



What it's all about

Tech. Sgt. Robert Isarraraz, 341st Recruiting Squadron, visits with three new Airmen at their Basic Military Training graduation at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, Dec. 12. From left are Airman 1st Class Elliot Briell, Airman 1st Class Joshua Devine, Isarraraz, and Airman Basic Matthew Flores. Briell and Flores, both BMT honor graduates, were recruited by Isarraraz. Devine was recruited by Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Tapia. The three Airmen are now in pararescue training. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Senior NCO personnel changes coming in spring

Washington (AFNS) – The Air Force continues the phased implementation of its Enlisted Evaluation System and Weighted Airman Promotion System (WAPS) changes with the convening of a master sergeant evaluation board scheduled for May 2015.

Evaluation and promotion system changes, scheduled for implementation over the next 16 months for active-duty Airmen, are focused on ensuring job performance is the most important factor when evaluating and identifying Airmen for promotion.

Master sergeant evaluation board

The revamped master sergeant promotion process will be divided into two phases –Phase I and a Phase II which contains an evaluation board similar to the current senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant evaluation boards.

Under Phase I, promotion-eligible technical sergeants, as of the Nov. 30 promotion eligibility cut-off date (PECD), will be scheduled to complete their WAPS tests (specialty knowledge

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A time of reflection and looking forward

By Brig. Gen. James C. Johnson
Air Force Recruiting Service commander

Season's greetings!

As we look forward to celebrating this holiday season, Stacy and I want you to know how proud we are of all you've achieved. You have sustained our all-volunteer force with the lifeblood of new Airmen and this was definitely no small feat. The Air Force Recruiting Service remains a premier organization in today's Air Force because of the caliber of its military and civilian Airmen.

As you recharge during this time, we know that you draw strength from the support of your family and friends, and we want to wish you and them all the very best the season has to offer. Please be safe when you celebrate, be careful and watch

out for each other. We need you back after the holidays!

Also, please be vigilant and remember that some of our Airmen may be going through difficult times and really need a wingman. Be that wingman if you see a need.

2015 promises to be a very exciting time for all of us in Recruiting as we launch a new Strategic Plan. The plan will focus on Precision Recruiting, Comprehensive Professional Oversight and Development, a Leading Edge Environment for Applicants and Recruiters, and Strong Airmen and Families. This plan is not meant to sit on a shelf, but will live through the actions of all the military and civilian Airmen across our recruiting enterprise. We look forward to the success we will achieve together with this plan in the New Year!

Happy Holidays and best wishes to you and yours!



A STEP up

Lt. Col. Steven Phillips, 343rd Recruiting Squadron commander, presents newly promoted Tech. Sgt. Joanne Moseley with her stripes at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., Dec. 22. Moseley was promoted under the Stripes for Exceptional Performers program. She was asked to be part of a conference call on special operations recruiting with group and squadron leadership. Brig. Gen. James C. Johnson, Air Force Recruiting Service commander, called Phillips on his cell phone, and asked to speak to one of the recruiters via FaceTime. When Moseley got on the phone, the general asked her name, and when she said "Staff Sergeant Moseley," he corrected her and said, "But I'm looking for Tech. Sergeant Moseley." Johnson said Moseley stared at the phone a few seconds before she realized what he meant. For the complete story, see the Jan. 12 issue of Behind the Badge. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Commander looks back at life's choices

AKA: How I lost a bet to my wife and still managed to travel to Europe

By Lt. Col. Robert Firman
344th Recruiting Squadron commander

I love working in recruiting for many reasons. I love the team. I love living in Texas. I love the mission.

But most importantly – I love the recruits.

Every chance I get to meet a group of young Americans eager to put on the “cloth of their nation” and join the Air Force team, I am inspired. I have far fewer days ahead of me now than I have behind me in my career, and I often think how much I would love to trade places with these young folks.

I remember the excitement, the enthusiasm, and the raw potential of it all. I remember the day I decided to take a shot at going to Officer Training School and pursuing the chance to join the Air Force myself.

Like many new recruits, I had family connections that pulled me toward “crossing into the blue.” My dad had served, my cousin was serving, and my brother was in his first year. I also lived near Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, and had the chance to work with active duty people pretty often. They, too, made the Air Force look like a great option.

However, the thought of a 20-year career was daunting. (I laughed at my younger self as I typed that just now.) To avoid the thought of such a huge commitment, I was determined to do my four, then pursue other options – grad school, a degree in international affairs, work overseas, work in Washington, etc.

My then-girlfriend (now wife of 14 years) told me I was

‘We are professionals; we are selfless; we are excellent; and our commitment to integrity holds it all together.’

crazy. She was so sure I’d stay in the Air Force that she bet me a trip to Ireland I’d stay in longer. I confidently took that bet. What did she know about my dreams and desires, anyway?

Turns out that Ireland is beautiful!

However, I like to think we were both right. I did get to do an internationally focused graduate degree; did get to work overseas; did

get to study two languages; and did get to do political-military work. In fact, I’ve gotten to do everything I ever dreamed of when I was in college and in the early years after – and much more. And when we went to Ireland with our two boys, we flew from an airport near our house in Germany. Not a bad way to lose a bet!

As I spend time with new recruits and those just thinking about it, I have to be careful not to get too enthusiastic. I don’t want to scare them off. But I do want them to know how very lucky they are to be joining this amazing team!

I can’t think of any other organization in the world that I’d rather be a part of. And I can’t think of any other organization that is based so solidly on an ethical foundation. We repeat it so much that we risk just mouthing the words, but the Air Force Core Values truly separate us and keep us on a higher level.

We are professionals; we are selfless; we are excellent; and our commitment to integrity holds it all together. All of that enables us to accomplish our nation’s vital missions, and to do it really well.

And what’s even better than all of that, is that I get to see the next generation put on the blue uniform. I know our future is in really good hands, and I am honored to play a small part in that process. I can only sum up how I feel at this point in one simple phrase, and it is very true.

Boy, am I enthusiastic!



Lt. Col. Robert Firman

'Senior NCO' continued from Page 1

test (SKT) and/or promotion fitness examination (PFE) during the February to March 2015 testing window.

Promotion-eligible technical sergeants complete WAPS testing in the same testing window as promotion-eligible staff sergeants; therefore, force support squadrons have been instructed to give testing priority to their technical sergeant population. This will assist the Air Force Personnel Center in completing the Phase I process which includes ensuring SKT and/or PFE minimum scores have been met and establishing each Air Force specialty code's (AFSC) Phase I cut-line.

Each Airman's test scores will be combined with their other weighted factor points (time in grade, time in service, decorations and enlisted performance reports) to determine an initial score. Scoring will follow the previously released WAPS point model for staff sergeants through master sergeants.

The top 60 percent of Airmen, by score in each AFSC, will then move forward to Phase II of the promotion process where their records will meet an evaluation board. In addition, in AFSCs where there are 15 or less eligible Airmen, all records will be advanced to the Phase II evaluation board provided the minimum SKT/PFE scores have been met.

During phase II, board members will follow the same process as the current senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant boards. They will review the selection folder containing each Airman's evaluation brief, EPRs closing out within 10 years of the PECD, and all decorations received over the Airman's entire career. Any Article 15 received within two years of the PECD and recommended for placement in the selection folder by a commander will also be visible.

The evaluation board will provide a score for each Airman's record. That board score will replace an Airman's weighted EPR points score from the Phase I portion of the process. The board score is then combined with the remaining WAPS factor scores from Phase I to produce a final overall score. Ultimately, this final WAPS score allows the creation of an order of merit that ranks Airmen by total score for each AFSC.

For the last step, the promotion quota is applied to each AFSC order of merit to determine the final master sergeant promotion selections. To see the tables describing the revised

scoring and an associated example calculation, go to <http://www.afpc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-141203-066.pdf>.

Consistent with current practice, deployed Airmen and those serving in a temporary duty assignment location unable to test during the normal testing cycle will be considered for promotion through the supplemental promotion process.

Additional adjustments

The Air Force is also adjusting the WAPS scoring model for chief and senior master sergeant promotions beginning with the 15E9 chief master sergeant and 16E8 senior master sergeant promotion cycles. Starting with these cycles, weighted EPR points will no longer be included in the final WAPS score calculations for promotion eligible master sergeants and senior master sergeants.

Airmen competing for promotion to senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant will have their points calculated using the following factors: United States Air Force supervisory examination, time in grade, time in service, decorations and a board score.

Additionally, to be promotion eligible master sergeants and senior master sergeants must have completed a Community College of the Air Force degree, in any discipline, and must have completed the Senior NCO Academy via correspondence or in-residence, on or before the PECD.

To see details on the composition of the SNCO enlisted performance reports are scheduled for release in spring 2015, go to <http://www.afpc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-141203-070.pdf>.

To ensure records and weighted factor scores are accurately calculated, Airmen should review their records in the Personnel Records Display Application, accessible via the myPers website.

When reviewing records, Airmen should ensure their EPRs, decorations, control AFSC, total active federal military service date, and date of rank are accurate on their data verification record and that all decorations and EPRs are reflected correctly in PRDA.

For more information about the two-phase master sergeant promotion process and enlisted evaluations and promotions changes, visit the myPers website at <https://mypers.af.mil>.

(Courtesy of Defense Media Activity)

“... job performance is the most important factor when evaluating and identifying Airmen for promotion ...”

'Should' I wear or 'Can' I wear -- what's the difference?

By Chief Master Sgt. Edward Edgar
Chief Enlisted Manager, AFRS Inspector General

When the question is phrased with "*should*," typically the response is known but an integrity battle exists. When the question uses "*can*," typically the answer is unknown.

In either case, the uniform of the day decision rests with command. Guidance for proper uniform wear is governed by general order (Air Force Instruction 36-2903) and the right question to ask is "*can*" through leadership to a commander.

Regardless of the instance, we are limited in UOD options: the Airman Battle Uniform, service uniform (Class B), service dress (Class A), mess/semi-formal and the Physical or Improved Physical Uniform I/PTU along with various accouterments for each. A final and popular option for recruiting is the Informal Uniform (not the obsolete special events uniform) which also requires command approval for wear as UOD.

Where the majority of us are lock-step with compliance there are a few concerns. Most infractions stem from creative interpretations of UOD to "fit in" with civilians at special events, specifically, piecing together event-related "civvies" with authorized uniforms (e.g., SPI polo with khaki, SPI T-shirt with PTU short, jeans with informal polo).

Whatever reason uniform infractions occur, recruiters can "fit in" while *standing out* as professional Airmen. The traditionally accepted uniform for standing out is the class B service uniform with all earned accouterments and tie/tab.

Recruiting is a special duty that requires a special person. You are that person! Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the provisions of AFI 36-2903, especially paragraph 9.2 (Informal Uniform).

Thanks for being a great Airman. Have a great holiday season and move that product!



While this person guilty of stolen valor is not an Airman, the photo illustrates the most extreme example of improper uniform wear ... and it got your attention. (Courtesy photo)

Congratulations

A1 award winners

Congratulations to the Air Education and Training Command-level A1 annual award winners from Air Force Recruiting Service.

Personnel Field Grade Officer of the Year: **Maj. Gregory Chambers**

Chambers

Civilian/Operational Manager of the Year: **Jennifer Caracciola**

Technician of the Year: **Celia Llamas**

AFROTC commanders

Congratulations to **Lt. Col. Craig McCuin**, 369th Recruiting Group, and **Maj. Will Bragg**, Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service, on their selection as 2015 Air Force ROTC detachment commanders.

AFRS 3rd quarter winners

Congratulations to the Air Force Recruiting Service calendar year 2014 3rd quarter award winners.

Airman: **Senior Airman Jesse Ranslow**, 339th Recruiting Squadron

NCO: **Staff Sgt. Tyler Martin**, 345th RCS

Senior NCO: **Master Sgt. John Roy**, 367th RCS

Company Grade Officer: **Capt. Stefan Wladyka**, Headquarters AFRS

Civilian Category I: **Jennifer Chandler**, 331st RCS

Civilian Category II: **Bradley Sanker**, 345th RCS

Correction

The Dec. 8 issue of Behind the Badge had an error concerning the photos of **Katja Frommer** being sworn in by **Lt. Col. Charity Hartley**, 317th Recruiting Squadron commander. Frommer was sworn in as a civilian lawyer, and not as a staff judge advocate. She is the wife of **Senior Master Sgt. Cory Frommer**, 317th RCS production superintendent.



The Civil Air Patrol receives the Congressional Gold Medal in a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol Emancipation Hall in Washington, D.C., Dec. 10. From left are Maj. Gen. Joe Vazquez, CAP National Commander; Honorable Lester Wolff, former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from New York and CAP World War II veteran; Congressman John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; Sen. Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader; U.S. Representative Michael McCaul of Texas, sponsor of the bill honoring CAP; and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives. (Courtesy photo/Civil Air Patrol)

Civil Air Patrol recognized with Congressional Gold Medal

The Civil Air Patrol was recognized for its volunteer service during World War II with the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal at the U.S. Capitol, Dec. 10.

“The men and women of Civil Air Patrol stepped up and served their country when it needed them during the darkest days of World War II, and it’s time we recognized them and thanked them for their service,” said Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, who introduced the Senate legislation in February 2013. Harkin is commander of CAP’s Congressional Squadron.

The [CAP website](#) provides full coverage of CAP’s Congressional Gold Medal journey, including vintage photos, bios of living World War II veterans, nationally renowned veterans, B-roll video and blog posts.

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, who introduced the gold medal proposal in the House, praised the legacy CAP’s founders established.

“The awarding of the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the members of the Civil Air Patrol ensures that long overdue and proper recognition has finally been bestowed upon these brave men,” McCaul said.

“The Civil Air Patrol’s valiant efforts in defending our coastline, providing combat services and flying dangerous humanitarian missions in America during World War II embodies the American Spirit of volunteerism. These brave men were an integral part in defending not only our homeland but also our principles of freedom and liberty.

“I am proud Congress has taken this step to recognize all of the important work the Civil Air Patrol did,” McCaul said.

CAP was founded Dec. 1, 1941, a week before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Within three months, CAP members were

using their own planes to fly anti-submarine missions off the East and Gulf coasts, where German U-boats were sinking American ships carrying oil and other vital supplies to the Allies. By the time that mission ended Aug. 31, 1943, CAP’s coastal patrols had flown 86,685 missions totaling 244,600 hours and more than 24 million miles. Seventy-four planes sent out from coastal patrol bases crashed into the water; 26 CAP members were killed.

Elsewhere, CAP’s airborne missions throughout the U.S. included border patrols, target-towing for military trainees, fire and forest patrols, searches for missing people and aircraft, disaster relief, emergency transport of people and supplies, and orientation flights for future pilots. Many from the organization’s ranks went on to join the Army Air Forces.

CAP’s legacy of selfless service for the nation and its communities continues today. In all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, CAP members stand ready to respond to such challenges as natural and manmade disasters and searches for missing aircraft or individuals.

Participation in CAP carries no military obligations, and the organization doesn’t attempt to recruit cadets for the armed forces. However, the uniform, military customs and courtesies and drill and ceremonies are among the important features of cadet life that make the military an attractive option for many.

On average, 10 percent of cadets at the Air Force Academy got their start in CAP. Members who earn CAP cadet officer status may enter the Air Force as an E-3 rather than an E-1.

See Airman Magazine’s [November 2014 issue](#) for more information about CAP.



Commissioned on Veterans Day

Master Sgt. Richard Geren, Health Professions recruiter in Goodyear, Ariz., with the 348th Recruiting Squadron, presents a commissioning certificate to 2nd Lt. Bridget Bradshaw on Nov. 11. Bradshaw is a recent graduate of Northern Arizona University. She was commissioned into the Nurse Corps as a Clinical Nurse and will attend the nine-week Nurse Transition Program at Tampa General Hospital before being assigned to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. (U.S. Air Force photo/Dick Jonas)

Fitness Management System slated for upgrade

By Debbie Gildea
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas – Active duty, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard officers and enlisted members who want to maintain copies of their pre-July 2010 fitness records need to access the Air Force Fitness Management System and save or print their records by Dec. 30, Air Force Personnel Center officials said today.

AFFMS will be offline Dec. 31-Jan. 11 to enable AFPC teams to transition content to the improved Air Force Fitness Management System II, said 1st Lt. Nathan Strickland, AFPC Special Programs Branch Chief. When the new system comes back online, it will not include fitness information older than July 2010.

The new system - AFFMS II - will improve accessibility and fitness program managers' ability to manage fitness program records. In addition, it will feature more stringent security controls to protect members' information from unauthorized changes or updates.

"This system will provide Total Force Airmen with a more up-to-date, user-friendly fitness management system that

will better support the overall Air Force Fitness program," Strickland said. "Before the system goes down, we want to make sure that Airmen are aware of the pending change and have time to go into the system to save their older records."

While there is no requirement for Airmen to maintain fitness records, Strickland advises Airmen who would like to maintain a copy of their fitness history prior to July 2010 to go to the current AFFMS site by Dec. 30 and download or print their pre-July 2010 information. Records can be printed or saved as PDFs, he said.

"In the interim, base fitness assessment centers and unit fitness program managers will maintain hard copies of fitness score sheets for Airmen who test while the system is down and will update those records once AFFMS II is up and running," Strickland said.

To save copies of pre-July 2010 records, go to the Air Force Portal at <https://my.af.mil>, hover the cursor over the Life & Fitness menu and select "AF Fitness Management System" from the drop down menu. For more information about the fitness management system and other personnel issues, go to myPers at <https://mypers.af.mil>.



A family affair

The 314th Recruiting Squadron enlisted a special member into the Air Force Dec. 2 when Ethan Davis took his official oath of enlistment at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., and shipped to Basic Military Training. Ethan is the son of Chief Master Sgt. Keith Davis, 314th RCS superintendent, and Senior Master Sgt. Alucia Davis, 87th Force Support Squadron, who have 43 years of combined service. After BMT, Ethan will attend fire protection training at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. With the Davis family is Lt. Col. Michael Fenimore, 314th RCS commander. (U.S. Air Force photo)

SrA and below EPR static closeout date to be March 31

By Debbie Gildea
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas – Enlisted evaluation and promotion changes, announced in July, continue with establishment of a March 31 enlisted performance report static closeout date for Regular Air Force, or RegAF, senior airmen and below, Air Force Personnel Center officials said. In addition, change of reporting official evaluations have been eliminated for RegAF senior airmen and below effective Dec. 2, 2014.

Enlisted Evaluation System and Weighted Airman Promotion System changes continue to be implemented in stages over the next 16 months for RegAF Airmen, and over the next 28 months for Air Reserve Component (Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard) Airmen. The changes focus on ensuring job performance is the most important factor when evaluating and identifying Airmen for promotion.

The new SCOD implementation and CRO report elimination affect RegAF senior airmen and below with at

least 20 months of total active federal military service as of Dec. 2, 2014.

RegAF senior airmen and below whose EPRs closed out before Dec. 2, 2014, will get another EPR on March 31, 2015. That EPR will cover the number of months since their last EPR closed out.

RegAF senior airmen and below whose EPRs would have closed out between Dec. 2, 2014, and March 31, 2015, will not get an EPR until the March 31, 2015, closeout.

Airmen who reach 20 months of active duty service after the March 31, 2015, closeout will get their initial EPR on the date they reach 20 months of active service.

Additional enlisted evaluation and promotion system changes will be announced as they are approved for implementation.

For more information about enlisted evaluations and promotions, and other personnel issues, visit the myPers website at <https://mypers.af.mil>. Select “Search All Components” from the drop-down menu and enter “27948” for enlisted evaluations or “27949” for enlisted promotion change information.

336th Airman receives Native American name

By Airman 1st Class Ceaira Tinsley
23rd Wing Public Affairs

MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – The buildings looked the same and the people seemed familiar, but something was different. Maybe it was him. His Native American ties were lost at a young age and now nearly 20 years had passed since he reconnected with his roots. This piece of his life was broken until a naming ceremony brought him back to Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota.

Capt. Myles Morales, 336th Recruiting Squadron support flight commander, traveled approximately 1,700 miles to receive one of the most distinguished decorations in his Native American culture: a name.

“My native name is now Wanbli Kinyan Gli and that stands for ‘the eagle flies home,’” said Morales. “Before my grandmother passed away one of the last things she said was ‘one day the kids will return’ (to the reservation).”

Morales said that the tribe elders “found my grandmother’s words to be powerful and thought that name would be a perfect fit.”

A naming ceremony is a sacred Native American tradition in which the elders collectively bless a name that embodies a particular person’s character or experiences.

“Specifically in the Lakota Sioux tradition, a naming ceremony is typically done for warriors before they go to battle,” Morales said. “Nowadays, people receive them for many different milestones, like graduating college. Any major milestone in their lives (the tribe) tries to honor because there is not too much progression within the tribes lately.”

Before this ceremony Morales wasn’t well informed about his culture, but that all changed when he was invited back to experience a part of his heritage.

“My mom passed away when I was eight years old and after that we lost touch with that side of the family,” Morales said. “Now that I’ve pinned on captain it’s a big deal to them because I’m only the second person in the tribe that has made this rank.”

He chuckled as he recalled his limited knowledge of the ceremony before, but was proud of all the things he learned and the sacred gifts he was presented.

“They presented me with many gifts signifying their thanks and congratulations,” Morales said. “It’s customary to give either a Pendleton or star quilts, but I got 11 (Pendleton quilts) and that is equivalent to the status of what a chief would have gotten.”

The tribe also gifted Morales with an eagle feather that symbolizes trust, honor, strength, wisdom, power, freedom and many other things in the Native American culture. He is required to handle the feather with care and it can never touch the ground.



Capt. Myles Morales, 336th Recruiting Squadron support flight commander, poses for a photo with his Pendleton quilt at Moody Air Force Base, Ga. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Ceaira Tinsley)

“The elders performed a presentation with the feather and used thyme to purify me,” Morales said. “He instructed me to face north, east, south, and then west and during every direction he said a prayer. My family actually hand wove the beading [on my feather] and there is also an eternity wheel that represents life at the bottom made out of pheasant bone.”

November was Native American Heritage Month; it’s designed to acknowledge the contributions Native Americans have made to the American culture as well as the military.

According to the Annual Demographic Profile of the Department of Defense, American Indian/Alaskan Natives account for 1,901 or less than 1 percent of all active duty service members in the Air Force.

Morales described members of his culture as very trusting and reliant people and he used this as the bedrock of his values.

“Everything I do I try to do well, and I’ve definitely developed a foundation [of values] from my culture to stand firm in tough times,” he said. “The values I’ve learned have always been to be respectful, get an education and do everything to the best of your ability.”

Now that Morales has been named, he embraces the Native American culture that he once knew little about. His grandmother was right – the children returned home.



Rock on

Several staff members from the Recruiting Schoolhouse participated in the San Antonio Rock 'n' Roll Marathon and Half Marathon Race Dec. 7. From left are Staff Sgt. Sundae Hutton, who placed 14th out of 118 teams in the co-ed relay, and also completed the half marathon; Master Sgt. James Scapperotti, placed 6th in the co-ed relay; Jonathan Branch, completed the half marathon; Tech. Sgt. Leonor Branch, placed 6th in the co-ed relay and completed the half marathon; Tech. Sgt. Kristopher Woods, placed 14th in the co-ed relay; and Tech. Sgt. Rebecka Composano, who completed the half marathon. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Have a happy – and safe – holiday season

By Master Sgt. Jermaine Goodman
AFRS Ground Safety Manager

This is a great time of year to celebrate with family and friends. It's also a time of year when we need to ensure that we are safe.

The holiday season is one of the busiest times for emergency rooms across the nation. In a study of fall-related injuries during the holiday season, there was an estimated annual average of roughly 5,800 fall injuries related to holiday decorating, such as falls from ladders, roofs and tripping or slips on tree skirts.

When it comes to live trees, one of every 40 reported home structure Christmas tree fires resulted in a death, compared to an average of one death per 142 total reported home structure fires.

Please keep the following tips in mind as you celebrate the holidays.

Decorating tips

- Ensure you do not overextend yourself or the ladder.
- Use the ladder only for what it is intended for, and make sure the ground is clear.
- Have a buddy assist you when using a ladder.
- Use a fiberglass ladder.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Keep it watered.

- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators.
- Do not use indoor lights outside.
- Check for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.

- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

Planning is key to any successful holiday; always plan for the unexpected when traveling. Whether you've got 50 miles to travel or a long journey ahead, your trip can make or break your mood. Anticipate the pitfalls and be prepared if you go home for the holidays.

Travel Tips:

- Plan for delays; do not wait until the last minute to load your vehicle and allow yourself plenty of time.
- Take necessities; keep bottled water, blankets, coats, gloves, and food, etc.
- Keep children occupied. Kids can sometimes distract the driver so bring them activities.
- Ensure your vehicle is ready for the trip with an inflated spare and tires and proper fluid levels.
- DO NOT TEXT AND DRIVE!

Have a safe and wonderful holiday! If you have any questions, please me at 210-565-1473.



345th RCS annual

ABOVE – Members of Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service, the 369th Recruiting Group and the 345th Recruiting Squadron congratulate Staff Sgt. Tyler Martin, A-Flight, as he receives the squadron Gold Badge at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., Nov. 20. From left are Lt. Col. Tommy Koory, 345th RCS commander; Chief Master Sgt. Michael Kovach, 345th RCS superintendent; Master Sgt. Michael Cline, 345th RCS first sergeant; Col. Robert Borja, 369th RCG commander; Chief Master Sgt. Reginald Prothro, 369th RCG superintendent; Brig. Gen. James Johnson, AFRS commander; Chief Master Sgt. Charles Lamer Jr., AFRS command chief master sergeant; Senior Master Sgt. Robert Jones, 369th RCG Standardization and Training; Tech. Sgt. Sharron Craft, 345th RCS Operations NCO; Staff Sgt. Tyler Martin, 345th RCS Gold Badge recipient; and Tech. Sgt. Curtis Morrison, 345th RCS Line Officer Recruiter. LEFT – Staff Sgt. Brian Matheny, Memphis Military Entrance Processing Station liaison, accepts the 2014 AFRS Top Small MEPS award from Brig. Gen. James Johnson, AFRS commander, and AFRS Command Chief Master Sgt. Charles Lamer Jr. at the 345th RCS Annual Awards Banquet at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., Nov. 20. (U.S. Air Force photos)



Handing over the keys

The 344th Recruiting Squadron handed over the Vicksburg, Miss., office to the 331st RCS Dec. 9. In the transition to the “hub and spoke” model, the 344th RCS shut down its I-Flight, transferring the Vicksburg zone to the 331st. Both squadron commanders and superintendents met with the recruiter, Tech. Sgt. Matthew Bickel, and his family to host a combined “hail and farewell” the day before the ceremony. ABOVE – From left are Lt. Col. Robert Firman, 344th commander; Lt. Col. Jonathan Austin, 331st RCS commander; Bickel; Chief Master Sgt. Carla Thornton, 344th RCS superintendent; and Chief Master Sgt. Jimmy Hedden, 331st RCS superintendent. LEFT – Austin (right) wrestles the keys to the Vicksburg office away from Firman. (U.S. Air Force photos)



Getting fit

The 344th Recruiting Squadron C-Flight participated in the 2014 North Texas Fit Expo in Arlington, Texas, Dec. 13. ABOVE – Staff Sgt. Sheldon Ricks (left) and Staff Sgt. Adam Konstanzer, Fort Worth recruiters, have some fun with local weightlifter/bodybuilder, “The Hulk.” LEFT – From left, Master Sgt. Michael Watkins, C-Flight chief, Konstanzer and Ricks watch as an expo attendee does a push-up challenge. (U.S. Air Force photos)



25 hours of Thunderhill

The 364th Recruiting Squadron was on hand at the 11th Annual 25 Hours of Thunderhill at Thunderhill Raceway Park in Willows, Calif., Dec. 6. Sponsored by the National Auto Sport Association, the event had 60 race cars with four drivers per car from all over the world. ABOVE – Lt. Col. Jeffrey Rosa, 364th RCS commander, stands with the honor guard from Beale Air Force Base, Calif., after they presented the colors at the start of the race. Rosa coined the Airmen. LEFT – Staff Sgt. Michael Garlit (left) and Staff Sgt. Tony Grabarczyk, E-Flight recruiters, wait to lead the race cars onto the 3.5-mile track for the pace lap. (U.S. Air Force photos)



Special guests

Staff Sgt. Samantha Johnson, 314th Recruiting Squadron, stands with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia luncheon Dec. 1. Johnson, the Fort Dix Military Entrance Processing Station Liaison, sang the national anthem at the event, which featured McCain as a guest speaker. He joined other council members and guests in presenting stories of 13 American military members who fought in conflicts from the Revolutionary War to Iraq and Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)



Coined by the chief

Staff Sgt. Ciani Muna, 345th Recruiting Squadron A-Flight, is coined by Air Education and Training Command Chief Master Sgt. Gerardo Tapia in her office in Rolla, Mo., Dec. 3. Tapia also visited with other members of A-Flight, as well as some from the squadron headquarters at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. "Any time that I'm out and about visiting students at their tech schools, I always make an effort to stop in and visit with the local recruiter to see how they are doing," Tapia said. The chief and Muna discussed recruiting in her zone, and he shared his perspectives on topics such as the upcoming master sergeant board, new Enlisted Performance Report format, Battlefield Airmen, and others. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Schoolhouse tour

Staff Sgt. Rachael Rodriguez, 337th Recruiting Squadron D-Flight, stands in front of an obstacle at the Combat Control Schoolhouse at Pope Army Airfield, N.C., Nov. 8. The 337th RCS D- and B-Flights participated in the behind-the-scenes tour, spearheaded by Rodriguez. This event generated eight new Battlefield Airmen prospects and cemented the desire to serve for 18 Delayed Entry Program members. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Spouses' event

Spouses and family members gather for a group photo at one of their networking events Nov. 13 during the 337th Recruiting Squadron annual at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. (Courtesy photo)



Recruiting salutes

Courthouse Fitness-Lancaster in Salem, Ore., is the latest recipient of the Air Force Recruiting Salutes plaque presented by the 361st Recruiting Squadron. The center allowed the squadron to test 24 applicants at their facility; 18 passed, which was more than the squadron's fiscal 2014 Battlefield Airmen recruiting goal. The squadron was able to achieve 317 percent of their BA goal because of their support. The center also provides a free location to conduct quarterly leadership training meetings. From left are Lt. Col. Jason Scott, 361st RCS commander; Tyson Cox of Courthouse Fitness-Lancaster; Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Sites, 361st RCS superintendent; and Master Sgt. Brian Rodgers, E-Flight chief. (U.S. Air Force photo)



5/6 Council

Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Gomez hands out election ballots at the 5/6 Council meeting at McChord Field, Wash., Dec. 12. Gomez, Operations NCO at the 361st Recruiting Squadron, was elected president for 2015. The position offers him greater networking opportunities with more than 10,000 personnel at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Food bank volunteers

Members of the 362nd Recruiting Squadron and their Delayed Entry Program came together to volunteer at the "Feeding America" event at the Moreno Valley, Calif., food bank Nov. 25. At left are Senior Airman Heriberto Valencia, C-Flight recruiter in Riverside, Calif., and Tech. Sgt. Christopher Girouard, 362nd RCS Operations, and at right is Tech. Sgt. Richard Jay, C-Flight recruiter in Moreno Valley. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Certified

Tech. Sgt. Christopher Cerny, 362nd Recruiting Squadron D-Flight, receives his recruiter certification from Senior Master Sgt. Mark Pennock, 362nd RCS production superintendent, in Glendale, Ariz., Dec. 2. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Telethon ambassador

Tech. Sgt. Paul Golembiewski and his wife, Staff Sgt. Amanda Golembiewski, stand with their daughter Grace, who was the ambassador for this year's United Rehabilitation Services annual telethon in Dayton, Ohio, Dec. 7. Grace was born with Arthrogyrosis, resulting in joint contractures of all four limbs, fingers, wrists, shoulders, elbows and hips. She is unable to walk or grasp things with her hands the way a typical toddler can but she has learned to adapt, thanks to the physical and occupational therapies URS provides in their daycare program. Paul is the 338th Recruiting Squadron Operations NCO, and Amanda is a public health instructor at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Answering phones on the right are Senior Master Sgt. Joseph Cuthbertson, 338th RCS first sergeant, and Staff Sgt. Elsie Mavron, C-Flight recruiter. (Courtesy photo)



Hanging out with the Colts

Staff Sgt. Earl Reynolds, 338th Recruiting Squadron E-Flight, stands with other service members and Pat McAfee, punter for the Indianapolis Colts, and Adam Vinatieri, kicker for the Colts, on the Pat McAfee Show, Nov. 25. The show, broadcast on WTHR NBC, featured "A Salute to the Armed Services Men and Women in the Greater Indianapolis Area." (Courtesy photo)



ALS graduate

Senior Airman Elizabeth Rivas, 314th Recruiting Squadron G-Flight, is joined by squadron leadership at her graduation from the Kish Airman Leadership School at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Dec. 4. From left are Senior Master Sgt. Robert Shafer, first sergeant; Master Sgt. James Thompson, G-Flight chief; Rivas; Lt. Col. Michael Fenimore, commander; and Chief Master Sgt. Keith Davis, superintendent. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Teaching drill

Staff Sgt. Mark Devine, 314th Recruiting Squadron C-Flight, demonstrates a drill procedure for members of the Civil Air Patrol 801st Cadet Squadron in front of the PP&L Center in Allentown, Pa., Dec. 6. The ceremony was part of a commemoration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The cadets learned the drill the U.S. Army performs in their duties as guards of the tomb at Arlington National Cemetery. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Thanksgiving volunteers

Members of the 336th Recruiting Squadron volunteered at the annual Thanksgiving meal for E-4s and below at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., Nov. 22. From left are Capt. Brian Murraray, Staff Sgt. J.R. Hair, Staff Sgt. Vanessa Spry and Master Sgt. Wil Smith. Coordinated by Leila Brown, the squadron is typically responsible for the kitchen duties during the event. Also assisting were Lt. Col. Joseph Egresits, 336th RCS commander; and Dot Clisby, Tech. Sgt. Ezra Tanner, Staff Sgt. John Dulce, Tech. Sgt. Rick Barber and Tech. Sgt. Teresa Reed. (U.S. Air Force photo)



He's No. 1

Staff Sgt. Steven Ortiz, 336th Recruiting Squadron, placed first in the Zombie Workout of the Day CrossFit Competition in Altamonte Springs, Fla., Dec. 7. Ortiz, an enlisted accessions recruiter in Daytona Beach, Fla., bested 249 other participants. (Courtesy photo)



Poolside COI

Staff Sgt. Matthew Gainer talks to members of the Perkins High School swim team at the YMCA in Sandusky, Ohio, Dec. 3. Gainer conducted the center of influence event to spread awareness of Battlefield Airmen opportunities; he told them the conditioning they do makes them prime candidates for these jobs. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Master Sgt. Dale Graham)



Gimme that cookie

Staff Sgt. Johnny Amaya, 336th Recruiting Squadron G-Flight, gets into a tug of war with the Cookie Monster at the annual Christmas parade in Valdosta, Ga., Dec. 7. No word on who won the cookie. (U.S. Air Force photo)

**D-League B-Ball**

Staff Sgt. Buddy Crawford and Tech. Sgt. Jerry Perkins work their table at the D-League Basketball game between the Shreveport Mavericks and Texas Fresh at Hirsch Coliseum in Shreveport, La., Dec. 13. The Airmen are 344th Recruiting Squadron E-Flight recruiters from Bossier City, La. Perkins presented the official game ball, and both recruiters threw out T-shirts to the crowd between quarters. (U.S. Air Force photo)

**Thank a Veteran**

Staff Sgt. Matthew Bobbitt holds his daughter's hand as he is recognized at Thank a Veteran night at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas, Dec. 13. Bobbitt is with the 344th Recruiting Squadron F-Flight in Nacogdoches. The ceremony was held at halftime of the Stephen F. Austin vs. Long Beach State basketball game. (U.S. Air Force photo)



It's a celebration

Members of the 319th Recruiting Squadron celebrated a banner fiscal year by going to Altitude Trampoline in Billerica, Mass., Dec. 10. The squadron took home the Top Operations Flight, Top Support Flight and the Standard of Excellence Awards at the Air Force Recruiting Service level. In the front row is Lt. Col. Anthony Stroup, 319th RCS commander, and in the second row are, from left: Christine Tobin, Support Flight; Maj. Carmen Sowers, Support Flight commander; Master Sgt. Kevin Walker, first sergeant; Michael Brothwell, Information Technology; and Tech. Sgt. Heather Carriere, Operations NCO. Standing in the back are: Chief Master Sgt. David Anthony, superintendent; Master Sgt. Nicholas Ellis, senior trainer/flight chief; Master Sgt. Kristofer Miller, Operations Flight chief; Master Sgt. Camille Woods, Command Support Staff; Tech. Sgt. Tyler Pestell, IT; Senior Master Sgt. Thomas Farrill, production superintendent; Master Sgt. John Barber, Training/Marketing; Tech. Sgt. Orville Toller, Operations NCO; and Staff Sgt. Samuel Harris, Training/Marketing. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Samuel Harris)



Congratulations

Lt. Col. Angie Blair, 341st Recruiting Squadron commander, presents a certificate of retirement to Master Sgt. Herlinda Vandong, 341st RCS Support Flight, Client Systems Management, at her ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, Dec. 5. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Battlefield Airman event

Staff Sgts. Aharon Hoke and Staff Sgt. David Edwards of the 319th Recruiting Squadron C-Flight coordinated a Battlefield Airman event at the University of Rhode Island in South Kingstown, Dec. 4. These type events keep their Delayed Entry Program members motivated and in shape as they prepare to become Battlefield Airmen. (U.S. Air Force photos)



Wreaths Across America

Members of the 341st Recruiting Squadron G-Flight were among the volunteers who participated in Wreaths Across America at Houston National Cemetery, Dec. 14. The mission of Wreaths Across America is to “Remember, Honor, Teach” by remembering fallen heroes, honoring those who serve, and teaching children about the sacrifices made by veterans and their families to preserve America’s freedoms. One day in December is set aside for this event at Arlington National Cemetery and other veterans’ cemeteries at all 50 states and beyond. Tech. Sgt. Melissa Perez Arriola is shown below left, and Staff Sgt. Raymond Oliver is shown below right. (U.S. Air Force photos)

