



NEWSBLAST

U.S. Army Contracting Command

Vol. 4, No. 38
Oct. 31, 2013

"Providing global contracting support to war fighters."

ACC training helps define procurement roles

By Linda Carlston
Anniston Contracting Office

ANNISTON ARMY DEPOT, Ala.— The Army Contracting Command-Warren, Anniston, Ala., Contracting Office recently conducted three consecutive 1-day sessions of Procurement

Package Preparation Training for Anniston Army Depot employees.

The more than 50 attendees included contracting officer representatives, AcquiLine/PRweb-authorized users, Advance Acquisition Plan coordinators and others who may be responsible for preparing purchase requests for contracted

services, supplies and equipment.

Each session in the training, which was held Oct. 8-10, included a series of formal presentations along with workshop time where contracting personnel were available to assist preparers with questions and documents for particular purchases.

The training covered key aspects of the procurement process, introducing students to the rules, documents and actions needed for a procurement package for requirements generally valued at more than \$25,000.

When an ANAD organization has a requirement for services, supplies or equipment which cannot be met through government sources, a procurement package is prepared to bring together the information and documents needed for the contracting office to complete the purchase.

The procurement process includes regulatory requirements for market research, estimating, competition and socio-economic sourcing. The procurement package documents walk preparers through these requirements to ensure these critical steps are covered.

See **TRAINING**, page 4.



(Photo by Linda Carlston)

From left to right, Dorothy Hutton, procurement analyst, ACC -Warren, Anniston, Ala., Procurement Business Support Division, provides procurement package preparation training to ANAD employees Stacey Coker, Directorate of Public Works, and Valerie Geier, Directorate of Engineering and Quality.

Changes coming to NewsBlast

EDITOR'S NOTE: The NewsBlast, Army Contracting Command's weekly newsletter, will be changing over the next two weeks.

The NewsBlast will cease operations the week Nov. 4-8 as the newsletter transitions to a new format. A reduction in staff mandates use of a less manpower intensive layout and design publication process.

During the transition, ACC's primary news outlet will be

its public Web page, www.army.mil/acc.

News will also be posted on the command's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/armycontracting, and on the ACC SharePoint site. People with Facebook accounts are encouraged to "like" the ACC Facebook page, the command's most active news resource.

The new version of the NewsBlast will be available Nov. 14.

AGILE

PROFICIENT

TRUSTED



Spotlight on...

For Spotlight submissions, click on the icon.

Employee's quilts sew rewarding

By **Betsy Kozak-Howard**
ACC-Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.
Betsy.j.kozak.civ@mail.mil

"Quilting is a creative outlet for me," said Brenda Aleman, contracting officer, Edgewood Division, Army Contracting Command-Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

Quilts for Heroes, Aleman said, is a non-profit organization dedicated to honor and provide comfort to our American heroes.

Recently, the quilting group was contacted by the Baltimore affiliate of Fox News.

Reporter Melinda Roeder asked to attend one of the group's meetings to do a news story about the Quilts for Heroes. In October, she and Jed Gamber, cameraman, visited APG's Edgewood Chapel to film and interview group members in various stages of quilt making.

During their 2-hour visit, the news correspondents also spoke with two individuals who each received one of the group's quilts. The news story will air in early November.

"Melinda first contacted us after an online search led her to the Quilts for Heroes president, Carol Hansen," recalled Aleman. "This type of recognition is great for the group and helps to spread the word that we are here to support our military."

The group has been meeting for 10 years and became incorporated in 2007. One year later, Aleman became a contracting officer.

"Although I love my job, work as a KO

can be stressful at times and I'm going full speed ahead all day long," said Aleman. "Quilting is very relaxing for me. I find great pleasure in working at my own speed and creating beautiful quilt designs."

Aleman learned to sew on her grandmother's treadle machine when she was 10-years-old. In high school she was a member of 4-H and volunteered as an instructor to teach the basics of sewing. Over time, her sewing focused on quilts.

"I've made approximately 100 quilts and I didn't keep a single one," Aleman explained. "When I make a quilt, I usually have someone in mind that I plan to give it to. It's so rewarding to give the gift of a quilt. Working with Quilts for Heroes is a way for me to do what I love and to thank our military heroes for the sacrifices they have made."

The Quilt for Heroes group has members at various skill levels, she said. "We have members who are making their first quilt while Carol is our expert with 40 years of experience."

Most of the quilts that the members have donated have gone to Walter Reed Army Medical Center but they are currently planning to provide quilts to the Fisher Houses of Maryland, Aleman pointed out. Fisher Houses are a non-profit network of comfort homes which enable families to stay near their military loved ones during hospitalization for a combat injury, illness or disease.

"On one particular donation visit to Walter Reed, we took approximately 100 quilts," she said. "I specifically remember one quilt that I donated - it was my



Brenda Aleman

favorite. It had an African theme which featured animals indigenous to that country and had a zebra-print backing. I was glad that it went to this good cause."

U.S. Army Contracting Command

Commanding General
Brig. Gen. Theodore C. Harrison

ACC Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. John L. Murray

The NewsBlast is a bi-weekly newsletter authorized and produced by the U.S. Army Contracting Command's Office of Public and Congressional Affairs editorial staff in accordance with AR 360-1 (The Army Public Affairs Program) to inform, educate and entertain the ACC community on people, policies, operations, technical developments, trends and ideas of and about the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army and this command.

Director, Office of Public & Congressional Affairs
Art Forster

Public Affairs Team Chief
Ed Worley

Editor
David San Miguel

Public Affairs Team
Larry D. McCaskill, Giselle Lyons, Beth E. Clemons

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the U.S. Army or this command.

Send submissions and correspondence to the U.S. Army Contracting Command, Office of Public and Congressional Affairs, ATTN: Editor, NewsBlast, 3334A Wells Road, Redstone Arsenal, AL 35898-5000. Telephone: 256-955-7634, DSN 645-7634 or email at acc.pao@us.army.mil.



NEWSBLAST

Grit, determination leads Vietnamese nurse to America

By **Larry D. McCaskill**

ACC Office of Public & Congressional Affairs
Larry.d.mccaskill.civ@mail.mil

For Thulan Phan, the path from Vietnamese nurse to U.S. government employee has been one of grit and determination accompanied with a never-give-up attitude.

Phan, currently a management analyst with the Expeditionary Contracting Command at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., fled Vietnam as part of what became known as the Vietnamese boat people. Millions risked their lives fleeing the Southeast Asian country after the Vietnam War through the early 1980s, many on small boats.

“My father came home from the labor camp and said we had to go,” said Phan, who heard about the war but didn’t live in a war zone, so she knew little of it. “The whole family had planned to go but had to go separately. I was the lucky one. I left and did not get caught. They got caught, but planned to go again. Every time you try, you have to pay money for the people to help you. My family ran out of money so they stayed there.”

The first leg of the then 20-year-old’s journey started hours before daybreak in her hometown of Sa Dec and ended 75 miles later in Rach Gia near the Gulf of Thailand. There, she would wait a few days before making it onto a boat.

“I left my house early in the morning,” said Phan, who worked as a nurse before her escape. “During the trip, I pretended to be part of a family of fishermen. My family had made arrangements in Rach Gia for someone to pick me up. We drove out to the coast and hid in some bushes on the shore where the coast guard could not see us.

“If I got caught, I would have lost my job and went to jail or to what they called re-education camps for those caught escaping.”

When it was safe to leave, Phan and 26 others boarded a small fishing boat and

made their way to the open waters. For the next four days, Phan and her compatriots floated in international open waters. On the water, the things they feared the most were storms, diseases, starvation and pirates.

“The main things that the pirates wanted were currency and gold. They thought people took their wealth with them because gold and money were easy to hide,” said Phan, whose dad, stepmother and five sisters still live in Vietnam. “They might want to take girls, too, but we were lucky. The pirates did not take any of the girls in my boat. We were robbed three times and the third time the pirates took one of our back-up engines.”

Interestingly enough, Phan said the fourth pirate ship that approached saw their boat and helped instead of robbing them.

“Our boat was a mess and they knew we had been robbed. They saw that we had no food or water and there was nothing else to rob,” she said. “To our surprise, they towed us into a small village where we stayed in a temple until the local authority transferred us to a refugee camp in Surathani, Thailand.”

See VIETNAM, page 4.



(Photo by Larry D. McCaskill)

Thulan Phan was part of the wave of Vietnam refugees in the early 1980s who fled the country in pursuit of a better life in the U.S.



Thulan Phan (ninth from left) was the only one in her family that escaped capture and who eventually made it to America.

VIETNAM

continued from page 3

Phan stayed at that camp for a week and moved during the next 13 months to camps in Thailand, Indonesia and finally to Singapore.

"Life in the camps was tough. Everyone who left Vietnam had to stay in a camp. If you have a family or someone somewhere to sponsor you, you could leave faster," said Phan, who often found the language barrier in the camps difficult. "I didn't have anyone to support me while I was in the camps. We had food and shelter there, but if I wanted to buy something I needed money and I didn't have any. I ended up working as a receptionist at the camp hospital and got paid about \$10 a month and that was considered good wages."

For Phan and her fellow refugees, life in the camps had its ups and downs.

"I don't think any of the crimes that were committed were reported. Many people in the camps did bad things but there were some who did good things," said the optimistic Phan. "My co-worker in the camp asked her brother in Toledo, Ohio, to sponsor me and he agreed. Six months later, after the paperwork was finished, I was accepted into the U.S."

Leaving the refugee camps, Phan's first stop in the U.S. was a layover in San Francisco where she said everyone looked taller and things looked brighter.

"I remember thinking with all the electric lights how could anyone differentiate between day and night. I also remember being amazed by color television and the amount of cars. In Vietnam there were lots of bicycles and motorcycles and not as many lights," she said.

Two days later Phan arrived in Toledo and looked to get a job, go back to school and get married.

"I was scared of everything. How do I live here? How do I survive here? What will I do for a living? Everything was a mystery," she said.

"Your will is stronger than your mind," Phan said. "I feel the U.S. is still the land of opportunity. I have had a chance to go back to school to finish my education, something I may not have been able to do in Vietnam."

For the first few years, Phan found herself on welfare and working at fast-food restaurants while acclimating herself to American culture. Then out of nowhere, her sponsor asked her to marry him.

"We did not plan on getting married. I didn't know him. In sponsoring me, he was just doing a favor for his sister. The whole marriage situation just happened," said Phan, now the proud mother of Liem Le, a school teacher, and Daniel Le, a recent college graduate. "After I got married, I was a stay-at-home mom for 10 years, but did a lot of volunteer work at my sons' schools and the local hospital. When Daniel started first grade I went back to school as well."

Phan, who has a master's degree in Information Systems Engineering from Western International University in Tempe, Ariz., said that through all the hard times she just kept telling herself that she could do it. Only once did she doubt herself.

"The only time when I didn't think I could make it was when I had to take English 101 and 102 in college," she said.

With not enough foreign students enrolled in the small college, the institution could not put together a remedial English class, so Phan and others like her were on their own.

"I passed English 101 and I started 102 with the help of a friend, Dr. Sheldon. I still stay in touch with her. She is my angel. At the time, I told her I give up. I cannot do it. It is so difficult," said Phan. "She said she would be my mentor and tutor. She helped me get through that rough period. If not for her I would have given up the school."

Phan, who became a U.S. citizen in 1989, still visits her family in Vietnam.

Starting her federal career in 2005 at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., Phan said she knows that all things are possible with faith and hard work.

"Your will is stronger than your mind," Phan said. "I feel the U.S. is still the land of opportunity. I have had a chance to go back to school to finish my education, something I may not have been able to do in Vietnam. I am very grateful for what I have, which I have worked hard for, and to be able to live the American dream."

TRAINING

continued from page 1

The preparer usually begins by establishing an Integrated Product Team. ANAD's IPT process was streamlined a few years ago through Lean Six Sigma events to make starting the IPT as simple as filling out a short questionnaire and sending it to IPT coordinators through an established group email address, "USARMY Anniston AD TACOM List IPT Coordinators."

The contracting office team – including the contracting officer, contract specialist, contracting officer's representative manager, quality and price/cost analyst – is always part of the IPT.

The IPT coordinators represent the various ANAD stakeholders responsible for key functions like facilities, environmental compliance, safety and property management. The IPT members for each buy will be from organizations with an interest in that particular buy.

For example, a piece of equipment may have potential environmental and facilities issues to identify early in order to ensure the item purchased meets standards and can be installed as intended. The legal office always reviews statements of work and any justifications to buy from a particular source.

Each IPT is tailored to meet the unique demands of each procurement action. Package preparers work with IPT members and the contracting office to ensure market research is sufficient, the statement of work describes the need, and the independent government price estimate is supported.

Preparing a procurement package is definitely a team effort. The process works best when the right people come together early – package preparers, contracting professionals and other stakeholders – each having an important role in ensuring ANAD gets the right product or service to meet the need, on time and at a fair price.