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512th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, Del.

Dover AFB inducts new honorary commanders

Master Sgt. Veronica Aceveda
512th AW Public Affairs

Dover Air Force Base inducted 41 new honorary commanders and honored seven outgoing honorary commanders at an induction ceremony and dinner Feb. 4 at the Air Mobility Command Museum here.

The selected educators, business owners and civic leaders will spend the next year partnered with a military commander, exchanging ideas and strengthening community partnerships.

"I encourage each and every one of you to engage with your unit commander and communicate about what's going on in each of your worlds to see how we can honor each other," said Col. Randal L. Bright, 512th Airlift Wing commander, when he addressed the new inductees.

Jason Bishop, the regional sales manager for Pepsi, said he can already tell this is going to be an awesome experience. He is paired with Maj. Asheleigh Gellner, the 46th Aerial Port Squadron commander.

"I can invite her to get involved in things ranging from some of our legislative affairs to golf functions," said Bishop. "Plus, this opportunity is great exposure for my boys who are in the ROTC program."

Throughout the year, honorary commanders will be invited to tour various agencies on base and participate in an orientation flight on a C-17 Globemaster III or C-5 Galaxy. Each new inductee is also entitled to use on-base services such as the fitness center and outdoor recreation.

MXG gets new commander

Staff Sgt. Andria J. Allmond
512th AW Public Affairs

The 512th Airlift Wing held an assumption of command ceremony Feb. 4 at the Air Mobility Command Museum.

With Col. Randal L. Bright, 512th AW commander, serving as the presiding officer, Lt. Col. Kelvin D. McElroy officially became the 512th Maintenance Group commander.

Attendees included members of the Liberty Wing, as well as McElroy's family, friends and mentors.

During his first official address to his troops, McElroy stated he is excited and humbled to be in this leadership position.

"It's an honor and a privilege to stand before you today," he said. "And, I hope to carry on the legacy of excellence that was in place before me."

McElroy, the former 914th MXG commander at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, N.Y., continued by explaining his leadership strategy, which is founded on the three-pronged approach of time, trust and teamwork.

Bright mirrored the new commander's enthusiasm by stating that he and the wing are looking forward to the leadership McElroy will bring to the group and the Liberty Wing.



Photo by Roland Balik

Maj. Anthony Linton, 712th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander, welcomes Honorary Commander Kristen Cook, Extension Educator with the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension.

One of the newest units on base, the Joint Personal Effects Depot, will embark on having their first honorary commander this year. Eric Riddle, a cost accountant with PPG Industries, will serve with Lt. Col. Kelly Kyburz, the JPED commander.

"I'm looking forward to leveraging his skill set to help us achieve our vision of optimizing the balance of speed and accuracy while processing the personal effects of our nation's fallen heroes," said Kyburz. "And, because of the nature of our business, we hold a lot of morale events throughout the year that our honorary commander can attend. In addition to our hail and farewell, we look forward to inviting him to our talent show, organizational family day and future events to meet our entire team."

Following dinner, Dr. Stephanie Steckel, an orthodontist and outgoing honorary commander, shared a few highlights from her tenure last year.

"We were able to reactivate our connection with the dental squadron," she said. "Following 9/11, access to the base became limited, but now we're sharing education events again."

"I may be a retiring honorary commander, but I'll always be a good will ambassador for Dover Air Force Base."

Steckel and Deborah Caulk, the manager of Autozone Dover, relinquished their commands and became a member of the Honorary Commander Alumni Association.

Caulk, who served two years as an honorary commander for the 712th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, said it's different now when military members come in to buy their auto parts.

"I know what they go through now and what it takes to be in the military," she said. "This experience has brought me so much closer to the military community. I feel really connected."

After Col. Mark D. Camerer, 436th AW commander, and Bright bestowed alumni lapel pins to the outgoing civilian commanders, the two wing leaders led the new commanders in reciting an oath which outlined the responsibilities of their command.

"Raising my right hand and reciting the oath struck me as the most eye-opening and exciting part of the night," said Shelly Cecchette, the executive director of the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System. "I took it seriously, and I am truly honored to be a part of this program."