

AIR CAV JOURNAL

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1st Air Cavalry Brigade **Commanding Officer:** Col. Cory Mendenhall **The Air Cav Journal:** The Air Cav Journal welcomes articles and photos from readers. For further information, questions or comments, email the editor at christopher.a.calvert2.mil@mail.mil

1st Cavalry Division **Public Affairs Officer:** Capt. Matthew McMillan All editorial content of the The Air Cav Journal is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade Public Affairs Office.

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actionable intelligence from above. Our Troopers performed with the utmost professionalism and precision while integrating with AH-64D Apaches, UH-60 Blackhawks, and indirect fires from 2-20th Artillery Battalion (MLRS) from the 41st Fires Brigade.

Summer is fast approaching and I would like to remind everyone to DRINK WATER! Heat injuries are preventable, and so are most injuries incurred during the warmer season. Remember, your Family and our Nation needs you to be Combat Ready. Don't take unnecessary risks and always make good decisions.

Each service member in the formation, from pilots to maintenance, from foodservice to administration, from intelligence to simulations and beyond – each and every Soldier makes a critical contribution to the unit every day, and I am very proud to be part of this storied brigade – the AIR CAV!

WARRIORS – FIRST TEAM!

Warrior 6



WARRIOR 6 SENDS

Warriors and our Families,

First and foremost, let me officially welcome home the Troopers of 4-227 'Guns Attack' after their successful nine-month deployment to Kuwait. We couldn't be more proud of their outstanding accomplishments and partnership with our Allies in the Middle East.

Over the past quarter, our Brigade has been very busy with us supporting two National Training Center Exercises to include the first deployment of the F/227th "Grey Eagle" unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to Fort Irwin, Calif.

The Grey Eagle UAS is a "game changer" on the modern battlefield, providing the ground commander real-time



The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade "Warriors" welcomed home about 250 Soldiers from 4th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 'Guns Attack,' at a ceremony at Cooper Field here April 22, following the unit's return from a nine-month deployment to Kuwait.

After an official uncasing of the battalion colors by the battalion command team, Families and friends rushed the field to welcome home their Soldiers.



Shelina Millan (center), a Louisville, Kentucky, native, nursing student at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and wife of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Santos Millan (right), a Ponce, Puerto Rico, native and platoon leader for Co. F, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, pose for a photo alongside Col. Cory Mendenhall (left), a Bonners Ferry, Idaho, native and commander of the 1st Air Cav. Bde. at Club Hood at Fort Hood, Texas, April 23. (U.S. Army photo by Mrs. Melany Loftin, 1st Cav. Div PAO/Released.)

1st Air Cav spouse serves through volunteering

Story by: Staff Sgt. Christopher Calvert
1st Air Cav. Bde. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – Many military spouses spend time bettering their local communities and lending a helping hand to their respective family readiness groups.

For one 1st Air Cav wife, leading FRGs and volunteering to help others has been part of her daily routine for more than a decade.

“I just like to help people,” said Shelina Millan. “If there’s something I can do, why not do it? I’ve always believed that five minutes of your time can make a world of difference to someone else.”

Millan, a nursing student at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and wife of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Santos Millan, arrived to the Company F “Ravens,” 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division family in 2011 with her husband, and immediately began researching ways to help out.

Since then, she has spent about 25 hours a week volunteering at Metroplex Hospital, with the Cub Scouts of Pack 248, and spearheading

the company’s FRG program, all while juggling a full-time school schedule.

Last year alone, she administered numerous free blood draws for local community members strapped for cash, provided immunizations to children attending public schools, and has been in charge of several aspects of the local Cub Scout pack in Killeen, Texas.

“It’s tiring,” the Louisville, Kentucky, native said. “I didn’t realize how much I’d done until Melany Loftin [the 1st Air Cav. Bde.’s family readiness support assistant] told me how many volunteer hours I’d accumulated. As exhausting as it can be, it’s totally worth it.”

Millan is no stranger to leading FRGs and volunteering, as she has led the majority of FRGs she has been a part of, including a battalion program in Fort Rucker, Alabama, while continually volunteering around posts across the world since her husband enlisted in the Army in 1998.

For all that she has done to help better Co. F’s FRG and the local community, she was recognized as the 1st Air Cav Bde.’s volunteer of the year at Club Hood here April 23.

Her improvements to the company’s FRG program included changing monthly phone calls to monthly texts, which led to several units adopting the idea; and redefining monthly activities, which have been a hit with fellow spouses in the company, she said.

“We have an activity once a month for all spouses to participate in and get a break from the military for a day,” she said. “We’ve had private shopping parties, social games and ice breakers, so that all spouses in the company can get the opportunity to make friends and interact.”

“We also do craft night for children, as we don’t ever want to leave them out,” she added. “Ultimately, we do everything possible to make our organization feel more like a family than just a company.”

Millan said she sees no end to volunteering in sight and attributes her positive experiences as a military spouse to staying involved.

“As long as my husband stays in the military, I’m going to keep doing my part,” she explained. “It all started because I wanted to have a good experience as a military spouse.”

“It’s important to make and keep these relationships,” she added. “I still have friends from when I started, and it’s all thanks to an awesome FRG program I fell in on.”

Santos Millan, Shelina’s husband, a Ponce, Puerto Rico, native and platoon leader for Co. F, has witnessed his wife’s hard work firsthand since his enlistment.

Hard work that Santos said is not ending anytime soon.

“Her dedication over the years really shows what she’s made of,” he said. “She’s taking care of the commander, me, the Soldiers, and their Families every day.”

“She’s not doing this just because I’m an officer, as she’s volunteered and spearheaded activities since I was a private,” he added. “Everything she does is meant to help someone, and the organization is better as a whole because of her efforts day-in and day-out.”

1st Air Cav Soldier sings way into Soldier Show

Story by: Staff Sgt. Christopher Calvert
1st Air Cav. Bde. PAO

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas – Walking up on stage with shaky legs and sweaty palms, Spc. Aurielle Polynice's journey to making the cut for the 2014 Soldier Show culminated in one moment as the bright lights peered down on her.

It was audition time, and it was her turn to shine. "I started freaking out; I always freak out at first," she said. "Then I go out on stage and I let it all go."

Polynice, an unmanned aircraft systems operator with Co. F, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, sang her way into becoming the sole Fort Hood Soldier in the U.S. Army Installation Management Command's 2014 "Stand Strong" Soldier Show during a live audition at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Feb. 15.

Now, Polynice and her 21 fellow cast members are preparing for their first live show, set for April 18 at Fort Sam Houston, followed by 60 more performances at 37 garrisons across the U.S.

Polynice's journey began three years ago, when she witnessed the 75-minute Broadway-style production for the first time.

"When I saw it in 2011, I thought it was really, really cool," she said. "I wanted to see if I could make the cut. I wanted to represent my unit to the rest of the Army."

Earning the chance to audition live, however, took years of patience.

"I did a prerecorded video audition for 2011's show, but was unable to put in my packet because of an upcoming deployment," the Lawrenceville, Ga., native said. "I wasn't going to let that stop me from trying again in the future."

She deployed to Afghanistan for a year in 2012, and returned with her sights still firmly set on becoming a member of the Soldier Show.

Soon after redeployment, Polynice sang Whitney Houston's "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" during



Spc. Aurielle Polynice, an unmanned aircraft systems operator with Co. F, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, sings her way into becoming the sole Fort Hood Soldier out of 22 cast members to be part of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command's 2014 "Stand Strong" Soldier Show during a live audition at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Feb. 15. The 75-minute Broadway-style production is put on annually by Soldiers, for Soldiers, with the ultimate goal of providing entertainment and promoting esprit-de-corps among troops. (U.S. Army photo by Mr. Robert Dozier, IMCOM PAO/Released.)

2012's Operation Rising Star, a vocal competition that showcases the talent of Soldiers and their Family Members, and made it to the top 10 before being voted off.

This only fueled her fire to becoming a better, more confident vocalist, she said.

"At the time, I was pretty excited just to make in to the top 10," she said. "But soon after, I was already planning on trying out for the next one. I wanted to get better. I wanted to win."

Now part of the Soldier Show, Polynice and fellow cast members have bonded during the weeks of preparation, she said.

"I'm excited to be on the road with the friends I've made here," she said. "After only a week, we've become a family. The 12 to 15-hour days we spend practicing our vocals and choreography have helped us all grow strong together as performers and Soldiers."

Sgt. Quentin Dorn, Army Entertainment's production and stage manager, has closely watched the team come together during the past few weeks.

He has witnessed growth, he said, that has shown the teams' ability to potentially put on the best production to date.

"There's something special about this group," the Albuquerque,

N.M., native said. "They've bonded extremely well together from the beginning and have fallen easily into their roles. It's amazing how well they work together to shine as one."

While mentoring and observing cast members, Dorn has had a first-hand look at Polynice's improvements in both singing ability and confidence since her arrival at the installation, he said.

"Spc. Polynice is doing great," he said. "She was a little shy when she first auditioned, but we've got her used to singing on stage. She now has the confidence needed to really shine."

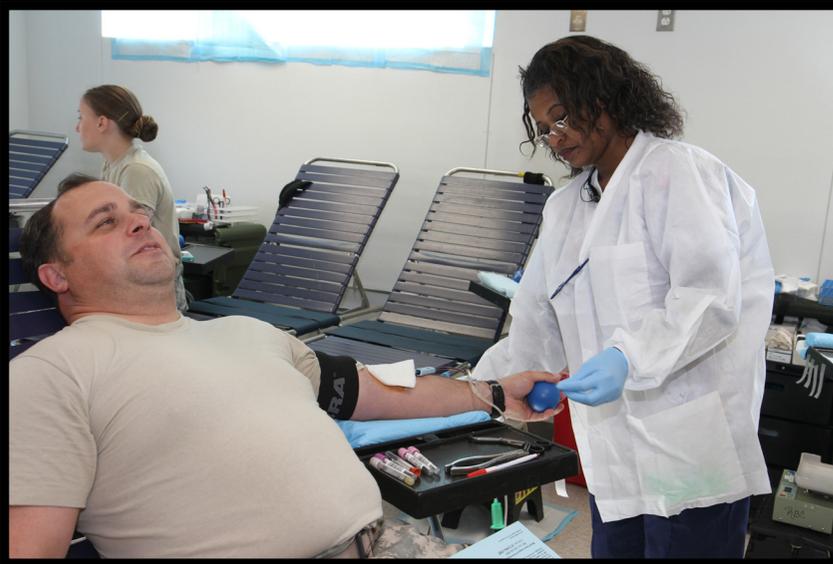
With the first live show around the corner, Polynice said she is looking forward to showcasing her skills, one lyric and dance move at a time.

"It's been a blast so far," she said. "I've learned a lot, and am still learning every day. I look forward to performing for my fellow Soldiers, and I'm especially proud to represent my unit."





Soldiers with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade “Warriors,” 1st Cavalry Division, participate during a division run here at Fort Hood, Texas April, 30.



Soldiers with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade "Warriors," 1st Cavalry Division, donate blood during a blood drive here at Hood Army Airfield, Fort Hood, Texas, April 15. By giving blood, Soldiers are potentially saving up to three lives per donation.

The blood drive received more donations for a single drive than previous ones during the last seven years.



Capt. April Santos, a Houston native, UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot, and commander of the Co. B “Jokers,” 3rd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, poses for a photo outside of a UH-60 Blackhawk at Hood Army Airfield at Fort Hood, Texas, March 20. Through hard work and persistence, she overcame many hurdles to make it through flight school as a single mother. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Calvert, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div.)

1st Air Cav pilot lives childhood dream: aviator

Story by: Staff Sgt. Christopher Calvert
1st Air Cav. Bde. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – For Capt. April Santos, the road to fulfilling her childhood dream hasn’t always been smooth. However, she fought to become the one thing she felt destined to be since the first time she ever saw an aircraft – an Army pilot.

“My brother took to me to see Army helicopters for the first time when he was in the Guard,” the Houston native said. “Since that day, that’s always remained in the back of my mind. I knew right then that I wanted to fly and serve my country.”

Santos, a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot and commander of the Company B “Jokers,” 3rd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, is no stranger to the military.

Her father served honorably as an infantryman, and her two brothers served in the National Guard. Growing up alongside them further fueled her dream to join, she said.

“I wanted to be a Soldier so bad,” Santos said. “I would always try on my

brothers’ uniforms, and one year for Halloween I pretended I was G.I. Joe, not G.I. Jane.”

After high school, Santos attended college but quickly ran short on funds.

Then 9/11 happened.

“I couldn’t afford college for a whole year, and I wanted to serve my country, so I enlisted as a 52 charlie [utilities equipment repairer],” she said. “After serving five years, I put in my Green to Gold packet [for an ROTC scholarship], completed my Associates of Arts in criminal justice at Methodist College in Fayetteville, N.C., and was picked up for flight school at Fort Rucker in 2007.”

Flight school brought its own set of challenges. During the two-year course, Santos would spend days away from her son, Demetrius, who was then only 2 years old.

“It took a lot of friends and child care sitters to help raise my son while I was learning to fly,” she said. “I only saw him during the night, as he was already asleep during the week when I would get home. All the while, I was going through a divorce. It wasn’t easy.”

“It was rough,” she added. “I knew it would be a struggle, but the rewards would be worth it in the end. You do what you have to do to make it happen, and that’s what I did.”

After completing flight school and receiving her commission, Santos deployed with the 2nd General Support

Aviation Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, to Camp Taji, Iraq, for a year in 2010.

Despite being halfway across the world, she and her fellow troops make the best of it, and Santos found a way to stay connected with then kindergarten-age Demetrius.

“Our unit kept its morale up during the deployment by playing practical jokes on each other to lighten the mood; we had the best water fights,” she said with a smile. “Demetrius and I bonded together over Skype, as my dinner time was his breakfast time, so we ate Lucky Charms together. It was our way of staying connected.”

Now flying with the Air Cav, Santos said she’s living her childhood dream every time she laces up her boots and dons her aviator helmet.

“Females have come a long way in the military,” she said. “I’m the first female commander this company has ever had, and the only female in the company. This battalion alone has four female commanders. That really shows the strides we’ve made.”

Santos has no intention of slowing down, as she puts in extra effort outside of duty hours to ensure she’s physically capable to keep up with the fittest of Soldiers, while doing her part to help those in need.

“I run an hour every night to keep up with my younger Soldiers during PT,” she said. “I also find it easy to help Soldiers with their problems. Most of the time, if they have an issue with finances or relationships, I can relate to them and use my experiences to help. That’s part of the reason I joined – to help Soldiers.”

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Penny Johnson, an electronic warfare technician with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Air Cav. Bde., can relate to Santos.

“Captain Santos is a very strong woman to say the least,” Johnson said. “Trying to raise a child as a single mother in the military ... gives her a lot to offer to her Soldiers.”

Looking back, Santos said everything she overcame was worth it.

“Back then, I couldn’t imagine having the opportunity to attend flight school,” Santos said. “Now, here I am. It’s just like I tell my Soldiers; never give up, because we all have something special to offer.”



Soldiers with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, gather for a group photo at Hood Army Airfield, Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 20. The company placed first in the medium-size category at the division level in the recent Army Award for Maintenance Excellence competition and will be competing at the Department of the Army level in April. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Calvert, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div.)

1st Air Cav units earn division, FORSCOM maintenance awards

Story by: Staff Sgt. Christopher Calvert
1st Air Cav. Bde. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – A 1st Air Cavalry Brigade unit is in the running for an Army-level maintenance award to be decided this spring.

The real story, however, is how they got there.

“I’ve witnessed a 180-degree turn around,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marvin Crews, maintenance technician for Company E, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cav. Bde., 1st Cavalry Division. “When I got here in August 2012, a lot of techniques needed polishing, and a lot of Soldiers needed training. Now, we’ve grown together, and every day we’re learning something new to better our unit and ourselves.”

Vehicle maintainers with Co. E, 2nd Bn. and with the 615th Aviation Support Battalion, both with 1st Air Cav. Bde., placed first in the medium unit and large unit categories respectively at the division-level to win the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence in the fall of 2013, with the 615th ASB also taking first place in the large unit category at the U.S. Forces Command-level.

Additionally, Co. E advanced to the Department of the Army-level competition in the medium unit category and is awaiting an on-site inspection in April to continue evaluation.

Crews said he attributes the unit’s effectiveness not only to senior leaders, but also to team leaders and junior enlisted Soldiers who strived for excellence.

“We have NCOs teaching junior Soldiers on a daily basis, ensuring everyone is familiar with our standing operating procedures,” said Crews, a Berlin, Germany, native. “We’ve collectively added a lot of attention to detail. Our growth has been like peeling an onion, as every time we peel a layer back, we discover something new to refine and perfect.”

“Our Soldiers did it all,” Crews added. “We have internal trackers in place now that accurately measure all of our resources. Everything we’ve implemented is working for us, and we will benefit from having not only stronger troops now, but more effective leaders in the future.”

The road to AAME victory was much the same for the 615th ASB, as they spent two years constantly improving their operations.

“When the 615th ASB redeployed in June 2012, they failed every initial maintenance inspection – every single one,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marshall Goodman, the 615th ASB battalion maintenance technician. “This

was due to the transition to garrison operations and a loss of key personnel. However, we worked together as a team to overcome these deficiencies, and ultimately have become the best maintenance battalion in FORSCOM.”

Goodman said the evaluation procedures began with a 20-page narrative of the battalion’s maintenance management program, followed by on-site assessments of the unit’s maintenance standing operating procedures, training, quality control, and resource management programs.

“I started writing the [award submission] book to submit for the battalion in May 2013, and it took eight drafts to get it right,” said Goodman, an O’Fallon, Ill., native. “We started this program literally from scratch when I arrived here. It was worth it, because I knew we were improving our motor pool operations, and I felt we were worthy of competing. Winning the award shows we truly have become the best.”

Assessments of each unit in the categories of attitude and effective leadership are rated against a benchmark of past winners, and the principles of exceptional maintenance processes are then validated and ranked, according to the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps, under whose purview all the wheeled vehicle mechanics fall

Winning was only possible because of the maintainers working behind the scenes, said Goodman.

“The Soldiers are the ones who truly made this happen,” he said. “All of our accomplishments are due to their hard work and long hours. They’re the ones who put the work in; I just wrote the book and made sure we exceeded the standards specified in it.”

Although the 615th ASB won at the FORSCOM level, they came shy of placing in the top three at the Department of the Army level this year.

Goodman said he’s convinced his battalion will take first place at the Army level in 2015, improving upon what they’ve learned since revamping their operations as maintainers.

“We’re going to keep getting better and continue competing,” Goodman said. “I know we’re a great battalion, and I think we have a great chance of winning it all next year.”



Chief Warrant Officer 3 Eric Pope, a Harker Heights, Texas native, and AH-64 Apache helicopter maintenance test pilot with Co. C, 4-227th "Guns Attack," is inducted into the Honorable Order of St. Michael here at Hood Army Airfield, Fort Hood, Texas, April 28.





The 615th Aviation Support Battalion kicked off a truck rodeo to more than 20 Soldiers with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade "Warriors" and 41st Fires Brigade here at Hood Army Airfield, Fort Hood, Texas, April 22.

The competition, which lasted until April 25, was meant to increase camaraderie and assess mounted operations proficiency among troops, with the winning battalion and best vehicle crews being identified at the conclusion of the event.



The Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.