

AFSA

MAGAZINE



FALL 2020

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AFSA

-- AFSA IS QUALITY OF LIFE --
THROUGH ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION FOR
IMPROVED QUALITY-OF-LIFE AND ECONOMIC
FAIRNESS TO SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING
OF MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS AND
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Through its many programs and worldwide chapters, AFSA also reaches out to bases and communities to help those in need and to raise awareness of the sacrifices, concerns and contributions of the men and women and their families who serve.

AFSA MEMBERSHIP

One-year, two-year, three-year and life membership options are available. Please call Headquarters for pricing. An *electronic subscription* to the AFSA Magazine is included in membership dues.

AIRMEN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION (AMF)

An AFSA affiliate, the Airmen Memorial Foundation, provides educational assistance to dependent children of the Total Air Force enlisted force. It is also an annual participant in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #10517).
Donate to the AMF here.

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THE ENLISTED FOUNDATION (TEF)

The Enlisted Foundation (TEF) was established in 2017 for the mutual welfare of members of the armed forces and their families; to include educating others on the quality of the lives of enlisted members serving in the armed forces.
Donate to the enlisted foundation here.

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

AFSA Magazine is the only magazine dedicated solely to serving our members and their families. We are obliged to serve the interests and concerns of our members by striving to report timely and accurate information. The editors reserve the right to edit all submissions but will never materially alter the author's viewpoint. The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Air Force Sergeants Association or its editors.

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COVER



*"To be forgotten is the worst"
A volunteer stands before headstones following National Wreaths Across America Day wreath laying event at Arlington Cemetery.*

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTARY

To say that 2020 was a rather unusual, interesting, challenging, and troublesome year would be an understatement. I have had enough negativity associated with COVID-19 and all the surrounding drama. I am ready for some good news! We again offer our heartfelt congratulations and welcome our 22nd Chief of Staff, General Charles Q. Brown and our 19th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Chief JoAnne S. Bass. AFSA stands ready to assist and support you and your team going forward. Our Air Force has a bright and gleaming future under these two tremendous leaders. Thank you for all you are doing for our Airmen, today and tomorrow.

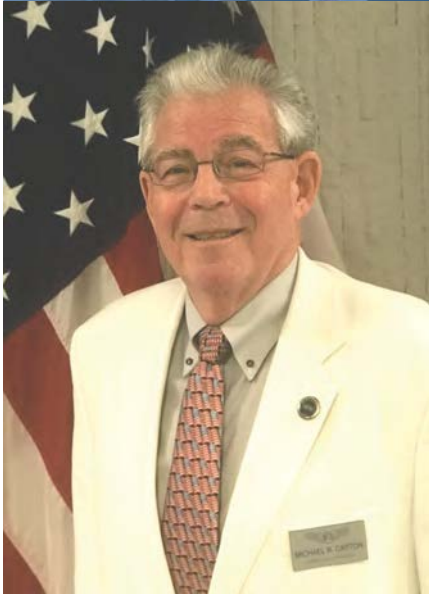
“GOING FURTHER TOGETHER,” was our 2020 Professional Airmen's Conference theme and it is how we should view and undertake future endeavors. The COVID-19 pandemic has consumed conversations, daily lives, and the ability to “function normally.” Regardless of the difficult and troubling times, the Air and Space missions continue to be accomplished. After listening to our Air and Space Force leaders, I see continually working together as the pathway to sustained excellence. Since September 17, 1947, we have evolved because of teamwork. We accomplished all our efforts by “Going Further Together” and we will continue evolving in 2021 and beyond.

Despite COVID-19's impacts, AFSA has remained at the forefront of improving our Quality of Life and growing our Association. I want to close out 2020 by highlighting five events which stamps AFSA as the premier Military and Veterans Service Organization.

It starts with our first ever **Virtual Professional Airmen's Conference (vPAC)** which was a resounding success, and has never been done before! I am enormously proud of our Executive Director, Keith Reed, and the entire Headquarters team for making this a seamless event. They deserve our thanks and congratulations. As with any new endeavor, there are bumps in the road, but we had a most enjoyable and smooth ride throughout the week. Over 5,747 individuals connected with our vPAC and dedicated over 3,401 hours of their time to participate and listen to the multitude of speakers and messages. Kudos to two groups of individuals from our vPAC. First, the Maxwell - Gunter AFB K-12 program and panel. An important family matters issue was identified, and they are working toward a resolution. The breadth, experience, and diversity of the K-12 panel members demonstrates a totally holistic approach to problem resolution. The takeaway is simple; regardless of the issue, there is always someone willing to listen and act. Do not be afraid to ask the question and seek the answer because a “No” given today can change to a “Yes” tomorrow. Second, is congratulations to all our 2020 Award recipients, and all our award nominees. Your efforts are the reason we are a great Association.

Over the course of AFSA's 60-year history, we have faced difficult challenges. Today's real-world circumstances test us as individuals and a society. No one is immune to these experiences, frustrations, and concerns. At the end of the day, we must trust in our leaders to do what is best. We say we are a team. Going forward we need to demonstrate that level of team-oriented commitment to humanity, and not just within our individual sphere of personal and professional relationships. How is AFSA playing in this team-oriented construct?

The answer is a new partnership with the **Korn Ferry Charitable Foundation**, in conjunction with their **Leadership U for Humanity**, designed to bring about societal change. My congratulations to Executive Director Reed for this partnership and providing an opportunity to help improve and change lives as well as develop leaders. We have all



Michael R. Carton
Air Force Sergeants Association
27th International President

“We launched our

Set it Forever

*membership payment
option; the membership
payment tool
you asked for.*

Share with your peers

*the accomplishments
of our great association*

*and how they can be a
part of it for only \$4.00
per month; and they
never have to worry*

*about getting a
renewal notice.”*



faced personal and professional challenges and are witness to the turmoil and unrest across our nation. Our sponsors CEO, Mr. Gary Burnison, stated *“Confronting systemic racism can’t be outsourced or delegated. This change must start from the top, with commitment and intentionality. Once leaders make it safe for others to learn, speak and act, the capabilities and ideas to affect change will bubble up from within. But change and action must be driven top-down.”*

Leadership U for Humanity is an opportunity and catalyst for developing tomorrow's diverse leaders within our society. While Air and Space Forces and AFSA are already remarkably diverse organizations, we can and must do more for a better tomorrow. This is an opportunity to develop and cultivate a mindset, share information and experiences, and create enticing and challenging leadership prospects, all while allowing individuals and organizations to flourish. This seemingly complex scenario is a life lesson of learning, sharing, and growing as individuals, organizations, and a society. This is a Quality of Life initiative impacting everyone.

It is finally here. The third event is our October treat. We launched our **“Set it Forever”** membership payment option; the membership payment tool you asked for. Now, it is incumbent upon each of you, and your respective chapters, to ensure success by maximizing this new capability. Share with your peers the accomplishments of our great Association and how they can be a part of it for only \$4.00 per month; and they never have to worry about getting a renewal notice. How great is that? The Headquarters has released the associated training, marketing materials, and hosted a town hall to cover the process. Each chapter and member must become proficient in using this tool when recruiting and/or retaining a member. We cannot afford for you to “learn on the fly” or you could lose a membership opportunity. Division leadership: You are charged with the direct responsibility of ensuring every chapter member knows and understands how to use “Set it Forever.” Chapters are the execution point; chapter leadership is accountable to ensure a successful recruiting or retaining experience. I am depending upon you for success.

As if the first three were not enough, our fourth event is our first ever and the remarkably successful **virtual Legislative Awareness Week (vLAW)**. I greatly appreciate, as do our members, the outstanding effort by our AFSA Policy Advisor, Mr. Matthew Schwartzman, Mr. Marshall Padgett and Ms. Bria Coles for their dedication and hard work on vLAW.

Collectively, your team brought the legislative process and our critical concerns to the forefront. The format, documents, and presentations are a testament to your skill and ingenuity to keep our membership informed, and more importantly, fully engaged. This vLAW initiative demonstrates, in no small way, the total commitment and focus on our members Quality of Life. Collectively, the membership from 49 states sent over 2,300 letters to members of Congress and the White House. Well done AFSA. Also, congratulations to the team and our prize winners.

The final event is possible through the efforts of our **Preferred Learning Partner at Waldorf University**. It starts with the introduction and presentation of the 1st Kaleth O. Wright Excellence in Leadership Scholarship to Senior Airman Asia Gray, 2nd SFS. In addition, Waldorf University is offering a complementary 1 course scholarship for every renewing member. Our thanks to Waldorf University for helping our Airmen. So, you see that despite COVID-19 and all the challenges we were presented with during 2020, AFSA had an exceptionally good year and 2021 only projects a brighter future.

History is a hard and unforgiving taskmaster. Sometimes, decisions do not meet the desired expectations and fall short, and we hopefully learn valuable lessons. What sounded like a great idea may not result in a long-term win-win scenario. President Obama stated, “The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won't. It's whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere.” I choose for AFSA to persevere. AFSA will continue making decisions and hopefully fewer mistakes, all while experiencing successes and yes, some failures. There is no shame in failing, but only you can choose your own path and determine your way ahead. Your path can be “Action,” or “Inaction,” or “Reaction.” I personally choose for AFSA to evolve through Action. We are a team and want you as part of our team.

AFSA's leadership must adapt in this ever-changing environment. Chapter leaders have a three-fold mission. First, share and spread our mission and vision. Second, locally grow the association's membership. Third, develop and mentor future leaders. Great leaders are developed by learning, building, and sharing your experiences.

Division Presidents, nurture and develop your chapters and translate AFSA's strategic vision into a set of tactical narratives for chapter execution. Chapters must know the “big picture.”

The International Executive Council must continue developing, updating, and executing forward thinking policy to match our AFSA Strategic Plan. This ensures currency and relevancy in today's and tomorrow's dynamic environment.

My thanks to Past Division 5 President Curtis McLean for his hard work and I welcome the new Division 5 President, Adam Weinberg. I also want to thank MSgt (R) Tony Rollis for his dedication and service to AFSA. Well done my friend. Finally, Rosemary and I want to wish each of you a most blessed and joyous holiday season. It is family and friends which makes what we do a most noble endeavor.



Michael R. Carton
AFSA International President



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EYE ON WASHINGTON

A HOLISTIC OVERVIEW OF THE 116TH CONGRESS

For those who may be unfamiliar, the 116th United States Congress is the current meeting of the legislative branch of the federal government, composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The 116th Congress originally convened on January 3, 2019 and will conclude on January 3, 2021.

While three months remain until the beginning of the 117th Congress, given the typical impact that elections have on the Congressional cycle, it is unlikely that any significant legislative initiatives will make their way through the legislative process with finality.

With that being said, our legislative team wanted to use this section of the *AFSA Magazine's Eye On Washington* to present a detailed overview and summary of the legislation that either directly or indirectly impact the various demographics of members that comprise the AFSA's military network at-large.

If, after the time of this publication, any further legislative developments unfold, our team will keep you informed via AFSA's Military and Government Brief (M&G-B) and through updates on our website and social media.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS AND STANDSTILL

Holistically, the Senate has been much less active than the House of Representatives - citing judicial nominations as the anchor grounding the ship of progress and expediency. As of the date of this publication, there have been 15,791 bills introduced to the Congressional docket, 1,573 bills to have passed one chamber, 236 bills to have passed both chambers, and 182 bills to have been codified in law.

In its simplest form, there is approximately a 1.1% chance that a bill introduced in the 116th Congress will become law. However, relatively speaking, legislation on the docket involving our troops, veterans, and military families fared very well. Of the 182 bills codified in law, 35 were encompassed within the wide-ranging scope of members covered by our Legislative Platform.

Below is a summary of the ten most impactful articles of public law (excluding the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA):

1. [Public Law No: 116-40, the Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020](#)
At the over-arching level of analysis, the Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 ensures that student veterans can continue their studies without any interruption and loss of income during COVID-19. In short, this law gave the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the latitude it needed to continue paying veterans who may have lost their position on campus due to COVID-19, modified previous law to extend such protections and guarantees during a President's declaration of a national emergency, ensures that student veterans will continue to receive housing benefits through the end of their term and will not have their GI Bill eligibility changed for any class they may have been unable to complete,



and provided parity for veterans in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program by including protections against sudden closures or terminations of programs that could not transition to online learning.

2. [Public Law No: 116-178: the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2020](#)

This law directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase, as of December 1, 2020, the rates of veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. As you may be familiar, the percentage increase in COLA benefits is the same as the COLA increase for Social Security recipients. According to the Social Security Administration, the latest COLA is 1.3% for Social Security benefits and SSI payments. This means that Social Security benefits will increase by 1.3% beginning with December 2020 benefits, which will be payable in January 2021.

3. [Public Law No: 116-133, the Citizenship for Children of Military Members and Civil Servants Act](#)

This law establishes that a foreign-born child of a U.S. citizen member of the Armed Forces or a government employee may automatically acquire U.S. citizenship even if the child is not residing in the United States. Currently, a foreign-born child automatically acquires U.S. citizenship if the child (1) has at least one parent who is a citizen, (2) is less than 18 years old, and (3) is residing in the United States in the citizen parent's legal and physical custody pursuant to a lawful admission for permanent residence.

Under this bill, the third requirement is fulfilled if a foreign-born child is (1) living in the legal and physical custody of the citizen Armed Services member or government employee who has been stationed abroad (or the accompanying spouse of such a citizen), and (2) lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States.

4. [Public Law No: 116-137, the VA Tele-Hearing Modernization Act](#)

This law amends title 38, United States Code, to permit appellants to appear in cases before the Board of Veterans' Appeals by picture and voice transmission from locations other than facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs and requires the VA to regularly report on the utilization of "virtual appeals."

5. [Public Law No: 116-154, the Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019](#)

Through the Specially Adaptive Housing (SAH) program, the VA provides grants to veterans with certain service-connected disabilities to help them construct, purchase, or remodel a home to better accommodate their needs. To be eligible to participate in the SAH program, veterans must have experienced a permanent, catastrophic, and/or life-altering injury.

Eligible veterans can use a total of three SAH grants to make needed adaptations to their homes. The Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act modernizes the SAH program to adequately meet the changing lifelong needs of disabled veterans and improves the program to benefit more disabled veterans across their lifespan.

Namely, this law allows eligible veterans to use the SAH grant a total of six times as opposed to three, authorizes the VA to provide additional SAH funding to veterans ten years after the veteran's original utilization of the SAH grant, increases the cap on SAH payments by 15%, increases the number of post-9/11 veterans who are eligible for partial SAH grants, and prioritizes SAH grants for veterans with certain serious illnesses.

6. [Public Law No: 116-154, the Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019](#)

In 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act into law. Among many other things, this law established a "means test" to determine a debtor's ability to repay debts. Under this test, a Chapter 7 bankruptcy case is presumed to be an abuse of the bankruptcy process if it appears that the debtor has income that exceeds certain specified thresholds. The National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Act of 2008, Public Law No. 110-438, created an exception to the means test's presumption of abuse for members of the National Guard and Reserve who, after September 11, 2001, served on active duty or in a homeland defense activity for at least 90 days. The exception is also available for 540 days after the servicemember leaves the military.

The National Guard and Reservist Debt Relief Extension Act of 2015 extended the exemption through December 2019. This law extends the exemption from the means test under Chapter 7 bankruptcy for qualifying members of an Armed Forces reserve component or the National Guard for an additional four years.



7. [Public Law No: 116-36, To amend title 38, United States Code, to reduce the credit hour requirement for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship program of the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

This law reduces the credit hour requirement for the VA's Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship program. The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship allows some eligible veterans and dependents in high-demand fields to extend their Post-9/11 GI Bill or Fry Scholarship benefits. Specifically, an eligible individual must be enrolled in a program that requires at least the standard 120 semester (or 180 quarter) credit hours, instead of the current requirement for more than 128 semester (or 192 quarter) credit hours.

For more information on the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship program, please click [here](#).

8. [Public Law No: 116-23, The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019](#)

On June 25, 2019, the President signed the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 into law. This law extends a presumption of herbicide exposure to Blue Water Navy Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam and the offshore waters. Blue Water Navy Survivors, and certain dependents may be entitled to benefits if the Veteran was exposed as well. Under the law, certain Veterans, who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam and Cambodia, or who had service in the Korean Demilitarized zone (DMZ), may be entitled to disability compensation for conditions that are related to herbicide exposure.

To be entitled to VA benefits, these Veterans must have served between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, and have one or more of the conditions that are listed in section 3.309(e) of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations. As of September 30, the VA has processed 34,415 (48%) of the 69,570 claims received. Of which, 24,328 (71%) have been granted, awarding more than \$664 million in retroactive benefits to eligible Veterans and families.

To learn more about the Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, please click [here](#).

9. [Public Law 116 No: 116-158, An Act to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend lease protections for servicemembers under stop movement orders in response to a local, national, or global emergency, and for other purposes.](#)

This bill provides certain lease protections for service members under stop movement orders in response to a

local, national, or global emergency. In short, a service member may terminate a lease for premises or for a motor vehicle, and may not be charged an early termination fee for doing so, if the service member enters into the lease upon receipt of certain military orders for permanent change of station, deployment with a military unit, or individual support of military operations and subsequently receives, in response to a local, national, or global emergency, a stop movement order for an indefinite period or at least 30 days.

For the bill to apply in the case of a lease for premises, the stop movement order must prevent the service member or the service member's dependents from occupying the premises.

10. [Public Law No: 116-71, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019](#)

The Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019 is a comprehensive piece of legislation that amends a number of VA authorities related to helping veterans transition from military to civilian life, suicide prevention measures, mental health care research and oversight, mental health care staffing, and health care for women veterans. As you may already be familiar, it is estimated that approximately 20 veterans die by suicide each day. Of those, 14 have received no treatment or care from the VA.

In short, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act will improve outreach to veterans and their mental health care options in six major ways:

- Bolster VA's mental health workforce to serve more veterans by offering scholarships to mental health professionals to work at Vet Centers and placing at least one Suicide Prevention Coordinator in every VA hospital.
- Improve rural veterans' access to mental health care by increasing the number of locations at which veterans can access VA tele-health services.
- Implement a pilot program to provide veterans access to complementary and integrative health programs through animal therapy, agritherapy, sports and recreation therapy, art therapy and post-traumatic growth.



- Establish a grant program that requires VA to better collaborate with community organizations across the country already serving veterans.
- Study the impact of living at high altitude on veterans' suicide risk and diagnostic bio-marker research to identify depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and other conditions.
- Hold the VA accountable for its mental health care and suicide prevention efforts by examining how the Department manages its suicide prevention resources.

Shortly following the President's signature, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie tweeted his personal thanks to select members of the VSO community for their support in helping to advance S.785 past the finish line.

A transcription of his tweet is as follows:

"Supporting Veterans is a constant fight - thanks @AMVETSHQ for speaking boldly and @VFWHQ for getting a suicide prevention bill to @POTUS. And thanks to the VSO leaders who pushed Congress to deliver - @EANGUS72 @treorg @IndyFund @AFSAHQ @wwp and many others."

Attached to the tweet was a press release published by the VA's Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, titled "Secretary Wilkie Applauds President Trump for Signing Suicide Prevention Bill." To read the Secretary's remarks, please click [here](#).



MILITARY TUITION ASSISTANCE

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE RELEASES NEW MILITARY TUITION ASSISTANCE APPROACH FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

A crucial quality of life benefit to AFSA members and to the integrity of the all-volunteer force (AVF) is the Military's Tuition Assistance Program. The Air Force currently pays 100% of tuition (with cap limitations) in off-duty courses with accredited schools who have signed the Department of Defense Memorandum of Understanding in pursuit of approved degree programs.

On September 29, the United States Air Force (USAF) announced that beginning on October 1, 2020, a \$3,750 military tuition assistance cap per fiscal year will go into effect. Previously, the tuition assistance limit cap was set at \$4,500 per fiscal year. However, according to the USAF, this reduction is an action taken to "ensure the program remains fully available and fiscally sustainable while meeting an increase in participation rates, the number of courses taken, and course costs." The USAF also warns that "should fiscal year funds become exhausted at year end; service members who did not get their applications approved will have to wait until the new fiscal year's funds are available for tuition assistance."

It is important to note that these adjustments apply to both undergraduate-level and graduate-level classes. There are also unique circumstances under which an individual may exceed the modified annual cap upon completion of a waiver. For example, "members whose degree program requires a lab class exceeding the \$3,750 limit by one semester hour or two quarter hours, or those working on a unique degree deadline may apply for a waiver."

To learn more about this policy change, please consult [Air Force Instruction 36-2670 Total Force Development and Air Force guidance memorandum 2020-02](#).

If you have any additional questions, please reach out to our legislative team at milgov3@hqafsa.org.

AN UPDATE ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2021 DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is an abundant Congressional authorization of appropriations for the Department of Defense (DOD) and defense related activities at other federal agencies. Additionally, the NDAA formalizes national defense policies and procedures, as well as addresses organizational administrative matters related to DOD. Jurisdiction over the NDAA lies within the scope of the House Committee on Armed Services (HASC) and the Senate Committee on Armed Services (SASC).

The NDAA process almost always begins during the first week in February with the submission of the President's budget request to Congress. The necessity of the NDAA's passage often triumphs over the all-too common gridlock persistently on display in Washington. In fact, this year served as the 59th consecutive fiscal year for which an annual defense authorization was enacted.



However, to tout the fostering of such a pure non-partisan working environment would be a misnomer; as America's military has begun 13 of the past 18 years under a continuing resolution (CR). Unfortunately, it appears as if the FY2021 NDAA will also be codified in law under a CR.

On Wednesday, September 9, (HASC) Ranking Member, Mac Thornberry, confirmed that the FY2021 NDAA will not be ready until after the election cycle.

For more details on the quality of life measures currently contained in the House and Senate's FY2021 NDAA, please consult the Summer 2020 edition of the AFSA Magazine by clicking [here](#).

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE PROVIDES ANNUAL FLU VACCINE GUIDANCE

Within the Department of Defense (DoD), the independent services annually review and vote on the "official list" for vaccine flu distribution. Typically, priority goes to overseas locations, ships afloat, and deployed personnel. When those locations are fulfilled, distribution is then prioritized by each individual service for delivery to their locations in the continental United States, in support of all active and reserve locations.

When the vaccine arrives at a military medical treatment facility, the commander of the installation has the authority to determine priority for receiving it.

Learn more about DoD flu vaccine availability on the Military Health System website by clicking [here](#).

If you want to get a flu shot before it's available at your MTF, the vaccine is covered by TRICARE with no cost-shares or copayments as long as it's administered by a pharmacist at a participating network pharmacy or by a TRICARE-authorized provider.

Learn more about the TRICARE benefit and the flu vaccine at the TRICARE website by clicking [here](#).

AFSA EXECUTES FIRST EVER VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS WEEK!

Since 1984, AFSA's Legislative Awareness Week program has increased member involvement in the legislative process and

has helped to establish our Association as each community's leading advocate for service members past and present and their families. This year, from October 4th to October 10th, AFSA was proud to execute the FIRST EVER Virtual Legislative Awareness Week; "vLAW" for short.



Visit the AFSA vLAW page:
<https://www.hqafsa.org/legislativeawareness.html>

Throughout the week, members had an opportunity to become a leading advocate on more than 15 legislative initiatives encompassed within the scope of AFSA's Legislative Platform. While the vLAW has unfortunately concluded in official terms, the work of our legislative team has not!

To support the lobbying efforts of the AFSA Headquarters Military and Government Department, our legislative team has decided to keep each of the advocacy campaigns on the AFSA Legislative Action Center until the conclusion of the 116th Congress.

If you have not already engaged with the official AFSA 2020 vLAW resources, please do so by clicking [here](#).





(Top) A volunteer stands at headstone following National Wreaths Across America Day wreath laying event.

**"TO BE
FORGOTTEN
IS THE
WORST"**

(Bottom) Iconic image take in 2005 that went viral and was the start of what would become Wreaths Across America the national nonprofit.





THE AMERICAN DREAM IS NOT LOST... IT IS REMEMBERED!

By Sean Sullivan, Wreaths Across America Staff

Pierre Claeysens, who was rescued by U.S. Forces in Belgium said, "To be killed in war is not the worst that can happen. To be lost is not the worst that can happen...to be forgotten is the worst."

[Wreaths Across America](#) (WAA) is a national non-profit organization best known for remembering fallen veterans with wreaths placed each December at [Arlington National Cemetery](#). However, the organization is much more. As of 2019, the nonprofit placed more than 2 million sponsored veterans' wreaths at over [2,100 participating locations nationwide](#) while offering various year-long programs. These programs help live a mission to remember, honor and teach.

In the beginning, founder, Morrill Worcester, a 12-year-old paper boy for the *Bangor Daily News*, won a trip to Washington D.C., where Arlington National Cemetery became an inspirational location. His

pilgrimage served as a consistent reminder, through career and life, that opportunities stemmed from the values and freedom afforded to us by our nation's veterans.

After years of hard work, Morrill founded [Worcester Wreath Company](#) in Harrington, Maine. In 1992, Worcester Wreath had a surplus. Morrill saw this as his opportunity to honor our veterans with hopes of returning to Arlington. With the aid of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe (ret.), the first 5,000 wreaths were placed that year at Arlington National Cemetery. As plans were underway, other individuals and organizations shared Morrill's spirit and by working together built an annual mission that went unnoticed for many years.

In 2005, a photo surfaced of Arlington covered in snow, adorned with wreaths. This picture became a viral internet sensation before there was even such a marketing term. After, thousands of requests poured in, from people wanting to help emulate the Arlington success on the local level, prompting the official formation of Wreaths Across America the national nonprofit in 2007.

The newly formed 501c3 began its national effort by sending seven ceremonial wreaths to every state (one for each branch of the military, and for POW/MIAs). The ceremonies took place in nearly all of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., with a focus on family during the holidays. As the organization grew from volunteer support, a network of local groups and cemetery locations began to emerge.

Simultaneously, groups began to escort the wreaths to Arlington. This started an annual tradition called "The Veterans Honor Parade" which travels the east coast in early December. This part of the mission grew into a multi-mile long convoy which acts as an ambassador by stopping at schools, monuments, veterans' homes and local communities as the mission of the organization is shared.



Volunteers hand out veterans' wreaths for placement on National Wreaths Across America Day.

In 2008, over 60,000 volunteers helped move the mission, placing 100,000 wreaths on veterans' headstones. Recognizing the organizations impact, the United States Congress unanimously voted to declare "National Wreaths Across America Day" to be held annually, on the second or third Saturday of December.



Volunteers wait in line on a rainy Wreaths Across America Day in 2018 to help place wreaths.

British street artist Banksy once wrote, "They say you die twice. One time when you stop breathing and a second time, when somebody says your name for the last time." So, it wasn't enough to say "we covered Arlington" because that's a mission half completed. When a volunteer places a wreath on a veteran's headstone, WAA encourages them to speak that veteran's name aloud, thank them for their service and sacrifice, reflect on their life as a person and member of a loving family and never let that service member die a second time, including all 226,525 at Arlington starting in 2014, and millions more at cemeteries nationwide.

Presently a small, but dedicated staff and more than 7,000 core volunteers across the country, work tirelessly on year-long programs that help accomplish this ongoing mission. That number grows to more than 2 million, a third of whom are children, who participate in the annual wreath laying events nationwide! These programs are designed to help highlight the awe-inspiring work of our volunteer groups and locations, civic groups, supporters, donors, and others that enable this mission to flourish regardless of challenges and changes.

Some of these programs include the following...

Group Sponsorship Program

In 2007, Wreaths Across America expanded its annual wreath placement event to enable groups and organizations to support Arlington National Cemetery and other local, participating cemeteries across the country. The organization established the Group Sponsorship Program to benefit other like-minded charities, community programs

and civic groups through the sale of wreath sponsorships for participating locations. Through this, WAA invites other group or organizations to help in remembering and honoring our American heroes and teaching the next generation, through raising funds to sponsor veterans' wreaths. As a Wreaths Across America Group Sponsorship partner, your organization will receive \$5-of-each-\$15 wreath sponsorship to support your important work while sponsoring a veterans' wreath. **Since its start, WAA has given back more than \$12.4M to other groups.**

AFSA is one of WAA's newest Sponsorship Groups. By sponsoring a wreath through AFSA, you will place a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery and give \$5 back to the organization to use for its own mission. Donate today at www.wreathscrossamerica.org/AFSA

Wreaths Across America Museum

Located in the WAA National Headquarters at 4 Point Street in Columbia Falls, Maine, the Museum is an 1,800-square-foot facility showcasing hundreds of items that have been donated to Wreaths Across America by its volunteers, including personal photos, awards, uniforms, helmets and other military memorabilia. The Museum is open year-round with visiting hours Monday through Friday, from 9AM to 4PM.

Mobile Education Exhibit

In addition to the Maine museum, Chevy dealers of New England donated the Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit, a 48' exhibit is equipped with a 24-person screening room, interactive computers, and a history exhibit. This traveling exhibit extends the mission by traveling to local communities, schools and events.

The Remembrance Tree Program

Throughout the year, Gold Star Families are invited to the "tip-land," where balsam tips are harvested to be made into veterans' wreaths. These family members are invited to claim a tree in the name of their loved one with military-style replica dog-tag creating a living memorial for that service member. These dog tags and tree locations are recorded and geo-tracked so the families sponsored wreaths can be made from those trees and revisited by loved ones over the years. WAA Executive Director, Karen Worcester once said, "There are few things more moving than hearing the sound of thousands of these tags chiming in unison from a gentle breeze on a quiet evening in Maine."

Stem to Stone 5k Races

As the Mobile Education exhibit travels the country, so too does our series of 5K races that we call "Stem to Stone" Races. The Stem to Stone name refers to the balsam bouquets trimmed from trees that make up the wreaths laid

at cemeteries all across America, and Stone refers to the actual headstones of the soldiers. The 5k is reminiscent of basic training runs and allows participants to get a small taste of what our heroes have endured as they train.



Members of our armed forces help hand out wreaths to volunteers.

July Concert (Virtual Concert)

In addition to the remembrance tree program, visiting the museum, and a 5K race, veterans and active service members are treated to a free concert each July (this year this event was held virtually). Some of today's biggest musical acts have performed here over the years including: [Craig Morgan](#), [Chris Roberts](#), [Lindsay Lawler](#), [Mark Wills](#), [The Bellamy Brothers](#), [The Don Campbell Band](#), [Darryl Worley](#), [Lee Greenwood](#), [Unites States Army Field Band's Six-String Soldiers](#), [Sawyer Brown](#), and the late great [Charlie Daniels](#) (whose signed guitar is in the Wreaths Across America Museum).

Wreaths Across America Radio

This 24/7 internet radio station has a unique format that mixes country, rock, bluegrass, Americana, information and inspiring content about members of the U.S. armed forces, their families, military veterans, and volunteers who support the mission. Special segments and programs include:

Mission Matters - Wreaths Across America's Executive Director, Karen Worcester, interviews families who have impacted the mission, members of the military community, and Gold Star Families. She shares those discussions with the public Wednesdays at 10:00 AM EST, and again at 7:00 PM EST.

Cup of Joe Radio - The purpose of this broadcast is to support military veterans worldwide. Show hosts Mike Spotswood (USMC) along with his wife Irene and weekly contributors Doug Bradley (U.S. Army-retired) and Jerry Lamerton (U.S. Army-retired) are passionate about the mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach while entertaining with music. The program airs twice on Fridays, from 4:00 - 6:00 PM EDT, and again Friday night from 9:00 - 11:00 PM EDT.

Trucking Tributes - Is a radio feature highlighting the support Wreaths Across America receives from the trucking industry.

Kid's Corner - Wreaths Across America recognizes youth volunteers monthly who do their part to make sure no hometown hero is forgotten.

The 100-Day Countdown to National Wreaths Across America Day - A daily segment on the morning show with Michael W. Hale counting down 100 days until Wreath Day 2020, featuring interviews with group and location volunteers who are making the mission happen in their communities!

All these year-long programs and participating locations across the country of this young organization would not be possible, or successful, without the help of volunteers, active supporters and donors, and the generosity of the trucking industry, which offer invaluable support to WAA's mission to remember the men and women who served our country, honor our military and their families, and teach our children about our freedom and those who protect it. ♦

If you wish to help honor our veterans, please support the mission by sponsoring a wreath or registering to volunteering to place wreaths at www.wreathscarossaamerica.org/AFSA

*Each sponsorship goes toward a fresh balsam veteran's wreath that will be placed on the headstone of an American hero as we endeavor to honor all fallen veterans on **Saturday, December 19, 2020**, as part of National Wreaths Across America Day.*

National Wreaths Across America Day 2020 is happening, and we will honor veterans in all 50 states again this year. WAA has been working with local, state and national officials, as well as health professionals, to develop plans for the safety of all involved with the mission.



Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds join together each National Wreaths Across America to Remember, Honor and Teach about our nation's heroes.

QUALITY OF SCHOOLS IS A READINESS ISSUE

By Christina Karvwnaris, Lt Col, AU/PA, Academic Outreach, and Michael Morgan, CMSgt, 42d ABW/CCC

In military terms, when we think of readiness, most of us immediately focus on our active-duty members. Are they ready for the mission? Have they completed all the required training? Do they have all the equipment they need? These are all fundamental aspects of readiness, but what about their home life? Family readiness plans? Is their family ready? We often talk about readiness centered around deployments; however, readiness figures into our daily lives as well. Airmen cannot focus on their jobs when they are worried about their families, whether at home or deployed. Family concerns affect Airmen every day and range from spouse employment, quality of available childcare, to finding the right educational opportunities for their children. These issues have become an Air Force wide concern and are being addressed at an enterprise level. K-12 education is a tough nut to crack though as there are no national standards. A great resource is the Military Interstate Children's Compact, viewable at www.mic3.net. It addresses key educational transition issues encountered by children of military families. While the Compact is critical and helps to ensure military-affiliated children are not disadvantaged, a move is still a drastic change to deal with.

In the last few years, the education of military-affiliated children has been brought to the attention of Air Force leadership. They agree that the availability of quality K-12 education is a vital aspect of readiness for our Airmen. When the Service Secretaries addressed a letter to the Governors Association in February 2018, they put these two issues to the forefront: The quality of schools available for their children and the ability of spouses to obtain jobs and sustain careers. They highlight that transitions are difficult for children and extend past academics. Not only do our children have to adjust to new teachers and curriculum with each move, but also fit into existing clubs and athletic teams. They recognize that extra-curricular activities are extremely important for our military children, as they are critical to social development and self-esteem. This letter was only

the beginning for the Air Force, though. In the summer of 2020, the Air Force released the results of the Support of Military Families Report. This report racked and stacked the communities surrounding installations located in the continental United States against one another based on K-12 education and spouse employment concerns. For the ones on top, it was a great pat on the back. For communities that did not fare well in the report, the public acknowledgment of their challenges presented an opportunity to increase the quality of their public education.

This report has instilled a new focus for some communities surrounding Air Force installations, which has brought the conversation of improving K-12 education to the front gate. Another topic brought to light, because of this report, was the realization that many families view quality education opportunities for their kids as a career decision point. Many school districts are unaware of the challenges that can arise for military families as they move from base to base, in fact military children can move an average of six to nine times during their school career. Upon receiving news of an upcoming move, military parents begin researching schools to find the best educational opportunities for their kids, and the stress associated with finding the best fit school to meet their child's needs can be all-consuming. Another misconception is school districts are only competing against other local schools surrounding the installation. In reality, military families will compare school districts not only with local communities, but even with districts from different states. It is for this reason that many military parents choose to home-school or even go as far as breaking up their family unit and geographically separate from their families, rather than enroll their kids in a school district they perceive as challenged.

Fortunately, there is a resource available at most installations to help parents. The School Liaison Officer (SLO) provides support and helps to manage expectations. The SLO is typically the best line of communication between military families and the surrounding school districts. The SLO can

K-12 Military Family Education



The Air University K-12 Summit in January 2019 brought over 80 leaders from the River Region, including the four local superintendents together. The keynote speaker was Dr. Eric Mackey, the Alabama State Superintendent.

help families find the best educational options for families surrounding an installation while also helping the school districts understand the needs and expectations of military families. Additionally, SLOs can provide training for military families and school districts alike to help establish a common understanding.

For the last two years, Maxwell-Gunter has been working closely with its surrounding four school districts to improve the educational opportunities for all children. We knew the report was coming and prepared our community partners for the results. Because we had been working closely together, the results were not unexpected, but rather confirmed what our community partners and we already knew. We used it to emphasize that while we have accomplished much in a short time, there is still more to accomplish together. Establishing that direct line of communication between our military families and the school districts with the help of the SLO has been the most important piece of this puzzle. This helped the school districts understand that while our children attend school alongside our community partners, their backgrounds and needs can be different. Our school districts now have a better understanding of what it means to be a military child. They now understand that what happens in our schools is just as important to military parents as it is to their civilian counterparts. Sometimes it is even more important, as this may be the third or fourth move for the child, making them the new kid once again.

While military families see themselves as a part of the community, some communities see us as short time tenants. Other communities embrace military families as a part of the community, involved in the schools just as much as our civilian counterparts. Bridging these two vantage points is the standpoint that “what is good for military children is good for all children.” This is the basis of

our Air University Public K-12 Education Working Group. We want to improve educational opportunities for all children. We started small with local partners and stakeholders. Our kickoff event was an education summit in January of 2019, that included all four superintendents from the area. An 'aha' moment occurred when we realized that this was the first time they were in the same room at the same time. They began to gain a collective understanding of some of the issues encountered by military families, such as determining eligibility, mid-year enrollments, comparable placement, and differing graduation requirements. This was eye-opening for many and each district pledged their support.

We continued building our relationships with the school districts, and our School Liaison Officer (SLO) was out front, forging new relationships. At the end of the summit, the superintendents asked what they could do and we requested military liaisons within the districts. The districts appointed POCs, and things have only improved since then. This direct



Over 65 educators and K-12 supporters congregated at Troy University to discuss military-connected student issues. This workshop session discussed out-of-district enrollment options with local educators.

line of communication between the SLO and the district POCs has turned out to be critical. The districts and schools know the SLO and trust her.

Additionally, we have reached out to local higher education institutions and leaders. These organizations can bring new resources into the K-12 arena. Our local universities have each hosted events, providing a neutral meeting ground and expertise for all attendants. This may seem small, but it is important to remember that the school districts are competing with each other for students, so meeting with each other, sharing best practices, revealing what problems they are facing is not their natural instinct. It has turned out to be a great collaboration where best practices have been shared and implemented across districts.

However, we did not stop at the local level. We included the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) in all of our efforts from the beginning. When our leadership asked for a military liaison at the summit, ALSDE stepped up and provided one for themselves. This single POC at the state level has been incredibly helpful for both communities. The POC even stated that this new relationship has opened his eyes to the needs of the military community. As an additional benefit, he realized that military-connected children are everywhere.

Many hide in “normal” communities while their parents serve in the Guard or Reserve. His new knowledge allowed him to help a graduating senior attend school out of state after moving, and earn an Alabama high school diploma. His favorite slogan now is “Call the SLO before you go!” Elevating our relationship to the state level has also ensured other installations in Alabama benefit from our efforts and has increased our stakeholder network.



The winning picture of the art contest coinciding with the Air University Public K-12 Education Symposium hosted by the Alabama State University in September 2019. Payton Lardino, 9th grade Wetumpka High submitted “Here We Go” as response to what describes the biggest challenge of being a military child.



Auburn University at Montgomery host the Air University K-12 Resource Fair in November 2019. CMSgt Michael Morgan, 42d Command Chief and Dr. Carl Stockton, Chancellor of Auburn University at Montgomery, browse the exhibits alongside of over 50 principals, teachers and counselors.

Other critical partners have been the Alabama Military Interstate Children's Compact Commissioner, the Alabama Military Stability Foundation, and the Alabama Jobs Creation and Military Stability Commission. These organizations are advocating for our military-connected children on a state level, bringing resources, like professional development, into our region. While most of us knew of the Military Interstate Children's Compact, many did not have a real understanding of what it does. Learning about the Compact and educating both military families and school districts about it, has been pivotal in our relationship. While we were concerned the school districts would look at the Compact as another bureaucratic layer of requirements, they took it as a tool allowing them to do what is needed to accommodate military-connected children.



Lt Gen Hecker, Commander and President of Air University, in a meeting with Lt Gov Ainsworth the Chair of the Alabama Jobs Creation and Military Stability Commission.

K-12 Military Family Education



In September 2019, Alabama State University hosted a K-12 Education Symposium focused on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children. Over 240 participants from across the state were in attendance.

This different perspective has been eye-opening and has helped us frame our approach to K-12 education differently.



General & Mrs. Goldfein take time to speak with the River Region Delegation at the National Training Seminar in July 2019 hosted by the Military Child Education Coalition in Washington D.C.

National non-profit organizations enhance this network of support. The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) has been with us from the very start. They offer support, resources, and network connection to other installations on a similar journey. MCEC has not only attended all of our events, they even sponsored an Alabama Education Delegation consisting of all four school districts and ALSDE to their National Training Seminar in July 2019. This shared experience set the foundation for local collaboration and support. It allowed schools to network outside of Alabama and see that the challenges each school district faces can be overcome. The school districts mention this event as a turning point in their understanding of the challenges faced by military-connected children. General Goldfein, the keynote speaker, took the time to meet with our educators, which drove home the significance of our initiative. This is not just a local issue, but one that has support from the very top. This support continues under General Brown. During his first visit to Air University, Mrs. Brown took the

time to meet with the Air University Public K-12 Education Working Group. Another big national supporter is the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS). NAFIS traveled to Maxwell-Gunter twice to provide professional development to our districts. As a direct result, our districts are now applying for Federal Impact Aid, increasing funds in their districts. Other organizations like Collaborative for Student Success have reached out to us and supported us with national media coverage. Continued media coverage helps keep the focus on this issue.

Quality education opportunities for military children is an important issue, and often one that challenges military members to consider taking off the uniform permanently. When Airmen are focused on overcoming barriers to their children's academics, they are not focused on their job: taking care of the mission. K-12 education is a readiness issue that must be addressed. Installations should begin working with community partners and create options that bolster educational opportunities. Community engagement and support are key factors in improving local educational options for all children. ♦



Mrs. Sharene Brown, wife of our Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr. was briefed by CMSgt Michael Morgan on the public education initiative for families at Maxwell-Gunter.



AFSA *Virtual* PROFESSIONAL AIRMEN'S CONFERENCE & CMSAF AWARDS

The annual AFSA Professional Airmen's Conference is an amazing opportunity to learn, become an active participant to share your ideas, make your voice heard, and continue to develop your professional network.

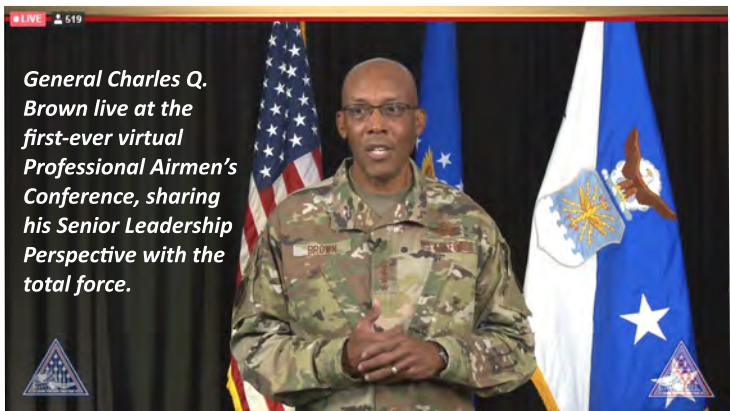
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Working together with Mission Partners and the Military Conferences, participants enjoyed a wide-range of professional development forum and leadership development speakers, including:

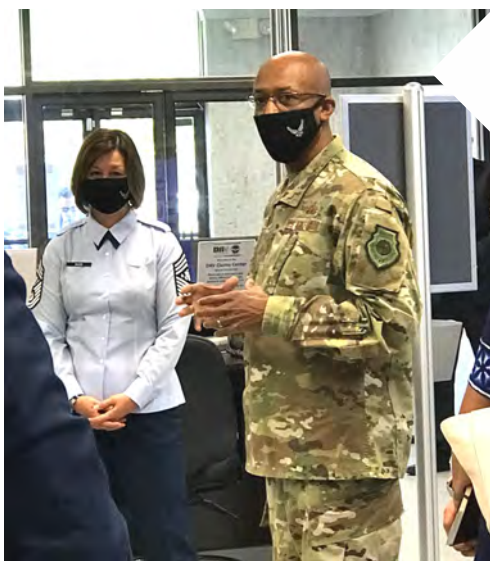
- AFSA International President's Annual Brief with CMSgt (Retired) Michael R. Carton
- Professional Development Forum: Resiliency with Dr. Russell Ledet
- Legislative Up-to-the-Minute Update with Matthew Schwartzman
- AFSA International Executive Director's with Annual Brief - Keith A. Reed, MBA
- Professional Development Forum: Five Voices with Mark Tilsher
- Professional Development Forum: LIVE with Senior Leadership Perspective with General Charles Q "CQ" Brown, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

The 2020 AFSA Professional Airmen's Conference was held virtually August 25th through the 28th. It was streamed live from the headquarters in Suitland, MD. To see highlights and clips from the 2020 AFSA Virtual Professional Airmen's Conference (vPac) and Virtual Professional Education and Development Symposium (vPEDS) please visit: www.hqafsa.org/afsapac2020

Professional Airmen's Conference

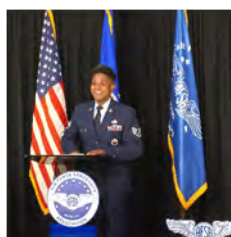


General Charles Q. Brown live at the first-ever virtual Professional Airmen's Conference, sharing his Senior Leadership Perspective with the total force.



General Charles Q. Brown, and CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass meet with AFSAHQ staff at the Airmen Memorial Building (AFSAHQ) during the virtual Professional Airmen's Conference. (Below) Behind the scenes with CMSgt Roger Towberman, Senior Enlisted Advisor of the U.S. Space Force as we set-up for his Senior Leadership Perspective

WATCH THE *Virtual* CONFERENCE
hqafsa.org/afsapac2020

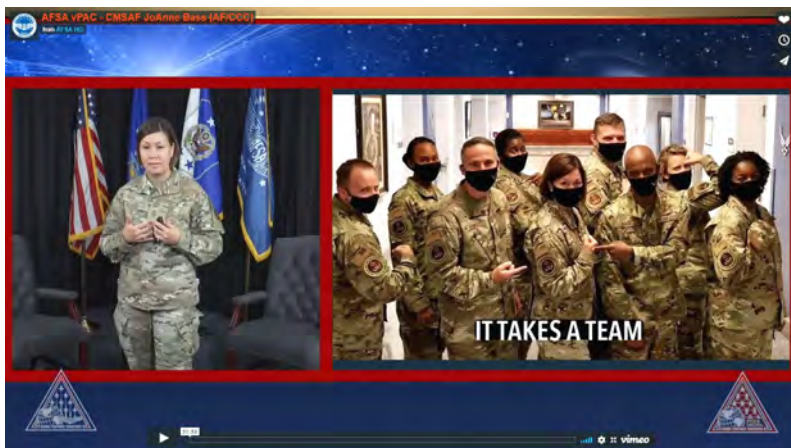


- Virtual AFSA & AFSA International and CMSAF Awards Ceremony with Special Guest Speaker CMSAF#5 Robert D. "Bob" Gaylor
- Professional Development Forum: Financial Readiness with CMSgt (Ret) Gerardo Tapia, USAA Air Force Relationship Director and LTC (Ret) Joseph "JJ" Montanaro, USAA Military Advocacy Director
- Professional Development Forum: Senior Leadership Perspective with CMSgt Roger Towberman, Senior Enlisted Advisor of the U.S. Space Force
- Professional Development Forum: Leading on Purpose with Dr. Kevin Basik, Basik Insight, LLC
- Professional Development Forum: CMSgt (Retired) Anthony Brinkley, On the Brink Consulting
- Professional Development Forum: Air University K12 (Public Education as a Readiness Issue)
- Professional Development Forum: Former CMSAF Panel
- Professional Development Forum: Building Empathetic Leaders with CMSgt (Retired) Todd Simmons, Courageous Leadership Alliance
- Professional Development Forum: Senior Leadership Perspective with DIAMOND ONE - CMSgt Nathaniel M. Perry Jr.
- Professional Development Forum: Senior Leadership Perspective with CMSAF JoAnne Bass (AF/CCC)

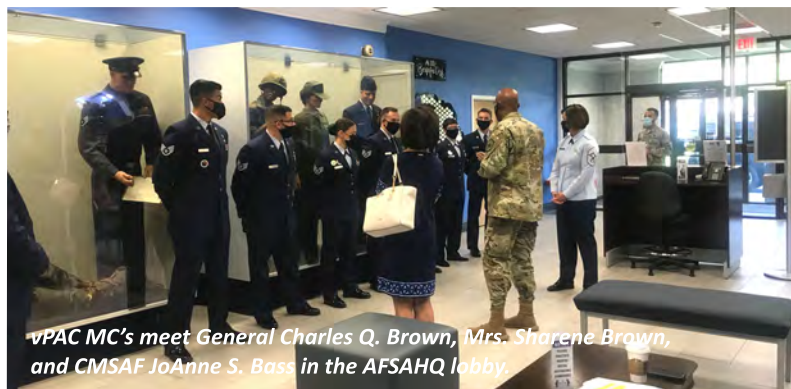
MISSION PARTNERS

We are extremely grateful for our event donors, sponsors and supporters. These Mission Partners are critical to our overall AFSA Mission and Special Event success.

- PEARL Insurance
- Columbia Southern University (CSU)
- Waldorf University
- American Military University (AMU)
- Exchange (Army & Air Force exchange service)
- Air Force Aid Society
- Air Force Enlisted Village
- Southern New Hampshire University
- Sweet Treats by Brea
- AFSAHQ Business Center



Visit www.hqafsa.org/afsapac2020 for complete live videos!



VPAC MC's meet General Charles Q. Brown, Mrs. Sharene Brown, and CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass in the AFSAHQ lobby.



Master of Ceremonies at the first-ever Virtual Professional Airmen's Conference.



Dr. Ernie Rosado, Director Military Outreach with Waldorf University and Rick Cooper, VP Business Development & Military Initiatives prepare to virtually present the NCO of the Year, Airman of the Year, Family Focused, and Air Force Recruiting Service Blue Suit Scholarships.

AFSA AWARD RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to the following AFSA PAC19 Award Recipients. We are proud of your efforts and success

- **L. Mendel Rivers Award**
U.S. Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA)
- **Excellence in Military Leadership**
CMSAF Kaleth O. Wright
- **Americanism Award**
Airman Heritage Foundation
- **William H. Pitsenbarger Heroism Award**
SSgt Eric Z. Dahl
Sponsored by American Military University (AMU)
- **NCO of the Year**
MSgt Oliver S. Freche, Division 2, Chapter 553, Tyndall AFB, FL - *Sponsored by CSU*
- **AFSA Airman of the Year**
SrA Matthew Ketterling, Division 4, Chapter 652, Keesler AFB, MS - *Sponsored by Waldorf University*
- **AFSA Member of the Year**
MSgt Jennifer Hall, Division 2, Chapter 358, Langley AFB, VA
- **AFSA Family Member of the Year**
Ms. Wanda G. Kiefer, Division 3, Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO
- **AFSA Legislative Award (Individual)**
MSgt (Ret) Terry L. Turner, Division 3, Chapter 985, Tinker AFB, OK
- **AFSA International Legislative Award (Chapter)**
Division 3, Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO
- **AFSA VA Volunteer Service (VAVS) Award**
Ms. Helen Hatz, Division 3, Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO
- **AFSA Volunteer Service Award (VSA) (Individual)**
TSgt Erin Story, Division 2, Chapter 554, Eglin AFB, FL
- **AFSA Volunteer Service Award (VSA) (Chapter)**
Division 4, Chapter 652, Keesler AFB, MS

Professional Airmen's Conference



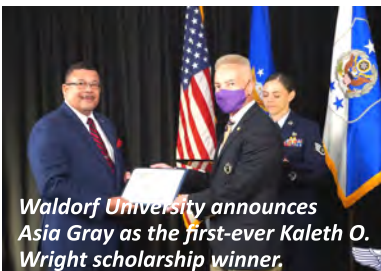
Columbia Southern University presents a 2-year Air Force Recruiting Service Blue Suit Scholarship to MSgt Marquise Heard, USAF.



Professional Development Forum with CMSgt (Ret) Todd Simmons, Courageous Leadership Alliance.



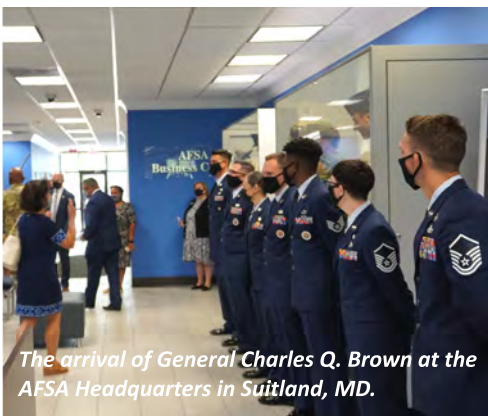
AFSA's Executive Director and CMSgt Roger Towberman's interview during the 2020 Virtual AFSA Professional Airmen's Conference.



Waldorf University announces Asia Gray as the first-ever Kaleth O. Wright scholarship winner.



Columbia Southern University presents the Family Focus Scholarship to Alyssa Martin



The arrival of General Charles Q. Brown at the AFSA Headquarters in Suitland, MD.



CMSgt (Ret) Anthony Brinkley On the Brink Consulting



CMSAF JoAnne Bass and AFSA's Chief of Staff, Juanita Weems



CMSgt Roger Towberman, CMSAF JoAnne Bass and Executive Director Keith Reed continue discussions with Airmen throughout the conference

- **AFSA International Membership Achievement Award:** SMSgt (Ret) Daniel Kazumura, Division 4, Chapter 652, Keelser AFB, MS
- **AFSA CMSgt Richard L. Etchberger Division Communication Award**
Division 3, Mascoutah, IL
- **AFSA CMSgt Richard L. Etchberger Chapter Communication Award**
Division 3, Chapter 951, Ellsworth AFB, SD
- **AFSA Humanitarian Service Award**
Division 4, Chapter 652, Keesler AFB, MS
- **AFSA Chapter of the Year (Under 500)**
Division 3: Chapter 964, Grand Forks, ND
- **AFSA Chapter of the Year (Over 500)**
Division 4: Chapter 652, Keesler AFB, MS
- **PRESIDENT'S AWARDS:**
- **TSgt Lee R. Thompson Award of Excellence**
Chapter 1056, Dyess AFB, TX
- **MSgt Bennie McGehee President's Award**
MSgt DeShon Hall, Chapter 1261, Davis Monthan AFB, AZ
- **Exemplary Achievement Award**
Individual: CMSgt Lisa Arnold, Chapter 1330, Los Angeles AFB, CA

Chapters: Chapter 1320, Travis AFB, CA and Chapter 1201, Kirtland AFB, NM
- **AFSA MISSION PARTNER SCHOLARSHIPS:**
- **AFSA Family Focus Scholarship** - Alyssa Martin
Sponsored by Columbia Southern University
- **Air Force Recruiting Service Blue Suit Scholarship**
MSgt Marquise Heard, USAF
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- **The Kaleth O. Wright Excellence in Leadership Scholarship:** SrA Asia Gray
Sponsored by Waldorf University



AFSA VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL AIRMEN'S CONFERENCE (vPAC) AND VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM (vPEDS)



L. MENDEL RIVERS AWARD

The Air Force Sergeants Association
Names

Congresswoman Julia Brownley

(California's 26th District)

as the 2019

L. Mendel Rivers Award Recipient

The L. Mendel Rivers Award is named after the Late Congressman L. Mendel Rivers (D-SC) who served as Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Throughout his career in Congress he championed the cause of enlisted members from all armed services.



U.S. Representative Julia Brownley, who serves California's 26th district, has been a leading advocate for our nation's veterans since she was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2012. For her first committee assignment, she requested to serve on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Since that request just eight years ago, Representative Brownley has been elected as the Chairwoman of the House Veterans Affairs subcommittee on health, serves on the House Veterans Affairs subcommittee on technology modernization, was selected to co-chair the Reinvesting in our Returning Heroes Task Force, and is the founder and Chairwoman of the Women Veterans Task Force.

This year alone, Representative Brownley has been the primary sponsor of over 20 pieces of legislation that would implement innovative solutions to longstanding problems that have impacted the veterans of our nation for far too long; including the improvement in the procurement of health-care benefits for women veterans, an expansion in the fight against veteran homelessness to encompass the children of homeless veterans, the enhancement of the procurement of health-care for military children, and the expansion of medical research networks available to uncover ground-breaking medical treatments for veterans.

Most notably, Representative Brownley was the primary sponsor of landmark legislation, perhaps the most comprehensive women veteran's health-care omnibus package of all time, the Deborah Sampson Act.

This Act creates a brand new VA Office of Women's Health, requires the VA to designate at least one women's health primary care provider at each medical center and community-based outpatient clinic, expands services for veterans who experience intimate partner violence or military sexual trauma, and much more.

In our estimation, Representative Brownley's unceasing support and reverence for our nation's veterans make her the ideal recipient of the 2019 L. Mendel Rivers Award.



EXCELLENCE IN MILITARY LEADERSHIP

The Air Force Sergeants Association
names

CMSAF Kaleth O. Wright

as the 2019
Excellence in Military Leadership
Award Recipient

The Air Force Sergeants Association's Excellence in Military Leadership Award is presented annually for superior military leadership and for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the United States Air Force.



Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright represents the highest enlisted level of leadership, and as such, provides direction for the enlisted force and represents their interests, as appropriate, to the American public and to those in all levels of government. He serves as the personal adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale and proper utilization and progress of more than 410,000 enlisted members. Chief Wright is the 18th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.

Chief Wright enlisted in the Air Force in March of 1989 and his background includes various duties in the dental career field. He served as a Professional Military Education instructor and has held various senior enlisted positions while serving at squadron, group, wing, Task-Force and Numbered Air Force levels. He has deployed in support of operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom and completed overseas tours in South Korea, Japan, Germany and Alaska.

Prior to assuming his current position, he served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant, U.S. Air Forces in Europe and U.S. Air Forces Africa, with headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

In areas of deliberate development, training and leadership, the Chief championed improvements to Enlisted Professional

Military Education by eliminating the 1-year suspense for distance learning completion and reinstating resident EPME promotion requirements. Airman Leadership School, NCO Academy, SNCO Academy and the Chief Leadership Course are required for promotion to E-5, E-7 and E-9. Moreover, AFPC no longer schedules Airmen for PME. MAJCOMs now own their allocations and are afforded the flexibility to work with commanders and Airmen for attendance, reducing potential paperwork caused by issues and possible empty seats.

Finally, the Chief, focused on improving the selection process of the United States Air Force First Sergeants by removing the First Sergeants from the Developmental Special Duty process, now using a combination volunteer and nomination process.

Chief Wright's consistent record of support for enlisted members has been and remains an integral part of his leadership style. The Chief has maintained the highest standards and has proven time and time again that "Attitude does reflect Leadership". The Air Force Sergeants Association is honored to present on behalf of more than 600,000 Airmen and 100,000 members, the 2019 Excellence in Military Leadership Award to a true servant leader, the 18th Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright. Chief Wright is accepting on behalf of America's finest Airmen – because **Success is a Team Sport!**



AMERICANISM AWARD



The Air Force Sergeants Association
names

Airman Heritage Foundation

as the 2019

Americanism Award Recipient

The Air Force Sergeants Association's Americanism Award is presented annually to deserving individuals or organizations for the development of programs, ceremonies or other initiatives that further patriotism in America.

The Airman Heritage Foundation is a private, 501c3 non-profit organization, made of volunteers entrusted with the awesome responsibility of raising approximately \$50 million in private funds to design, build, and equip a modern USAF Airman Heritage Museum at Joint Base San Antonio – Lackland.

The mission of the Airman Heritage Foundation is to support the USAF Airman Heritage Museum, Enlisted Character Development Center and other heritage-related activities in preserving and honoring the history and heritage of enlisted airmen and to educate future airmen and the public on airmen sacrifices to safeguard America.

The Vision of the Airman Heritage Foundation is to build a new USAF Airman Heritage Museum facility that will preserve and display the proud heritage of enlisted airmen and be a source of education about their rich history.

WILLIAM H. PITSENBARGER AWARD

The Air Force Sergeants Association
names

SSgt Eric Z. Dahl

as the 2019

William H. Pitsenbarger Award Recipient

The Air Force Sergeants Association's William H. Pitsenbarger Award recognizes an Air Force enlisted member who has performed a heroic act, on or off duty, which resulted in the saving of life or the prevention of serious injury.

*Congratulations to
SSgt Eric Z. Dahl
4-Year Scholarship
Recipient from our
Mission Partner
American Military
University*



Sergeant Eric Z. Dahl distinguished himself as a Pararescueman, 57th Rescue Squadron, 31st Operations Group, 31st Fighter Wing, Aviano Air Base, Italy from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. Sergeant Dahl expertly led tactical operations while engaged in direct combat with enemies of the United States, personally saving eight lives and enabling Coalition forces to eliminate 156 enemy combatants.

On one occasion, he rushed through heavy enemy gunfire to the aid of his injured team members where he provided immediate medical interventions and led casualty evacuation operations ultimately saving two lives. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Dahl reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NCO OF THE YEAR



Congratulations to NCO of the Year MSgt Oliver S. Freche 2-Year Scholarship Recipient from our Mission Partner Columbia Southern University

DIVISION 2
MSgt Oliver Freche
Chapter 553, Tyndall AFB, FL

AIRMAN OF THE YEAR



Congratulations to Airman of the Year SrA Matthew Ketterling 2-Year Scholarship Recipient from our Mission Partner Waldorf University

DIVISION 4
SrA Matthew Ketterling
Chapter 652, Keesler AFB, MS

AFSA INTERNATIONAL MEMBER OF THE YEAR



DIVISION 2
MSgt Jennifer Hall
Chapter 358 Langley AFB, VA

AFSA INTERNATIONAL FAMILY MEMBER OF THE YEAR



DIVISION 3
Ms. Wanda Kiefer
Chapter 804 Kansas City, MO

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DIVISION 1
Ms. Alyssa Martin
Chapter 254 Forte Meade, MD

Congratulations to Ms. Alyssa Martin Columbia Southern University or Waldorf University. Scholarship covers up to \$23,400 in one online degree program (associate, bachelor or master).





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The Airmen Memorial Building (AMB), located near our Nation's Capital is home to the Air Force Sergeants Association. AFSA represents all active-duty, veteran and retired military members and their families in Congress, the DoD, the Veterans Administration and through local communities across the globe. AFSA is a non-profit, politically non-partisan United States Armed Forces Veterans Service Organization.

Built in 1980, the Airmen Memorial Building is a fitting tribute to all past, present, and future Airmen.

In honor of our building's 40th Anniversary, AFSA invites you to help protect, maintain and enhance AFSA headquarters by sponsoring a leaf on our **AMB Benefactor Tree**. Your tax-deductible donation (Tax ID#520743333) is a permanent symbol, and unwavering reminder of how you helped support and continue our success. Each leaf recognizing you, your family, loved ones, your group or business will be permanently and prominently displayed on our beautiful **AMB Benefactor Tree** at the entrance of the Airmen Memorial Building at 5211 Auth Road in Suitland, Maryland.

Each Leaf is a minimum donation of \$1,200 (\$100 per month/12 months) and may be personalized with a name, dates of service or special date, memorial tribute, the name of your company, or a special message of your choosing.

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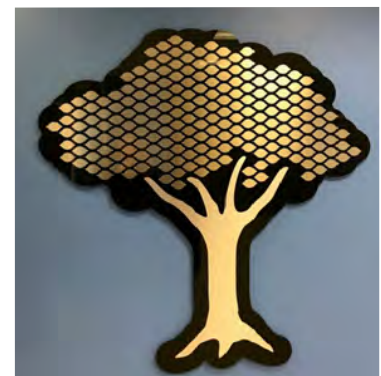
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FULL CIRCLE

By Todd S. Desgrosseilliers

I grew up in Maine, fishing its numerous lakes and streams for whatever I could catch – often with a fly rod. I usually conducted this activity with friends and family. Consequently, I maintain fond memories associated with it. Reflecting on my current situation and as I've grown older, I find it amazing how life forms a circle - if you let it. Ultimately, I've concluded that in life all action, positive and negative, is compensatory. Any actions we take - good or bad - eventually come back to us as help or as obstacles completing the full circle of our lives. But then we can always draw another circle. When you let the circle complete itself - every end is also a beginning.

Life is filled with options. Sometimes we just need to let go of the wheel and let life take its proper course. Sometimes we need to take a longer view. Sometimes we need to surrender to something outside to gain strength within. Sometimes we might need someone to remind us that to fulfill ourselves we may have to forget ourselves in the process. Indeed, finding ourselves can require us to first lose ourselves. Maybe we just need to stop and remember that holding firm to our character, integrity and moral compass is about confronting life's disappointments and overcoming them as challenges. Often, we must first give in order to receive. Is our cup half full or half empty? It depends - are we drinking or pouring?

Sometimes when we're struggling, we can't see that life is much bigger than we realize at the time. Our inward focus can blind us to the cause and effect which combine in a vast moral structure that ultimately directs us to do better, to become better – even when we dwell in the most powerful, confused darkness. Often our biggest failures in life can lead us to our greatest successes - humility, learning, and post-traumatic growth.



Close-up of a finished rod.

Todd Desgrosseilliers built his first fly rod with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing as a participant in 2016.

Sometimes we forget this, and when we do – well – we can lose our way. Sometimes we lack the strength and the willpower to pick ourselves up and return to the fray. That's when we need help to get back home – to help us to ask ourselves the right questions; not – “What do I want from life?” but, “What does life need from me?” And, “What are my circumstances calling me to do for others? The answer to these three questions can provide us with a summons to life. They can point us towards our vocation, our calling...if we let them.

I was wounded several times in 2004 fighting alongside my men in Iraq during the Second Battle of Fallujah. The result for me was multiple traumatic brain Injuries as well as a long list of orthopedic and balance issues from exposure to numerous explosions and from fighting in close quarters with the enemy. I also commanded thousands of men in combat – 22 of them were killed in action and more than 300 were wounded. As I struggled to deal with the effects of my wounds and the war over the past decade my symptoms progressively got worse – requiring extensive physical therapy and recently culminated in my medical retirement after 31 years as a U.S. Marine.

Fortunately, in April 2015, during a physical therapy appointment, my vision therapist recommended fly fishing as an option to my clinical regimen. That's how I got connected to Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing. I began my relationship with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing as a participant in their program located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Our program met weekly at the USO located near the

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

Intrepid Spirit Clinic on Fort Belvoir where I attended my daily physical therapy sessions. The camaraderie, mentoring, and friendships only added to their exceptional core program. Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing provides disabled veterans with a core fly fishing program at more than 230 locations across the country.

Their core program includes fly tying, fly casting, fly fishing education, fly fishing outings, and – my personal favorite – fly rod building. The fly rod building program is a nationwide effort – funded by a very generous grant from the Bob Woodruff Foundation – that culminates in a competition between the best fly rods built by participants across the nation for the year.

I built my first Fly Rod as a participant in 2016. Building a fly rod helped me in several ways with my rehabilitation. The camaraderie of sitting around a table with good friends completing a project I've never done before – together – helped restore my spirit. The concentration and focus necessary to work through the small details involved in something I've never done before - building a fly rod – helped improve my concentration and information processing. Catching a fish on a fly rod that I built myself.... priceless!

Becoming a Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing participant was the best thing I did to start to accept and build the strength it took to try to recover from my physical and emotional injuries. Project Healing Waters served this function for me and it does the same for thousands of other wounded, ill, and injured active duty military and disabled veterans in more than 200 programs nationwide. As a participant in its program I experienced it and saw it with my own eyes – over and over again. Now, as its President & Chief Executive Officer I see it even more!!! It's about fly fishing – but it isn't...

Project Healing Waters' wisdom let me see life from a wider perspective. As one participant told me – Project



Todd Desgrosseilliers served as the Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines from 2005 to 2007 – deploying the Battalion to Iraq in 2006-2007, where they conducted counter-insurgency operations in Ramadi and Fallujah.

Healing Waters Fly Fishing Programs provide love and hugs – not drugs... This can help us recover – physically and emotionally – and in the end our injuries can become our strengths. We can emerge healed – reborn and reconnected in ways we never thought possible. Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. helped bring life full circle for me. ♦

Todd Desgrosseilliers is a Marine Corps veteran and infantry officer with 31 years of service to our Nation. A native of Auburn, Maine, he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1985 and attained the rank of Sergeant before becoming an officer. He commanded at each rank and most recently served as the Commanding Officer of The Basic School from 2012 to 2014. He also served as the Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines from 2005 to 2007 – deploying the Battalion to Iraq in 2006-2007, where they conducted counter-insurgency operations in Ramadi and Fallujah. Todd developed a love for fly fishing growing up in Maine chasing its abundant native brook trout and landlocked salmon in its numerous lakes and streams. Todd reconnected with fly fishing after joining the PHWFF Quantico and Fort Belvoir Programs upon the recommendation of his physical therapist in March, 2015. As a participant, Todd recognized the remarkable physical and emotional transformation that PHWFF Programs initiated for him and his fellow veterans and decided that he wanted to join its exceptional team after his retirement from the military and currently serves as the President & Chief Executive Officer for Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing Inc. (PHWFF). You can learn more about PHWFF by visiting www.projecthealingwaters.org



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Todd developed a love for fly fishing growing up in Maine chasing its abundant native brook trout and landlocked salmon in its numerous lakes and streams.

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