

NSSC This Week



U.S. Army Garrison Natick Publ Office

Community

Top 10 stories about people and events at NSSC in 2014



2013 Department of Defense Thomas Jefferson & U.S. Army MG Keith L. Ware Award-winning Digital Publication



Publisher's Note

John Harlow
USAG-Natick and NSSC Chief of Public Affairs



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December 5, 2014

NSSC This Week

Where has 2014 gone?

It's hard to believe that we are already at our Top-10 issue.

This issue is something special to me. Every Soldier wearing the uniform is affected by the Natick Soldier Systems Center. From the uniforms they wear, to the body armor and helmets that protect them and the MREs they eat in the field, NSSC is the leader in protecting the Soldier.

Behind that science are the amazing Soldiers and civilians who work here. In this issue, you will learn about some of them.

Personally, almost every one of these 10 stories has affected me. From Justin Fitch's mission to end veteran suicide, Maj. Gen. Harry Greene's impact on NSSC and the sadness when his life was taken, Staff Sgt. Eric Murray and his ride to recovery, and the Soldiers of NSSC working with the Monsignor Haddad Middle School to teach them about being a Soldier, each story in this issue is compelling.

You will learn about the faith of a mother while her son was deployed, see veterans helping veterans with the NSSC clothing drive, and read about the GEMS program and how it helps shape young minds.

You will see how NSSC employees sent terrorists a message by running in the Boston Marathon and how one NSSC Soldier has been helped by the Home Base Program.

NSSC is a special place. There are great people doing great things every day to help Soldiers and also help in their communities.

I enjoy coming to work every day to work with some great people who help put this newsletter together. They work hard to get great stories, photos, art work and share them with you.

We also want to thank the people featured who trust us to tell their stories.

Please enjoy our Top 10 Community stories of 2014.

John Harlow
USAG-Natick and NSSC Chief of Public Affairs



NSSC This Week

NSSC

Senior Commander
[Brig. Gen. William E. Cole](#)

Garrison Commander
[Lt. Col. Brian Greata](#)

Command Sergeant Major
[Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Beausoleil](#)

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About this newsletter

NSSC This Week is a biweekly newsletter covering NSSC news within the Army and commercial media.

NSSC This Week is maintained by the USAG-Natick Public Affairs Office.

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Cover photo: Josh T. Reynolds for *USA Today*



Community

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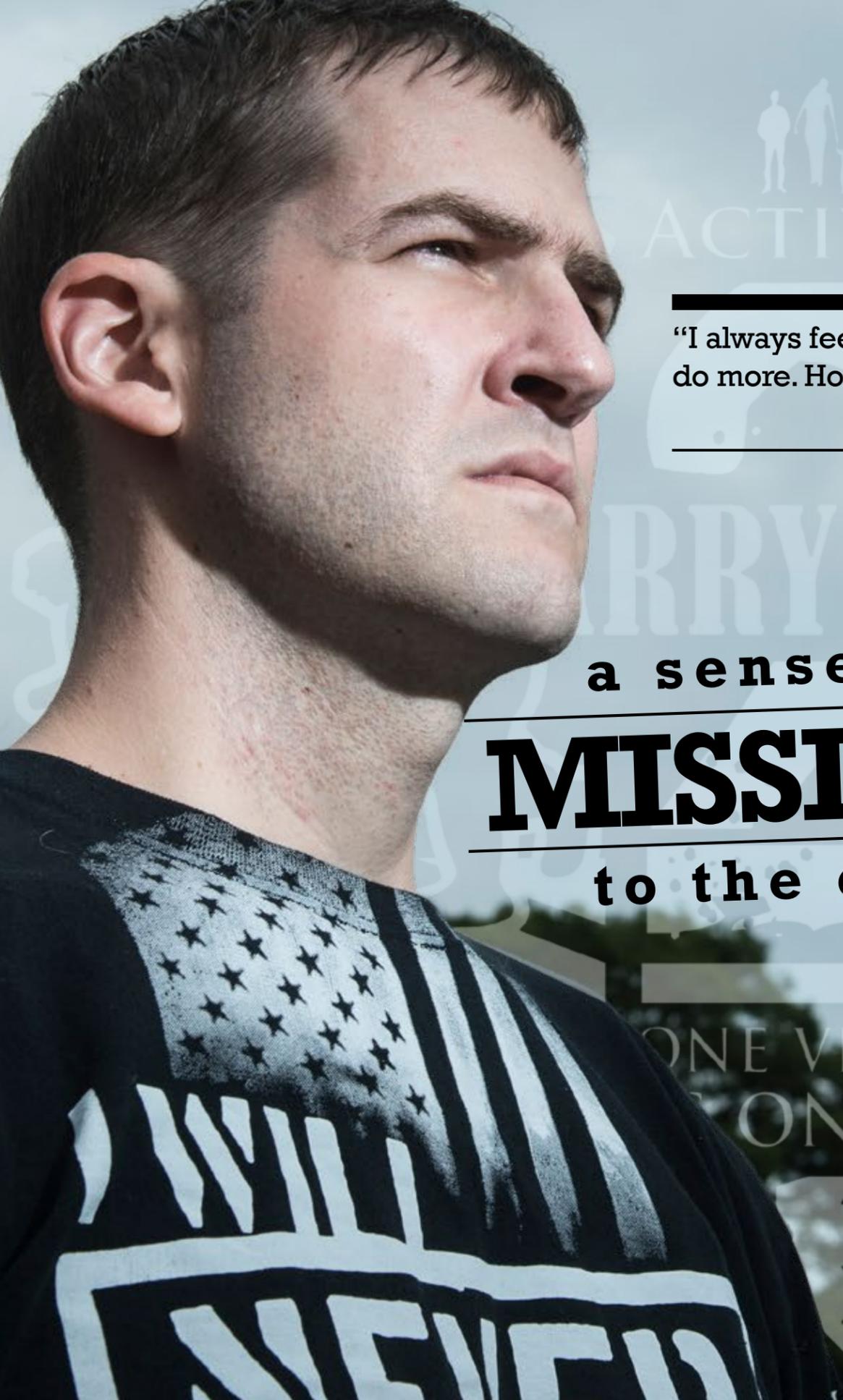
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“I always feel that I could do more. Honestly, I do.”

Capt. Justin Fitch

a sense of

MISSION

to the end

If doctors said that you had a finite amount of time left, how would you spend your remaining days?

It's a question that Capt. Justin Fitch has already answered in no uncertain terms: He will continue to fight while devoting what energy he has to saving the lives of his brothers- and sisters-in-arms.

The 32-year-old commander of the Headquarters Research Development Detachment at the [Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center](#) has terminal colon cancer. He faces medical retirement from the Army, and doctors have told him that he has a matter of months to live.

Fitch has endured 40-plus chemotherapy treatments, six major surgeries and a number of smaller procedures. Daily painkillers help him to cope with the tumors that have wrapped themselves around his intestines.

Despite this immense personal challenge, Fitch thinks mostly about reducing the pain in others. He has spent the past year trying to increase awareness of and raise money for veterans with post-traumatic stress who are contemplating suicide. As Fitch regularly notes, 22 veterans a day take their own lives – in excess of 8,000 a year – more than all the U.S. service members who have been killed in action since 2001 in the Global War on Terrorism.

“Twenty-two is too many,” said Fitch, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran. “We want to turn that number to zero.”

As a result, Fitch has gone to battle against suicide. In November 2013, he began doing 12-hour team ruck marches with the [“Carry the Fallen”](#) campaign. Since then, he and his “Team Minuteman” have raised \$114,000 for the [“Active Heroes”](#) organization, which is developing a 144-acre retreat in Shepherdsville, Ky., for at-risk veterans and their families. Fitch has raised \$60,000 as an individual. Those are the highest amounts in the organi-

zation, which has 109 teams nationally and has raised \$330,000.

When completed, the retreat will have such amenities as solar-powered cabins, campsites, healing gardens, climbing walls, hiking and biking trails, archery ranges, petting zoos, equine therapy and a small artificial lake stocked with fish.

“We’re looking at \$4 to \$5 million to finish (the retreat),” Fitch said. “Money is the thorn in our side that we’re trying to overcome. It just takes one thing to raise awareness and to inspire people to do what’s good. And people are good. They just don’t know how to help sometimes.”

Maybe they should just follow Fitch’s lead. Recently, he reached into his own pocket to donate the symbolic amount of \$10,022 to the organization.

“If I wasn’t trying to set up my wife for life, I would have put probably all the money in it,” said Fitch, adding that we wanted “to show people that I’m committed to the charity, that I believe in it, because people see me as a credible figure. If I trust that much of my money in the charity, then they should, too.”

Fitch said he has leaned heavily on his wife, Samantha, to get through this. The pain medication keeps him from driving, so he must rely on her to take him to and from work. She cooks his meals and takes care of the medical appliances that come with his condition.

“She puts up with a lot of emotional stress because of it,” Fitch said. “She’s a solid cornerstone in my life. I firmly believe she’s the strongest influence that I have in my life.”

His three days of chemotherapy treatments each week leave him tired, nauseous, dehydrated and sleep-deprived. He also suffers from what he calls “chemo-brain” – increasing memory problems.

The other two days of the week, Fitch reports to his command at Natick, where he has served 2 ½ years.

“I do what I can in the short time that I have at work,” Fitch said. “I try to keep my head above water. Realistically, between all the medical treatments that keep me out of the office, it has made it difficult.

“I always feel that I could do more. Honestly, I do. Despite what anyone says, there’s still a war going on.”

In what free time he has, Fitch works to keep other veterans alive. He understands their struggles, because there was a time in his own life when thoughts of suicide nearly consumed him.

“It’s OK to seek help,” Fitch said. “You can get help. Look at me. I’m a captain ... I sought help.”

Team Minuteman of Carry the Fallen will hold its next ruck march Sept. 6 on the 26.2-mile Boston Marathon course from Hopkinton, Mass., to Boston’s Boylston Street. Simultaneously, many of the other 109 teams across the nation will be doing ruck marches in their hometowns. Fitch will be on hand, but his illness will keep him mostly riding in the support vehicle.

“I do want to get out for a few miles to ruck with the team, preferably at the start and finish and maybe somewhere in between,” Fitch said. “I don’t see any possibility of me being able to finish the whole ruck with weight on my back.”

There is one finish line that Fitch would like to reach – seeing the Active Heroes retreat completed. To do that, he would have to defy doctors’ predictions. Smart money wouldn’t bet against him.

“Other than family and friends, this is my final mission,” said Fitch, “and I’m going to do everything I can to accomplish it.”

Despite facing his own struggle against terminal colon cancer, Capt. Justin Fitch of the Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center has refused to stop working to reduce the number of suicides among veterans.

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs (for Soldiers Magazine) / NATICK, Mass. (Aug. 25, 2014)



NATICK REMEMBERS

Recalling Maj. Gen. Greene

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Aug. 6, 2014)

They knew him as an excellent Soldier, scientist and commander, but when most people at [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) think of Maj. Gen. Harold J. “Harry” Greene, they remember the friend, the genuinely caring human being who laughed easily with them and flashed that infectious smile at every opportunity.

Those memories are all that remain now of Greene, who was killed Aug. 5, in Afghanistan, during a shooting incident that also left 14 other service members wounded. The 55-year-old Greene was the highest-ranking U.S. service member to die in the war, and he was the first general officer killed in combat since the Vietnam War.

At the time of his death, Greene was deputy commander of the Combined Security Transition Command, and was on a routine site visit to the Marshal Fahim National Defense University.

Greene, a 34-year Army veteran, served as NSSC’s senior commander from August 2009 to May 2011. Before his departure from Natick, Greene was asked about his legacy.

“My replacement is going to live at Natick,” said Greene, who had split time between NSSC and Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., where he also served as deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command. “I think that is tremendously important, and it gives a presence in the community that wasn’t here before with a part-time senior commander.

“He’ll travel a lot, but we planted a general officer flag back in New England,” he said.

He may have lived here only part time, but Greene became a recognizable figure at such events as the Iwo Jima Day ceremony at the Massachusetts State House, and the transfer of flags ceremony at the Natick School District. He was equally comfortable at a lectern explaining the important work done at NSSC, or taking off his jacket and dropping for push-ups with youngsters at Beacon Hill Day.

“One of the things I knew from growing up here as a kid was how patriotic (Massachusetts) was,” Greene said. “I learned to have a deeper appreciation during my time here. I had many opportunities to get out in the community.”

Brig. Gen. William E. Cole, the current NSSC senior commander, worked for Greene in the past and remembered him fondly.

“He was extraordinarily smart, cared deeply about his people, and was completely dedicated to the Army’s mission in Afghanistan,” Cole said. “He was also great to work for and with, and he had a super sense of humor. He was a mentor to me, and I will miss him very much.”

Dr. Laurel Allender, acting director of the Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center, shared her thoughts about Greene.

“I am wrestling with the sadness I feel personally on the loss of Maj. Gen. Harry Greene, an amazing Soldier, leader and fellow scientist — and also with the enduring questions of the nature of war and peace and our commitment to defense,” Allender said. “I awoke this morning with a renewed dedication to our mission, and encourage you all to do the same.”

Its director, Dale Ormond, talked about Greene’s importance to RDECOM.

“Many of you who knew and served with him know the impact he had on this command and its people,” Ormond said. “The loss of Major General Greene is certainly felt across the Army, and this enterprise. He dutifully served the people of this great nation and dedicated his time at this command making sure Soldiers came first.

“Most of all, we will remember Major General Greene as a great Soldier, officer and member of our family,” Ormond said. “He was a man of uncommon and exemplary professionalism, competence and candor, in the most profound way.”

Army Reserve Lt. Col. Brian Wood served as Greene’s executive officer for two years at Natick. He called his former boss a consummate professional.

“He would always do what was right, whether popular or not — a man of rock-solid and unwavering character,” Wood said. “I thoroughly enjoyed working for him and now carry many (of his) lessons with me each day. He had a great sense of humor and sense of community and a great way with people at all levels. You could always hear him coming down the hall, cheerfully greeting everyone.

“Most of all, I appreciated his commitment to the Army, its mission and the Soldiers” he said. “He was proud to be a Soldier, and it showed every day.”

Wood recalled how much Greene loved Boston’s professional sports teams.

“I was able to attend several Red Sox games with him, and recall one time at 2 a.m., after a rain delay and extra innings, when he still did not want to leave the game before the last pitch,” Wood said. “He would acknowledge Fenway Park every time we drove by.”

Retired Sgt. Maj. John Poff, who served as Greene’s senior enlisted adviser at Natick, said he was “crushed” by word of Greene’s death.

“He and I had a very special bond,” Poff said. “It was a devastating blow to see that something like that could happen to such a great human being.”

Once he absorbed that blow, Poff was able to recall some of the better times with Greene.

“He was very light hearted,” Poff said. “He was always in on somebody doing a practical joke. He looked at everyone equally. He never looked down on anybody. He was genuine.”

“Most of all, I appreciated his commitment to the Army, its mission and the Soldiers. He was proud to be a Soldier, and it showed every day.”

-Lt. Col Brian Wood



Pedal Power

Natick Soldier rides away from troubles

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (June 11, 2014)

No one will ever mistake Staff Sgt. Eric Murray for a Tour de France winner, but that really doesn't matter.

His bicycle became a lifeline of sorts for Murray after he suffered wounds to his lower extremities from two mortar rounds in a September 2006 attack near [Sadr City, Iraq](#), and later during his divorce. When he hopped on the saddle, his troubles disappeared.

"I got on the bike, and I didn't think about my ex-wife at the time," Murray said. "I wasn't thinking about how often do I get to see my son? And I wasn't thinking about the flashbacks that I have from Iraq."

"I was just thinking about there's the road, (and I was) ... just enjoying life again."

Murray had discovered "[Ride 2 Recovery](#)," an organization that helps service members and veterans to heal physically, mentally and emotionally through cycling. R2R holds a number of multi-day challenge rides of up to 450 miles each year that bring veterans together in various parts of the country.

"When I found Ride 2 Recovery, I was enjoying the physical aspect, but I was also enjoying the fact that I was able to clear my head," Murray said. "Getting on the road, I didn't care about anything except for what was in front of me on the road."

His first R2R ride was last year's [Minute-man Challenge](#) from Waltham, Mass., to Philadelphia.

"And (I) fell in love with it just because of the camaraderie with all the wounded veterans and PTSD members," Murray said. "I got into it and started riding and started liking it a little bit. They donated a bike to me so ... I can continue to ride. I've just been riding ever since then."

Though the 35-year-old father of three sons hadn't ridden since his youth, Murray said he felt comfortable on the bike from the start.

"I wasn't afraid to fall," Murray said. "In cycling they always say it's not if you're going to fall, it's when you're going to fall. I've fallen a couple of times, and I get back up on the bike and I push myself to where I know I can't go anymore."

Murray has stayed upright well enough to do four challenge rides since being assigned in July 2013 to the [Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center](#) as a combat arms NCO with the Human Research Volunteer, or [HRV](#), program.

"On the rides, they try not to let you fail," Murray said. "If you're hurting, somebody's going to come up and help push you and get you up there. We ride for about 50 to 60

miles a day ... and then we get on our bikes and go on the next day."

Murray said he has met some inspirational veterans out on those roads.

"We have some Soldiers in the program that are just phenomenal," Murray said. "It makes for a good time on the rides."

"We've got some that are triple amputees, double amputees. We've got some that are a little heftier because of their injuries, but once we all come together, it's just like one big family that just melded together instantly."

Next up for Murray will be the 2014 Minute-man Challenge in September from Boston to Fort Lee, N.J.

"It's awesome to see different parts of the country that we help defend as military personnel," said Murray, "but it's just the camaraderie (that) makes everything ... so great."

Don't expect Murray to abandon the bike anytime soon. He said that it helps him ward off the bad days.

"If I could do it on a daily basis, I would," Murray said. "It's not my entire life, but I try to allow it to (be) a little bit of my life."



Photos: Tiffini M. Skuce / Ride 2 Recovery



R2R holds a number of multi-day challenge rides of up to 450 miles each year that bring veterans together in various parts of the country.

Donna Leon was named the Army's winner of the NAACP 2014 Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award. Leon works for the Aerial Delivery and Soldier Protective Equipment Logistics Support Team at the Soldier Product Support Integration Directorate, TACOM Life Cycle Management Command at Natick Soldier Systems Center. Here, she confers with John Lemire.

A Life of Service

Natick employee named Army's NAACP award winner

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Aug. 5, 2014)

When Donna Leon was growing up in Oxford, N.C., her parents taught her to always be charitable with others, a lesson that their daughter never forgot.

"My parents are very giving in nature," Leon said. "We weren't independently wealthy or anything like that, but it was just the nature of both their families to share and have open doors for everybody."

No matter where she went during her 20-year career as a Soldier, Leon remembered to volunteer her time and talents to help others at work and in the community. After she retired in 2007, she continued that practice as an Army civilian employee at the [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#).

"I feel like, honestly, my life is a life of service," Leon said. "This is something I can feel almost ... in my soul, as if this is who I am."

Leon's devotion to selfless service in her professional and personal life was recognized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on July 22, when the [NAACP](#) made her the U.S. Army's recipient of the 2014 [Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award](#) at a ceremony in Las Vegas.

The award is given annually to American service members and Department of Defense civilian employees who have distinguished themselves by contributing to the DoD mission, overseas contingency operations, and demonstrated role model qualities and the core values of their respective military service or agency. Recipients promote the tenets of civil/human rights, equal opportunity, human relations, and/or public service. Leon was recognized for her support to equal opportunity policies and programs.

"My initial reaction upon hearing that I was to receive the award was surprise, quickly followed by an almost overwhelming feeling of gratefulness," Leon said. "This award, to me, means that even the smallest efforts can make a difference in the lives of others, as well as your own."

Leon's efforts include collecting donations for the homeless, encouraging fellow workers and serving on various committees at Natick.

"I've always been an advocate for the disadvantaged, and I can remember even within my life not always being in the best position, needing some help myself," Leon said. "It's always meant a lot to me, what people have done for



Photo: Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs

me, the kind words. You never know how far that goes in a person's confidence.

"I've always been a volunteer. I've always tried to help. It's just a natural thing for me. I'd have to say I've done none of this on my own. There's been a lot of encouragement throughout the years."

Leon, who retired from the Army as a sergeant first class, serves as lead technical writer/editor and is a team leader for the Aerial Delivery and Soldier Protective Equipment Logistics Support Team at the Soldier Product Support Integration Directorate, [TACOM Life Cycle Management Command](#) at Natick.

"I would like to thank all of my leadership for their confidence in me with the award nomination," said Leon, "and more importantly, for their support in my volunteer efforts."

Obviously, Leon is at Natick for the Soldier.

"This is a job, of course, but it's a mission," Leon said. "The people who we support (are) the reason why we do this job. Your work does make a difference. I think it's very important that we all try to reach the highest skill levels possible."

Leon demonstrates that same sense of mission in her personal life.

"I wish I were able to do more or had the time to do more," Leon said. "It's not always about the money. Your time and your talent mean a lot. When you have the time and if you have a talent, use it."

If her parents are any indication, Leon will continue serving others well into the future: Donnell and Leora Smith both continue to volunteer their time and help others at age 80.

"They are very pleased, very happy," said Leon, "because they see me as just sort of carrying on."

And Leon's charitable tendencies have nothing to do with trying to draw attention to herself.

"I like being behind the scenes," Leon said. "I don't like being in the limelight."

Leon plans to devote even more of her time, talents and energy to others when she reaches retirement age.

"It would be very difficult for me to just sit there and do nothing," said Leon, "especially knowing that there are so many people who could use a hand."

"It's just a part of me, I guess. I think I am the happiest when I'm serving others."

Turning to 'Home Base'

Natick Soldier seeks help with TBI

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Feb. 10, 2014)

He grew up a Boston Red Sox fan in Warwick, R.I., so Sgt. 1st Class Adam Morelli had long dreamed of touching home plate at Fenway Park.

When he did just that during the annual “Run/Walk to Home Base” fundraising event last year, he got something even more valuable — contact information for the Home Base Program, which helps veterans and families who are coping with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries.

Recently, he took advantage of it.

“Immediately, on my very first appointment, seeing the TBI doctor, he pointed out things that no other doctors had caught yet,” said Morelli, 33, the detachment sergeant at the [U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine](#) at Natick Soldier Systems Center.

Morelli’s problems with TBI date back to April 2008, when he was a medic with a Military Transition Team in Mosul, Iraq. He had relieved the turret gunner in a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected, or MRAP, vehicle during a patrol.

“About 300 meters away from the combat outpost and about 15 meters off to my right side was an [IED](#) that we didn’t know (about),” Morelli recalled. “And it detonated and just rocked the entire truck. Luckily, no damage to the truck, no damage to anyone inside — apparently, just to my brain.”

After the explosion, Morelli got back into position and the convoy kept rolling.

“My team was more important than I was at that point,” Morelli said. “Later

on that night, I had a headache, but who wouldn’t have a headache? That wasn’t the first time that we had an IED go off near our trucks. It just happened that that was the first time that I was in the turret.”

Soon, Morelli was experiencing memory loss, but he pushed through it.

“It wasn’t important to me,” Morelli said. “What was important was my guys.”

By the time his deployment ended, Morelli’s memory loss had become more noticeable.

“When I first got back, I kept forgetting the bread and picking up \$30 of other stuff at the store,” Morelli said. “Now (my wife) takes pictures of stuff and texts it to me and sends me a list on the phone so I don’t forget, because otherwise I will.”

And the headaches persisted. “It’s above my left eye, every time,” Morelli said.

Morelli has tried a variety of medications and has undergone speech and memory therapy since returning home.

“It’s always been trying to find that happy medium to what’s going to decrease my headaches but also not make me ineffective,” said Morelli, “because I still want to be a good Soldier.”

That goal brought him to the [Home Base Program](#), a unique partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital that began in 2009. In his

initial visit, the doctor asked him to march in place.

“I’m marching eight feet across the room and didn’t know it, didn’t feel like I was moving forward,” Morelli said.

To address his balance problems, Morelli began vestibular physical therapy at Home Base.

“Since my deployment in 2008, I’ve been compensating and figuring out ways to get around everything,” said Morelli, “whereas, now with Home Base, they’re working on ways to stop my compensating and figure out ways to overcome those obstacles.”

He has compensated well. In addition to his duties at USARIEM, the father of two is also pursuing an associate degree at American Military University and coaching youth wrestling in his native Rhode Island.

Through it all, Morelli never hid his struggle with TBI from his Soldiers at USARIEM.

“I think that more emphasis needs to be put on getting the help that people need, and that’s why I talk with my Soldiers,” Morelli said. “I don’t make it a secret, because I want them to see that even as the detachment sergeant of this unit, it’s still OK to go get the help that we need.”

“We can still be great Soldiers and do great things for the Army. I think that that’s an important message.”



Photo: Kirby Rock

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (April 24, 2014)

Reclaiming Boston

Natick employees back at the marathon

When he got to mile 22 of this year's [Boston Marathon](#) – the place where his race had ended during last year's bombing – it all started to catch up with Mike Nixon.

“When I headed down the underpass right before the turn to Hereford (Street), I couldn't stop the tears,” Nixon recalled. “This is what was stolen from (me) and the ... other runners that were stopped on the course last year. We had finally reclaimed, and so did the City of Boston and the surrounding cities (and) towns, our marathon.”

Nixon and other [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) employees had returned to Boston in response to last year's attack. They, like many others, came back to honor the victims and to make the statement that they were unwilling to yield to terrorism.

“This year's marathon had a vibe that brought tears to your eyes,” said Wes Long. “People were not just running for fun, to set records or to win the race. They were also running to pay homage to all those victimized by the Boston Marathon bombings and to show the world how strong the Bostonian and American spirit truly is.”

Working the marathon in his capacity as a Framingham, Mass., auxiliary police officer, Long was “overwhelmed” as runners made their way over to him for high-fives, handshakes and to say thank you.

“I was just doing my job and never expected any sort of gratitude for it,” said Long. “I was extremely touched ... by these gestures. To have runners from all walks of life, who have overcome so much, take a second out of their race to say thank you to me will be something I will never forget. Although I tried to thank them back, they quickly continued on

with the race; however, the impression they left with me will be there forever.”

Also in Framingham was Melvin Williams, in his familiar position as captain of a hydration station on the marathon course.

“This was one of the better races I've worked,” Williams said. “We had a great crew.”

Williams was struck by the size of the field and its collective mood in this, his 23rd straight year of working the marathon.

“There were a lot of runners this year,” Williams said. “It seemed that everyone was in good spirits.”

One of them was Shivaun Pacitto, who was near the finish line when the bombs went off a year ago.

“It was an emotional day, one filled with strength, hope, and determination to run ‘Boston Strong’ for the victims from last year's tragedy,” Pacitto said. “I did struggle running this year, as Boston is a challenging course.”

Pacitto, 56, ran the 26.2 miles in 4 hours, 22 minutes, 19 seconds, slower than last year's 4:03:37, but it didn't matter.

“The heat played a role in time, but it did not impact the feeling of joy for each step I took,” Pacitto said. “The spectators and fans were cheering us on, and they were enjoying it just as much as the runners.”

“Running in 2014 was an amazing experience. The runners were excited and the crowds (and) fans were unbelievable. You could feel their support, encouragement and excitement.”

The 34-year-old Nixon also felt the effects of the unseasonably warm weather, crossing the finish line in 4:52:35.

“The cumulative effect of the warm day, plus not adjusting my expectations due to the increased temperature, made the last nine miles really tough,” Nixon said. “There were very few clouds in the sky, a slight breeze that came and went, and almost no relief from the sun beating down on our necks.”

Like Pacitto, however, Nixon seemed more focused on the experience than his time.

“The crowds were spectacular,” Nixon said. “The course personnel were supportive and fantastic. All of the runners were out there supporting each other. The overall vibe was just remarkable.”

“The greatest part of all of it is the closure I finally received as I crossed the finish line. It wasn't the time I had hoped or trained for, but it was the redemption I needed by finishing.”

Long pointed out that the event became so much more than a marathon.

“Those running, (watching) and supporting the marathon were from all over the world,” Long said. “It was no longer about Boston or even the United States at that point. It was about the human spirit, the ability to come together though great adversity, push forward and overcome with excellence.”

“I will never forget the 2014 Boston Marathon, and I was extremely fortunate and proud to be a part of it.”



Photo: Michelle Kinsella

Shivaun Pacitto (opposite) smiles and waves as she starts the marathon. Mike Nixon (above) visits with Michelle Kinsella at mile 22.

NSSC Aids Homeless Vets

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (June 10, 2014)

About four years ago, Sarah Ross was walking through downtown Boston on a sightseeing trip with her mother. The Army veteran didn't like what she saw all around her.

"There were veterans everywhere on the streets with signs, and it made me really upset," said Ross, recalling how they lacked warm clothing to ward off the chill on that November day. "I think that people in general — and this could just be a misconception on my part — think that veterans are taken care of, and that's just not the case."

When a couple of the veterans told her about the nearby New England Center for Homeless Veterans, or [NECHV](#), she went about trying to find a way to help that organization.

"That's where it kind of started with me, is to actually see it in Boston," Ross said. "That reality hits you again that you're having a really good time, but not everyone is having such a good time."

So, last October, Ross and fellow former Soldier Darren Bean held their [first clothing drive](#) at [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#), where both are now civilian employees, to benefit homeless veterans. The five-day collection effort netted 800 pounds of clothing and other items for NECHV.

"I didn't know the kind of outcome that we were going to get," Ross said. "So there was no expectation."

That surprising outcome prompted Ross to hold another drive last month while Bean focused on his many other activities on behalf of veterans' groups.

In five days during May, the second drive at NSSC brought in 1,926 pounds of clothing and personal hygiene items, more than doubling what was provided for NECHV through the inaugural event. That amounts to more than a pound for each Soldier and civilian who works at the installation.

Ross was humbled by the response from her co-workers.

"I didn't do this," Ross said. "I just put bins out. People donated. This isn't my thing. It's NSSC's thing."

When it came to collecting and then delivering items to NECHV, young Soldiers from NSSC's Human Research Volunteer program pitched in to help Ross, the [HRV](#) program coordinator.

"They donated their time, their gas money, their cars to come and help me," Ross said. "So that was great."

They pulled up to NECHV on June 2 in five vehicles filled with donated items. The center was happy to receive them.

"The New England Center for Homeless Veterans provides a broad array of supportive services to veterans here in New England, and from throughout the nation, who are facing, or at risk of homelessness," said Andy McCawley, NECHV president and chief execu-

tive officer. "In order to most effectively accomplish its mission, the center relies upon community support in the form of goods, services and private philanthropy.

"The recent clothing and toiletries drive by the men and women serving the United States Army at the Natick Lab in Massachusetts is an important source of clothing and needed personal essentials for the veterans we serve," McCawley said. "We are grateful for their altruism and support for those who have served this country in uniform."

Ross added that she hopes to continue the NSSC drives twice annually — once to collect winter clothing and once to accept summer clothing.

"I'm just so excited that this many veterans are going to be getting clothing, and appropriate clothing," Ross said. "They deserve to be dressed appropriately."

"My goal is just to make this a regular thing. I would love for it just to be a staple."

Ross expressed pride that NSSC's people had lived up to the installation's mission to take care of Soldiers.

"Those clothes were donated in the name of what we say we do every day," Ross said. "We put our money where our mouth is, which is really cool, I think."

Above: Soldiers from the Natick Soldier Systems Center recently delivered more than 1,900 pounds of clothing and other items to the New England Center for Homeless Veterans.

Little GEMS

Natick gives kids hands-on experience in science



By Kelly Field, USARIEM Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Sept. 2, 2014)

Oil spills, crime scene investigations and DNA sampling. Usually, these words would send an organization into a tailspin, but this is just another day of summer camp for Massachusetts middle school students.

This summer the [U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine](#) once again sponsored the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science, or GEMS, program at [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) here. The GEMS program is an extracurricular summer science education program that enables middle-school-aged students to experience science in a real laboratory setting.

GEMS has a multidisciplinary educational agenda, and students take part in grade-appropriate, hands-on activities relating to science, engineering, mathematics, computational sciences, computational biology, biomedical sciences, chemistry and biology.

Capt. Carrie Quinn, the GEMS lab champion for USARIEM, said her main goal for GEMS is to get students enthusiastic about science and math while fostering a sense of community.

"Our main objective was to take science and math out of the classroom and put it in a real-world setting," said Quinn, who is also

a research physiologist for USARIEM. "The kids got to see things here that they wouldn't be able to experience anywhere else. They get to truly see how science and math are everywhere — even in the Army."

Now in its fourth year, the program has grown from four sessions with 100 children to six programs, GEMS I, II and III, with nearly 200 students in attendance. Each GEMS session allows students to return the following summer, slowly building on the lessons learned the summer before and encouraging future scientific leaders.

Advanced high school- and college-aged students called "Near-Peer Mentors" lead the GEMS programs, and serve as role models for the students. Near-Peer Mentors completed extensive training at a science boot camp prior to the student interns' arrival. The mentors learned how to conduct and teach the GEMS experiments.

"The Near-Peer Mentors are in charge of the curriculum and instruction for the summer GEMS program; they are the driving force behind this program," Quinn said.

While exploring the GEMS program this year, the students investigated problem-

solving, estimation, water properties, physics/forces of motion, forensics, and even got to see a helicopter land.

Collin Newman, a middle school student, participated in the GEMS program. He said his favorite parts of GEMS were the hands-on experiments he doesn't normally get to do in the classroom.

"You get a big experience in science," Newman said. "Plus, it is really fun. I like the hands-on experiments it takes to do GEMS."

The Army has a long history of recognizing that a scientifically and technologically literate citizenry is this country's best hope for a secure, rewarding and successful future.

"We created the GEMS program as part of this realization that science and mathematics (are) important to instill in the younger generations for future prosperity," Quinn said.

GEMS began as a single program at then-Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in 2005, and has expanded to 12 programs across the major Army research installations, including the one at USARIEM, which runs annually in July and August.

Sgt. Seth Bullock and his mother, Carla Bullock, used their faith to get them through Seth's deployment to Iraq.

Carla Bullock has always had a unique bond with her youngest son, Sgt. Seth Bullock.

"All my children are special," said Carla, "but that's my baby boy."

So when Seth deployed with the [1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division](#) from Fort Drum, N.Y., to Iraq in August 2006 for 15 months, Carla leaned heavily on her Southern Baptist faith.

"Because I did not know whether he would come home or not," she explained. "There were nights I worried. If it was not for my faith, I don't think I could have done it."

As Mother's Day 2014 approached, Carla and Seth recently took time out to look back on that time of uncertainty in their lives and how they got through it. Seth's career path actually began during his boyhood in Bainbridge, Ga.

"My father had served and he retired from the military," said Carla of Seth's grandfather. "And it was just something that Seth always talked about. He always talked about the Army, and we always encouraged him and told him it was an honor to serve his country. That's what he wanted, so that's what he did."

Seth, the youngest of a blended family of seven children, was born 10 minutes later than his twin sister, Erin. When Seth decided to enlist in 2005, he had his mother's full support.

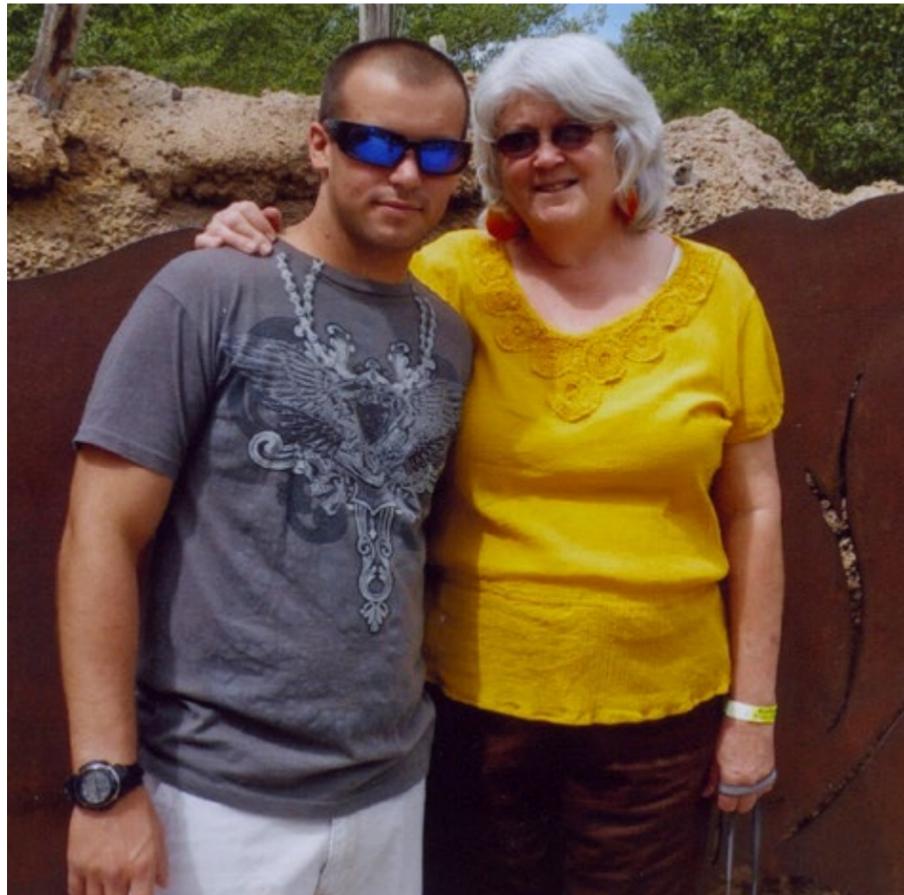
"One of the hardest things I've done, but one of the proudest things I've done," Carla said. "When one of your children knowingly puts himself in harm's way, that's hard."

Carla said that it was also difficult for Erin.

"It was hard on everybody, but it was the hardest on Erin," Carla said. "It was hard on both of them being separated. It just tore her up. They are still, to this day, extremely close."

When he deployed to Iraq, Seth did his best to keep bad news from his mother when they connected through email, phone calls or letters.

"I'd keep what was going on in Iraq ... I'd keep that to myself," Seth recalled. "We didn't want to, I guess, upset each other. We'd stay focused on the mission, and she'd stay focused on the things going on back home."



Courtesy photo

A Little Faith

Getting through a son's deployment

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (May 16, 2014)

It was only recently that Carla learned that Seth had survived an IED attack on his convoy on July 1, 2007 – the day he was promoted to specialist.

"He wanted to protect me," she said. "I would have rather known."

Seth said that he thinks she found out last summer, when he discovered that he would need surgery to repair fractures at the top of his spine, which may or may not have resulted from the explosion.

While Seth was deployed, Carla looked in on his wife, Jayme, and their children.

"They serve, too. They've sacrificed an awful lot," Carla said. "I think the one thing that I learned was to let him depend on his wife, more so than me."

Seth, who is now assigned to the [Operational Forces Interface Group](#) at the Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center, said that, like his mom, his faith helped him through his deployment.

"I grew up in the church," said Seth, adding that it "helps you get through things."

And then there was Seth's mother and their close connection.

"She was always there for me," Seth said. "She always sent me care packages and stuff like that."

Carla had worried that when her son came home from war, he would be a changed man. Was he?

"A little bit, but not much," she said. "He seems to value things a little bit more."



Photos: John Harlow, USAG-Natick Public Affairs



Soldiers for a Day

Seventh-graders learn drills

By John Harlow, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NEEDHAM, Mass. (May 5, 2014)

Seventh-grade students at [Monsignor James J. Haddad Middle School](#) started their Civil War studies with Recruitment Day on May 2, when Soldiers from the [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) participated in the recruitment process by teaching basic drill and ceremony.

The Soldiers, led by Natick's senior enlisted leader, [Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Beausoleil](#), had a great time working with the students.

"I had the pleasure in conducting some community outreach with one of our local middle schools, to teach 67 seventh-graders the basic drill movements in order for them to conduct a re-enactment of Pickett's Charge as part of their educational enhancement of history and military tradition," Beausoleil

said. "It has become an annual tradition of the NSSC Soldiers visiting Monsignor Haddad for Recruitment Day.

"It is an awe-inspiring feeling when you can directly impact a child's life through the knowledge of where drill and ceremony originated from and how it was used to infuse discipline within the Armed Forces. To see their smiles and watch them execute basic marching and drill movements was inspirational."

The students responded well to the Soldiers' instructions, and that was the purpose of having them participate in Recruitment Day.

"Today, the average person in Massachusetts has little opportunity to interact with the men and women who serve our country,"

said Jared Belliveau, a seventh-grade teacher at Monsignor Haddad. "First and foremost, we wanted our students to have an opportunity to meet and interact with our nation's service members. We also wanted them to become familiar with the basics of close-order drill in preparation for a re-enactment of [Pickett's Charge](#) later this month."

The students learned basic drill and ceremony, and by the end of the morning, they were able to perform right-face, left-face, they marched in formation and carried their weapons (broomsticks) at port arms.

"I learned about some of the personal experiences of people who serve our country, said seventh-grader Daniel Habermas of Needham. "They also shared with us some of the things they are taught during their own training."

The students will conclude their studies of the Civil War with a re-enactment of Pickett's Charge on May 22.

THANK YOU

The Public Affairs Office would like to thank
the men and women of the Natick Soldier
Systems Center for their continued service
to our mission and for their assistance in
spreading the word about their efforts
supporting our armed forces.