

Ohio Airmen lead community based learning for Afghan children

*By Capt. Rachel Ingram
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs*



An Afghan student writes out her ABCs during community-based education in Liberty Village, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Dec. 20, 2021.

Three Airmen from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, are among a small but mighty team offering community based learning to Afghan children and families temporarily residing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. The volunteer teachers, all of whom are junior enlisted Airmen, provide instruction to 30-40 students several evenings per week.

The Airmen are at JB MDL in support of Operation Allies Welcome, working in the Joint Reception Center on base to help greet and orient guests arriving through Philadelphia International Airport as part of the resettlement process.

"It's unlike any military mission or deployment I've ever been part of," said Senior Master Sgt. Michael Eonta, senior enlisted leader for night shift at the JRC. "Nothing we're doing here is something that we've ever trained for—there's not a textbook or a computer based training for how to do this."

Within the JRC, four lines of effort guide the day-to-day tasks. These priorities are reception, safety and security, care, and community. Due to the unique nature of the mission, Airmen working in the JRC are encouraged and empowered to develop creative ways to meet the priorities, he explained.

That's how the informal English school-prep classes began.

"These kids are about to go out into our world, so we realized we needed to prepare them for that," said Senior Airman Cicely McWhorter, passenger services apprentice, 87th Aerial Port Squadron.

McWhorter joined the Air Force Reserve in 2020. She met Airman Scotie Wood while both trainees were participating in the development training flight in the 445th Airlift Wing, and then the Airmen wound up in the same flight at basic military training and attended technical school together. Shortly after returning from tech school, while on orders for annual tour, both Airmen received the opportunity to deploy in support of Operation Allies Welcome. They both decided to go.

"The first week we got out here, a fellow Airman invited us to come see the class, and we just fell in love with it," explained Wood, a cargo processing apprentice in the 87th APS. "The people who started the classes were heading home, and we didn't want the kids to fall through the cracks, so we took it over."

At first, the volunteer teachers focused on teaching kindergarten basics like the alphabet, names of colors and shapes, and recognizing numbers. Over time, they expanded the course content to include lessons on the seasons, holidays, customs, and greetings. Despite the language barrier, the Airmen say they try to emulate a traditional classroom setting and role-play scenarios with the students to simulate the routines and interactions they will encounter once they begin school.

"There's not a specific lesson plan. We try to consider what these kids are going to need to know—we want them to be ready," said Senior Airman Taylor



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Rion Ehrman

A teacher instructs Afghan students during the first day of community-based education in Liberty Village, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Dec. 20, 2021.

Accountability begins with mutual respect

By Lt. Col. Edward Hale
445th Maintenance Group Commander



One of the long-term challenges we will face in coming months and years is rebuilding our Air Force culture.

Most of our important traditions, as well as many other important team building opportunities, were put aside for health reasons. Even when the pandemic subsides and activities return to normal, our culture will not immediately snap

back to pre-pandemic days. An important place to start the rebuild is to encourage a mindset where Airmen are accountable to each other, on- and off-duty.

Usually we only think about accountability when someone fails to meet minimum standards. While that is important, we can hold each other accountable to meet high standards, too! This kind of accountability begins with mutual respect. Without respect, poorly delivered feedback can put a person on the defensive. The message, no matter how well intentioned, is lost. The individual, and by extension, the entire team, then misses out on an opportunity to get better.

Leaders must foster a climate where people feel valued by the organization and by their peers. People are willing to accept feedback and improve their performance when they truly believe that the people around them want them to be better. People who feel valued by their team are more likely to invest themselves in the team. When we are all invested in the team, we become accountable to each other. We want to bring our best effort and help our teammates be their best as well.

When you are working out it helps to have a partner to encourage you. When you are accountable to each other you will find yourself running faster and lifting more weight than you thought possible. Bring that same mentality to your shop! When you work together and build each other up, your team can solve more problems and be more productive than you ever thought you could. If someone struggles, don't be afraid to hold them accountable in a respectful and professional manner. You are accountable to that person so that they know the standard and have the tools to meet it.

Most importantly, holding each other accountable can protect our team from work and life stressors. Everyone faces the temptation to take risks or shortcuts. Sometimes those shortcuts have catastrophic consequences. But more often than not we don't see the impact of that shortcut. So the temptation to take more shortcuts grows, until those little consequences become big ones and people get hurt.

Being accountable to each other means refusing to accept moral or physical casualties. Teammates are less likely to take shortcuts or refuse to tolerate when others try. This applies to off-duty behaviors as well. Holding each other to high standards protects us from risky behaviors like excessive alcohol consumption.

Airmen who are accountable to each other on- and off-duty are the bedrock of a healthy unit culture. They are ready to work together and seek out innovative ways to solve problems and knock down barriers, often with limited or no direction. These Airmen, working as an effective team, are ready to aggressively execute their mission!

Around the wing...

Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 445th Airlift Wing and 655th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, sort food items at a mobile food bank delivery held at Phillips Temple Church, Trotwood, Ohio, Jan. 19, 2022. The 15 volunteers collected, sorted, organized and prepped food that included fresh fruit, vegetables, chicken and baked goods. The food was given to families in need within the Trotwood area. The Airmen helped serve 86 families for a total of 145 individuals.



Mr. Patrick O'Reilly



Wing provides one-stop shop for helping agencies

By Capt. Wilson Wise
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Recently, the 445th Airlift Wing implemented changes to make it easier for Airmen to access wing helping agencies. The 445th AW's Director of Psychological Health, Airman and Family Readiness Center, Psychological Health Advocacy Program (PHAP) and the Resiliency First Sergeant are located in building 4014, making it easier to access these services.

Col. Donald Wren, 445th Mission Support Group commander and Chief Master Sgt. James Candler, 445th Force Support Squadron senior enlisted leader, had a vision to create a space where people can come to relax if they need to "de-stress." That room is located in building 4014, room 179. The room has a television, coffee maker and sitting area for people to use as they see fit.

Ms. Vera McClain, 445th Director of Psychological Health, is pleased that this all came together.

"People are welcome to come in anytime the door is open," McClain says.

As the DPH, McClain offers counselling services, and manages the suicide prevention and sexual assault prevention programs for the wing. She is passionate about being able to help Airmen and is here during the week and available during the Scarlet unit training assemblies.

The PHAP Team, through telephone calls and/or site visits, provides psychological health referral services to reservists and their families to include referral information, follow-up of services rendered and outreach services at all Air Force Reserve Command Yellow Ribbon events. They also offer morale calls to requesting reservists and families for pre-deployment, during and post deployment.

Master Sgt. Rebeccah Stammen is the new Resiliency First Sergeant. Previously, she was the 445th FSS first sergeant, but is now available to all Airmen regardless of squadron. Her role will be to supplement each squadron's existing first sergeants in a full-time role. She has an open-door policy and is available to talk to anyone who needs a listening ear.

"I love taking care of people and seeing the relief on someone's face when they know they are being helped



Mr. Patrick O'Reilly

Members from 445th Airlift Wing helping agencies (left to right) Pamela Boyd, Master Sgt. Rebeccah Stammen, Shanna King, Ashley Wall, and Vera McClain pose for a photo.

and know that someone cares about them," Stammen said.

Across the hall from McClain and Stammen resides the 445th AW Airman and Family Readiness Center. The A&FR is under the leadership of new director Ms. Shanna King, who recently joined the wing after serving in the same position at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts.

The A&FR is an all-purpose helping agency. The organization manages key programs including the transition assistance program (TAP) and helps with writing federal resumes.

A&FR also has a professional financial counsellor, Mr. Scott Pelfrey, who is available each Tuesday, during the UTA and by request. The agency also runs the wing's key spouse program and specializes in pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment support for families of 445th members.

King's office is committed to honoring military families and sponsors key events throughout the year. Last December, they hosted the "Angel Tree" and provided Christmas gifts for approximately 42 children from the wing. Future events include military spouse appreciation day in March and the month of the military child in April.

There is also free childcare available during the UTA through the family childcare coordinator at the 88th Air Base Wing.

King has practical advice for anyone who may have questions about anything.

"If you don't know where to go, come to Airman and Family Readiness. If we don't do it, we know who does, and if we don't know who does, we will find out for you," King said.

For more information please contact:

Airman and Family Readiness Center- room 118, (937) 522-4607, shanna.king.1@us.af.mil

Director of Psychological Health- room 182, (937) 257-6267, vera.mcclain@us.af.mil

Psychological Health Advocacy Program- PHAP Team Member 24-Hour Message Line (866) 417-0707

Wing Resiliency First Sergeant- room 180, (937) 257-7088, rebeccah.stammen@us.af.mil.



445th Chaplain Corps get new home, expands services

By Senior Airman Erin Zimpfer
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Over the course of the last 14 months, a lot of reshuffling has taken place at the 445th Airlift Wing. One of the first and biggest changes was moving the 445th Chaplain Corps offices to building 4008.

The original idea was to move the offices from the command section, as well as to be able to move other sections to areas that were more appropriate.

"It has been a very successful transition," said Lt. Col. Brandon Stephens, wing chaplain. "Having a separate space outside of the wing building makes the Airmen feel more comfortable to come visit the chaplains."

Stephens added that the change has allowed more opportunities for the chaplains to accomplish their mission in a more dynamic way. The chaplain's office is not just for members who are religious, the team and office space stand ready to serve anyone in a myriad of ways.



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Brandon Stephens, 445th Airlift Wing Chaplain Corps, browses books on display in the new building. Books are available to all Airmen.

"We want to create more of a café style place so it is more inviting. Anyone can come over, eat their lunch, grab a cup of coffee, or even just chill and relax. They don't even have to talk to the chaplains if they don't want to," encouraged Stephens.

Maj. Luke McKeeth, deputy wing chaplain, praised Col. Raymond Smith, 445th AW commander, for promoting the new space, remarking how rare it is for the chaplain offices to have such gener-

ous accommodations for the five chaplains at the wing.

"The command does not have to allow us to have a space like this but they really care about their Airmen," said McKeeth. "We are very fortunate to have a commander who prioritizes the welfare of the members at the 445th. He is really trying to keep an eye out for his Airmen."

The move to building 4008 came with many added benefits besides being more set apart. Having a lot more space and having a dedicated room to counsel members are at the top of that list.

"The chapel area can accommodate three times as many people, even with COVID-19 and the social distancing that goes along with it," said Stephens. "Additionally, this space can be used by anyone who maybe wants to present to a small group

or hold a class here. It's very multi-functional."

McKeeth agrees and says having designated areas has been wonderful for the team of chaplains, as well as the members.

"It's not so much the bigger space, but we used to have to borrow offices and fight for space to do counseling and now we have this great space designated for counseling that is comfortable, has a door," he stated. "It's not threatening and you can come in and we can sit and chat, and this adds to the confidentiality for the members."

A lot of work went into converting a building into a functional space again. Over the years, the building has been used by other squadrons. While some of the building is occupied by the 88th Air Base Wing, most of the available space was empty.

Members of the 445th Civil Engineer Squadron worked to build a wall and segregate the space and added new paint, ceiling tiles and light fixtures. These are some of the major changes completed so far.

"The financing from the commander made all of this possible," said Stephens. "It has been a work in progress, and I really appreciate the support we get as a Chaplain team."

Some future projects include signage for the outside of the building, updating the exterior and replacing the carpets.

"There are people who may not know we are here, and we hope to change that and get the word out," said McKeeth. "Airmen are being prioritized by the commander and they've created a safe place to just sit back. Our doors are always open."



Photos by Senior Airman Erin Zimpfer

Chaplain (Maj.) Luke McKeeth, 445th Airlift Wing Chaplain Corps and Chief Master Sgt. Alan Baker, 445th Civil Engineer Squadron install high definition multimedia interface cable in the wing chaplain office, Jan. 9, 2022.



Wing announces 4th Quarter CY 2021 award winners

CGO



Capt. Megan Busellato, 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron physician assistant, is the 445th Airlift Wing Company Grade Officer of the Quarter. Busellato accelerated the assembly of \$1.2 million in critical medical equipment and established the initial expeditionary medical support system hospital. She coordinated a joint force immunization event that included COVID-19 vaccinations; 8,920 patients vaccinated in 72 hours. Busellato implemented a joint task force disease protocol for 10,000 Afghan evacuees, controlling the spread of eight communicable diseases. She volunteered for Operation Allies Welcome and Task Force Liberty. She stood up five medical tent facilities; emergency department, pediatrics, obstetrics and pharmacy departments were integrated with more than 150 International SOS personnel—3,000 Afghan evacuees were treated, \$15 million in care was provided in the first week.

SNCO



Master Sgt. Benjamin Kessler, 445th Maintenance Squadron aircraft structural maintenance NCO in charge, is the 445th Airlift Wing Senior NCO of the Quarter. Kessler was the shift leader for Operation Allies Refuge where he oversaw an eight member team. His efforts enabled 116 deployers and 124,000 Afghans to be evacuated. He revitalized the flight safety program. He identified and corrected 37 deficiencies and authored lock-out and tag-out procedures. Kessler directed a C-17 cargo ramp overhaul, executed depot level repair with a 12-member team and averted a three-week repair and modification service hold, saving a \$296,000 asset. Kessler coached a local Olentangy Youth Athletic Association soccer team where he volunteered 31 hours and led 20 practices and eight games. He mentored 13 junior Reserve Citizen Airmen, providing professional development, education and guidance.

NCO



Tech. Sgt. Matthias Opitz, 87th Aerial Port Squadron cargo team chief, is the 445th Airlift Wing NCO of the Quarter. Opitz deployed in support of Operation Allies Welcome, where he led 18-member refugee escort teams supporting Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. with one of the largest humanitarian airlift events in 73 years. He aided the joint reception center linguist and unaccompanied minor program, fostering reunification efforts. Opitz managed logistics for Task Force Liberty and aerial port of debarkation. He directed transportation for 77 buses, 7,000 bags and 181 guides, ensuring the safe movement for 4,000 Afghan evacuees a month. He ignited joint reception center professional education seminars, developing lessons and instructing one course for 93 people. Opitz partnered with Team Rubicon, utilizing \$150,000 in donations for 2,300 families, expediting care for Afghan evacuees.

AMN



Senior Airman Cicely McWhorter, 87th Aerial Port Squadron cargo representative, is the 445th Airlift Wing Airman of the Quarter. McWhorter supported Operation Allies Welcome and assisted with a joint reception center floor operations tasking that supported Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. McWhorter partnered with Team Rubicon, distributing \$150,000 in donations to more than 2,300 families and provided clothes and relief to those who the evacuees. The Airman assisted the non-profit organization International SOS by escorting 61 Afghan females through medical screenings and helped improve the vaccination process by 20 percent. She volunteered 40 hours teaching math and English to more than 50 Afghan children. McWhorter augmented with security forces during night patrol, ensuring the safety and order of a two square mile area of responsibility for 2,300 evacuees.



SPOTLIGHT



Rank/Name: Staff Sgt. Casey Jones

Unit: 445th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Duty Title: Avionics Systems Technician

Hometown: Louisville, Kentucky

Civilian Job: Systems Product Owner

Education: Master of Business Administration from Indiana University – Southeast; Bachelor of Science in finance and management; and Associate of Science in avionics systems technology

Hobbies: Traveling, hiking, mountain biking and reading

Career Goal: Transition from enlisted to officer where I can better advocate for and support my fellow Airmen and help to implement impactful changes that improve people, processes and systems.

What do you like about working at the 445th?: The people. I work with some great people who have taught me a lot and continue to support me in my Air Force career.

Why did you join the Air Force?: It was something that I always felt compelled to pursue.

Focus on things you can change for positive mental health

By Ms. Vera McClain

445th Airlift Wing Director of Psychological Health

Happy Groundhog Year, er, Day! Sort of feels like that. With resurgences of new COVID variants and all that accompanies that, it can kind of feel like the 1993 movie “Groundhog Day.”

The main character, Phil Connors, a television weatherman, played by Bill Murray, relives Groundhog Day over and over while broadcasting in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

There are things we can glean from that movie that are helpful. By the end of the movie, rather than struggling with what he couldn't change, he focused on what he could change - himself. There are things that we can do to aide us in maintaining positive mental health.

Connectedness: This is one of the key factors in interpersonal violence protection. There are many wide-ranging benefits from this

connection. As Barbara Streisand sang about, people need people (you're probably going to have to look these people up to know what I'm referencing). There can be a plus side to social media such as tele-health, counseling, and meeting appointments that allows us to interact.

Activity: It can be challenging to keep active in winter months regardless of COVID. Variety can be helpful and can incorporate connections. Ask friends to do a class such as yoga online via Zoom, change up your playlists, and find virtual fitness and wellness programs.

Motivation: It's easy to lose focus when things become monotonous. While use of technology can connect us, too much time looking at a screen can be tiring. Find things that use non-screen time

that remove us mentally from social media, news outlets, etc. A small break can go a long way.

Routine and spontaneity: Routines such as regular meals and exercise are helpful for our well-being. Structure helps us with knowing what to expect and provides stability though changing things up interrupts monotony. Instead of television one night, read a book. Education is important though over saturation can become stressful. Take a break and find something you enjoy, maybe something new or rekindle a previous interest.

Find what works best for you. As always, if things become overwhelming, please reach out to a trusted person, a helping agency, your support system. Be kind to, and take care of yourself.



News Briefs

Annual Awards Recognition

The 445th Airlift Wing will honor its annual award winners at a venue to be determined April 2, 2022. With current COVID protocols the wing will not host a traditional celebration, however, we will honor our Airmen and families.

The event will recognize those selected for Airman, NCO, senior NCO, company grade officer, first sergeant, field grade officer, recruiter, honor guard member, civilian, spouse, youth and squadron of the year. The winner of each category will be announced during the banquet.

Airmen and civilians are encouraged to nominate co-workers and fam-

ily members for spouse, youth, field grade officer and civilian of the year.

Nominations should be submitted on an Air Force Form 1206 and emailed to: 445aw.pa2@us.af.mil. Please include a photograph. If a photo is needed, contact the public affairs office at 937-257-5784.

Submissions are due Feb. 13, 2022. Please contact the PA office if you have questions.

Promotions

Master Sergeant

Brent Bakazan, MXG
Roselys Baugh, FSS
Joseph Hackney, AMXS

Technical Sergeant

Richard Bullard, 87 APS
Joshua Davis, 87 APS
Adam Ozio, AMXS

Staff Sergeant

Adam Kresge, CES
Benjamin Maxfield, CES
Chloe Van Hoose, FSS

Senior Airman

Trevor Cornelius, 87 APS
Katelyn Kletschka, AES
Miguel Martinez, MXG
Samuel Weaver, MXS
Kairlyn Yeary, LRS

Airman First Class

Aidan Dill, AMXS
Andrew Fultz, FSS

Newcomers

Maj Kevin Brady, 89 AS
MSgt Vanessa D'Andrea, LRS
MSgt Caroline Sussman, 89 AS
TSgt Nathan Kendrick, FSS
SSgt Andrew Bliss, CES
SSgt Jeffrey Brown, MXS
SSgt Brandon Davis, FSS

SSgt Raheem Palmer, CES
SSgt Alyssa Veopaseuth, FSS
SrA Cedric Hunt, CES
SrA Katelyn Kletschka, AES
SrA Beverly Pacheco Espinosa, ASTS
SrA Alexander Perkins, AMXS
SrA Randell McMillian, CES
SrA Alexander Ott, SFS
SrA Dayvian Wells, SFS
Amn Isaac Moore, AMXS
AB Joseph Church, AMXS
AB Skylar Johnson, 87 APS
AB Andrew Rose, CES

Retirements

Lt Col Todd Mulhorn, AES

445th Airlift Wing Inspector General Tidbits

**MAINTENANCE OF AN INSPECTION
READY STATE IS THE NORM**

30 Month Cycle

Continuing Evaluations

- 18mth post-capstone
- 8mth pre-capstone

On-Site Capstone Event

- Face-to-Face Validations
- ATIS-G Panels

UEI Report Released

Focuses on the Four Major Graded Areas:

1. Leading People
2. Executing the Mission
3. Managing Resources
4. Improving the Unit

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REWARD THIS:



NEXT UEI: 10-15 MARCH 2022

What is the UEI?

UNIT EFFECTIVENESS INSPECTIONS

Buckeye Flyer

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LEARNING, from page 1

McAfee, financial operations technician, 88th Comptroller Squadron.

To prepare for the classes, McAfee said she researched techniques and tips from English as a second language websites. Another Airman purchased a miniature projector to add an audiovisual element in the classroom.

"The kids come back often—not always every single day, but we do see a lot of the same faces," said McAfee, an active duty Airman who learned about the classes through word of mouth and immediately wanted to be involved. "It's nice to know that they're getting something positive out of this temporary experience that they're having."

When they aren't helping the kids learn about letters, numbers and American culture, McAfee, McWhorter and Wood work 12-hour night shifts in various areas of the JRC: commuting to Philadelphia International Air-

port to escort guests to the base, in-processing guests and filing their medical records, and helping guests locate their lodging assignment, make necessary appointments and get settled in America. Some days, the JRC welcomes hundreds of guests at a time.

"Teaching these classes isn't an assigned duty. It's a volunteer effort—they are doing this of their own volition," said Eonta, who is also part of the 87th APS at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

"In line with two of our priorities, care and community, we really empower our Airmen and give them a lot of freedom to just be human and treat these kids like they might treat their nieces and nephews, or neighbor's kids," he said. "We want to set our guests up for success when they leave here, and this is one way we can do that."

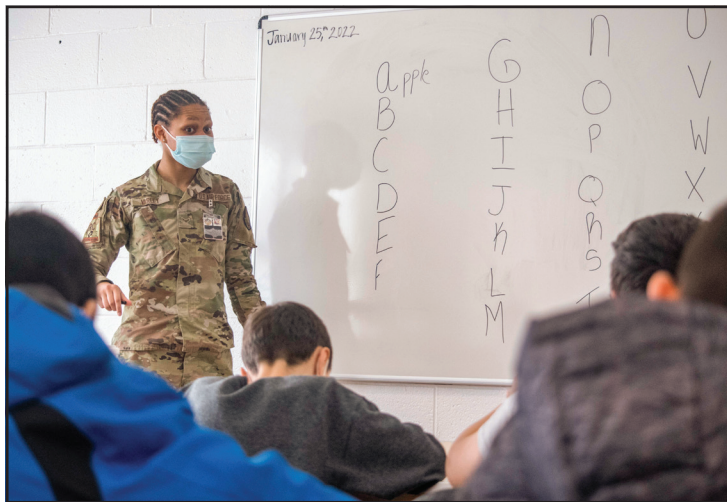
It's this longterm impact that the teachers say keeps them going.

"We have so much empathy for the guests," McWhorter said. "I think of my siblings... or my best friend, who is Islamic. The fact that people go through this breaks our hearts. It's one thing to go to a grocery store and have someone thank you for your service. Here, when the guests say 'thank you for your service,' it's a different kind of thank you. It means so much."

McWhorter and Wood both celebrated one year since BMT graduation while deployed. Wood

noted that the experiences she's had on this deployment solidified her decision to reenlist once eligible.

"There are some really vast cultural differences, but they are still just kids," McAfee said. "They are going to be citizens, this is going to be their life now. We're the first step, the first experience they're going to have with American classrooms and life—that's a big responsibility."



Staff Sgt. Mikaley Kline

Airman 1st Class Saidah Varley, Task Force Liberty Joint Reception Center help desk, teaches Afghan children during community-based learning in Liberty Village on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Jan. 25, 2022.

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