

THE **STINGER**

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- 3 COMMANDER'S COMMENTS
- 6 180FW Trains for Future Fight
- 10 180FW Deemed Mission Ready
- 12 Stingers Embrace Multi-Capable Airman Concept During ACE Exercise
- 14 Turning Struggles into Strengths
- 16 A Future Without Limits
- 18 Lessons in Leadership
- 19 180FW Participates in Guard Care
- 20 180FW Nurse Gives Back to Her Community
- 21 180FW Airman Coaches Youth Soccer
- 25 Promotions & Retirements



Cover Photo By:
Staff Sgt.
Brittni Capozzi

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS

Stingers set the bar high



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*In 2024, we flew 2,876 sorties,
totaling over 4,400 flying hours.*
~ Col. Chad Holesko

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SENTINEL. The 180FW was only the second Air National Guard unit to deploy to an Expeditionary Air Wing under the new Air Force-Force Generation deployment model, providing combat capabilities to the Central Command Area of Responsibility.

While deployed and assigned to the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing, our Stinger Airmen assisted the execution of two joint, coalition exercises, NATIVE FURY and DESERT SHIELD. They provided oversight for more than \$50 million in military construction projects and assisted with the modernization of the deployed network infrastructure, enhancing communications and security.

More than 145 Airmen and 10 F-16 fighter jets deployed to the Volk Field Combat Readiness Center in Wisconsin, over the summer, to participate in Exercise Northern Lightning. The annual, two-week, exercise enabled the 180FW to integrate with joint forces, focusing on full-spectrum air-to-air and air-to-ground combat, dissimilar aircraft air tactics, as well as defensive and offensive counter air maneuvers under realistic surface-to-air and air-to-air threat simulations.

In December, more than 110 Airmen deployed to undisclosed locations throughout the U.S. and its territories to conduct a four-month mission supporting Operation NOBLE EAGLE, providing critical homeland defense capabilities and air superiority in protection of the U.S.

For the second consecutive year, the 180FW led the U.S. Air Force, executing one of the largest flying hour programs across the total force. In 2024, we flew 2,876 sorties, totaling over 4,400 flying hours.

Supporting the flying mission with top-notch, proven maintenance practices, our Aircraft Maintenance Group led a team of personnel, from four units across the force, to Belgium to perform functional checks and prepare four F-16 fighter jets for return to home-station following intensive service life enhancement program upgrades.

Our maintenance team also conducted the upgrade of the F-16 Block 42 AESA Radar verification and validation of installation process, hosting five additional Air National Guard units to observe. The Actively Electronically Scanned Array radar enables legacy aircraft to integrate with fifth generation airframes, enhancing wide-range combat capabilities in information intensive battlespaces.

2024 was a huge year for the 180th Fighter Wing.

As always, our Stinger Airmen continue to set the bar high and the accomplishments below are just a small snapshot highlighting successful mission execution.

Our Airmen are the foundation of our mission success and each year we recognize the best of the best through our local Airman of the Year award winners. In 2024, our leadership team submitted many, many nominations from across the base and it was extremely difficult to choose only six Airmen to represent the wing. These Airmen exemplify the values, hard work and dedication that every Stinger Airman brings to the table, setting the 180FW apart from the rest.

Our wing-level winners moved on to the state-level to compete in the categories of Airman of the Year, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Company Grade Officer of the Year, First Sergeant of the Year and HONor Guard Member of the Year. We are also happy to announce that our 2023 180FW Noncommissioned officer of the Year was named NCO of the year for the Ohio National Guard, in January, 2024.

While we maintained our daily continuous training activities here at home-station, we also deployed more than 330 Airmen and 130 tons of cargo and equipment to four locations across the globe.

In April, we deployed 70 Airmen to Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates, in support of Operation ENDURING



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*These accomplishments would not
 be possible without the commitment
 and perserverance of every single
 one of our Stinger Airmen*
 ~ Col. Chad Holesko

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 The maintenance team also hosted a team of engineers for an anthropometric study of the F-16 cockpit. The study focused on human body size and ergonomics for development of future upgrades. To better support F-16 aircrew as airframe and technology capabilities continue to evolve.

Additionally, our Maintenance and Operations Groups partnered with the 122nd fighter Wing, Fort Wayne, IN, to provide hands-on maintenance and air tactics training as the 122nd transitioned from the A-10 Warthog, an air-to-ground aircraft, to the multi-role F-16 Fighting Falcon.

Ensuring that every Airman is physically, medically and mentally fit for duty and mission accomplishment, our MEDical Group conducted more than 6,300 medical assessments throughout the year. Ensuring that we are fit-to-fight, performed 1,143 periodic health assessments, 626 public health and 348 occupational health consultations, 1,126 immunizations, over 2,000 blood draws and more than 1,000 x-rays.

In addition to maintaining overall Airman fitness, our medical team participated in the Ohio Guard Care program, providing more than \$330 thousand in free critical medical care for over 1,000 un- and underinsured Ohioans. This joint program provided no-cost services including, physicals, immunizations,

eye exams and free eyeglasses, dental extractions and restorative care, hearing tests, nutritional counseling and women’s health services.

While flawlessly conducting our missions and continuing with our rigorous training requirements, the 180FW also executed an extensive community outreach program, supporting more than 160 community events including 30 base tours, 27 off-base events and 100 flybys across the midwest region and beyond.

These accomplishments would not be possible without the commitment and perseverance of every single one of our Stinger Airmen. Their contributions ensure the 180FW continues to lead the way and showcases that we are the most ready and lethal fighter wing in the Combat Air Forces.

The 180FW will again excel in 2024, as we continue to train and adapt to shifts in the strategic environment, refocus and reoptimize. We will continue to provide those lethal combat capabilities to combatant commanders.

I am proud to serve with each and every one of our Stinger Airmen, and I am extremely grateful for the dedicated and continued support our Airmen receive from our families and our communities. We could not do what we do without those of you who make up Stinger Nation!✈️

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180FW Trains for Future Fight

Story by: Senior Airman Nick Battani
Photos by: Staff Sgt. Brittini Capozzi and Senior Airman Nick Battani

More than 100 Airmen and 10 F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to Ohio National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing, deployed to Volk Field Air National Guard Base, Wis., in early August to participate in exercise Northern Lightning.

Northern Lightning is an annual training event, hosted at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center, a joint certified Air National Guard facility, leveraging an integrated, full spectrum training environment with electronic warfare, anti-access and aerial denial specialization for units to enhance their combat capability and readiness. During this two-week exercise, the 180FW had an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to integrate with joint forces, focusing on air-to-air and air-to-ground combat, dissimilar aircraft air tactics and offensive and defensive counter air, with realistic surface-to-air and air-to-air threats.

"With Northern Lightning, the key factor is the scale of the exercise and that fourth and fifth generation integration," said Maj. Travis Dancer, an F-16 fighter pilot and project officer for Northern Lightning. "Where both aircraft can do air to air and air to ground so we can use each other's benefits."

The ability to integrate their fourth generation aircraft with fifth generation aircraft was a major theme of Northern Lightning.

"The big learning objective here is to use the fifth generation to complement the fourth generation aircraft," said Capt. Patrick Haugen, an F-16 pilot assigned to the 180FW.

Northern Lightning provides a great training environment for the pilots to test this integration in real-world environments.

"Flying with the F-35, we're trying to use our systems paired with their systems and see how they complement each other and then testing our game plans to see if they work out," said Haugen.

Highlighting how the aircraft complement one another was a major objective for Northern Lightning. The 180FW worked with the U.S. Marine pilots to sync the F-16 with the F-35, focusing on the benefits each jet brings to the fight.

"It's important that we're in this joint-environment because that's how we're going to win the war," said Haugen. "There's not going to be just one type of aircraft and working with our Marine partners allows us to train to win a near peer conflict."

Dancer echoed the sentiments that Northern Lightning



highlighted the importance of training between services across the Department of Defense.

"When we talk about the future of warfare, the separation of different branches is going to the wayside," said Dancer. "I think that is a good thing because assets such as the F-35s from the Marine Corps bring a different avenue to the fight that work well in tandem with our F-16s and the more we get into that joint environment is a necessity because of the future outlook of our adversaries."

Volk Field provided an ideal location for this fourth and fifth generation integration during Northern Lightning. The airspace is much larger than the 180FW uses for training back home, allowing for more open space to train with the F-35s.

"With Volk Field, the major factor is the airspace," said Dancer. "Up here in the northern part of the United States, we have a lot more airspace that we are able to use, which is really conducive to our kind of training that we wouldn't be able to get back home in Ohio's airspace."

The airspace wasn't the only factor that makes Volk Field ideal for Northern Lightning. Volk Field is a large base, complete with housing for service members. This allows

members of the 180FW, who are mainly traditional guardsmen to live and work together for an extended period of time which is key to improving morale and missions readiness.

"The facilities at Volk Field, with their housing and debrief areas, that we don't have back home, is a major factor," said Dancer. "Coming out here allows the unit to come together which is a big part of these exercises."

Northern Lightning provided the 180FW the ability to test their integration of fourth and fifth generation aircraft as well their joint-training capabilities, enabling the 180FW to remain always ready, always there.

"The experience of a large-scale exercise and the stress that comes with it is invaluable," said Haugen. "We don't want the first time executing these tactics to be in war, so we iron out all of these issues together as a unit which keeps our pilots ready for any real-world scenario in the future."

Due to the tireless efforts of the pilots in the air and the Stinger Airmen on the ground, the 180FW was able to fly more than 146 training sorties, with more than 217.5 flight hours, enhancing the 180FW's capability to execute their mission in a joint, combat-like environment. 🇺🇸



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180FW Deemed Mission Ready

Story by: Airman 1st Class Camren Ray
Photos by: Senior Airman Nick Battani & Tech Sgt. Gregg York

When compared to other F-16 Fighting Falcon units across the Force, the Ohio National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing continues to set the standard with the dedication from Airmen who raise the bar high.

The 180FW received a Mission Effective rating after a Unit Effectiveness Inspection (UEI) in March of 2024 in Swanton, Ohio.

"From the Inspector General (IG), we were thrilled to see the hard work and effort of our wing members validated by the Air Combat Command (ACC) IG," said Capt. Ryan Lamy, the Director of Inspections, assigned to the Ohio National Guard's 180FW.

The UEI is a four-to-five-year cycle that ends in a capstone event which is an on-site visit from the ACC IG to the base and is the final evaluation of the cycle.

Leading up to the final capstone, the 180FW IG team conducted various inspections throughout the wing to identify strengths across programs and strategized with leadership on any identified areas of improvement.

During the UEI, the ACC IG evaluated each individual unit, referring to recent in-house inspections conducted by the wing IG team throughout the cycle.

The ACC IG team evaluated the wing and individual units based on the four Major Graded Areas (MGAs), Managing Resources, Leading People, Improving the Unit and Executing the mission. The grading system for the MGAs consisted of four ratings, Highly Effective, Effective, Marginally Effective and Ineffective.

The 180FW was graded Highly Effective in two of the four areas and was graded Effective in the remaining two areas.

The 180FW demonstrated effective stewardship of allocated



resources and mitigated manpower risks by shifting resources to reach mission requirements. With this, Airmen spoke highly regarding the stability at the base and the ACC IG determined that the use of Airman's time was highly effective.

The wing has a comprehensive communication strategy, ensuring all Airmen and their families can receive and understand information. With the ease of communication, the ACC IG determined that the wing effectively led Airmen in different professional areas, and Airmen expressed high unit pride and high morale.

Mission requirements were understood at all levels across the wing and Airmen were focused on readiness. The ACC IG highlighted how the wing is committed to continuous improvement to include leading the U.S. Air Force as the first Air National Guard Unit to receive the certification to perform on-site repairs of the canopy sil longeron on the F-16.

The ACC IG also highlighted preparedness of Airmen who are able to seamlessly perform their jobs in major joint exercises like NORTHERN LIGHTNING. The wing was effectively able to execute the mission ensuring efficient combat power and delivering Expeditionary Air Base capabilities.

Several programs stood out to the ACC IG team for superior performance including Command Post, Intelligence Flight, Fabrication Flight, Inspector General, Public Affairs, Logistic Plans, Emergency Management, Barrier Maintenance, Snow Removal, Outbound Cargo and Airman and Family Readiness Program. These programs each received a highly effective rating during their individual inspections.

"The rating validated mission requirements are met in all

mission areas (Readiness, Daily Operations and Instillation Preparedness) and confirmed that personnel are proficient in their duties," said Lamy. "Local community leaders and citizens can feel confident and proud that our base did well and set a positive example of the 180FW."

The rating issued by the ACC IG affirms that 180FW personnel are proficient in their duties and validated the 180FW as Mission Ready.

"The rating is a direct reflection of the day-to-day work put into our unit by our Airmen who dedicate themselves to maintaining lethality, improving their skills and ensuring that the 180FW is Mission Ready," Col. Chad Holesko, Commander of the Ohio National Guard's 180FW. 🇺🇸



Stingers Embrace Multi-Capable Airman Concept During ACE Exercise

Story & Photos by: Senior Airman Nick Battani

MAirmen from the Ohio Air National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing conducted an Agile Combat Employment exercise at the 122nd Fighter Wing, Indiana Air National Guard Base in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Nov. 6 and 7, 2023.

"Agile Combat Employment, the idea of that is to be able to recover, reload, refuel, and relaunch the aircraft while defending it, with a small footprint," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jerri Reeder, a munitions systems craftsman assigned to the 180FW.

ACE is the Air Force's operating concept in which Airmen and aircraft disperse from large central bases and operate from smaller, more austere locations, in a "hub-and-spoke" manner, to complicate an adversary's targeting.

The exercise was the culmination of many months of training the Airmen have been conducting and their first time using the ACE concept to successfully land, refuel, rearm, and relaunch F-16 fighter jets from an unfamiliar location.

"Rearm, refuel, and relaunch, that's the point of what we do," said U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Joshua Straka, an avionics specialist assigned to the 180FW. "We're here to catch jets and turn them quick to get them back in the air."

Airmen from the 180FW have been training under the ACE concept for over a year and will continue to conduct and perfect the ACE concept, enhancing mission readiness;

to ensure combat power can be delivered to combatant commanders, anytime, anywhere.

One of the key concepts of ACE is to allow Airmen to gain a better understanding of other career fields.

"What the ACE training does, is it allows Airmen not just to train in their job but to become multi-capable Airmen and train in a different jobs," said Reeder.

Airmen learning other trade skills is integral to the ACE concept, as it allows for better interoperability in the field.

"It allows you to broaden your horizons and you really get a better respect for the different maintenance disciplines that we work with every day," said Straka. "That translates into how we work together and everyday communications and relations."

This year of training has also come with some challenges for the Airmen to overcome.

"The biggest challenge is being able to balance your time," said Reeder. "We have to maintain these new qualifications, it's not just a one-time thing."

Through these challenges, there comes an opportunity for Airmen to grow as leaders.

"With ACE we step into scenarios where we have Airmen leading from the front and teaching you what they know as experts in their field," said Reeder. "It gives me an opportunity to learn from them."

Straka also valued the opportunity to get out in the field

"...you never know what will happen next and we always have to be prepared for it."

~ Master Sgt. Jerri Reeder

and put the skills he has been learning during ACE training to the test.

"What ACE does is it gets us out of our everyday training environment and gives us something to work towards," said Straka. "These are skills that we will potentially be using in a hot conflict if that happened."

Reeder expressed how vital the ACE concept is for the Air Force as it looks to maintain mission ready for the future fight.

"Being lean, light, and agile, that's the name of the game," said Reeder. "The best way to do that is to be able to know and perform multiple tasks outside of your comfort zone and what you've typically learned."

The ACE training highlights the U.S. Air Force's commitment to honing the skills and training for the future of air combat, where flexibility, readiness, and agility will take center stage.

"Being a multi-capable Airman makes you better equipped to serve and ultimately that's why we are all here," said Reeder. "With things changing in the world, you never know what will happen next and we always have to be prepared for it." "The biggest challenge is being able to balance your time," said Reeder. "We have to maintain these new qualifications, it's not just a one-time thing."

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Turning Struggles into Strengths

Story & Photos by: Staff Sgt. Brittnei Capozzi

Every year the 180th Fighter Wing recognizes and awards outstanding Airmen for their exemplary leadership, job performance, individual accomplishments and service to their community. Airman of the Year, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, First Sergeant of the Year and Company Grade Officer of the year. Throughout that year the winners of these awards showed how they embodied what it means to serve as an Airman.

The 2023 Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year award was presented to Master Sgt. Melissa Martin, the inspection coordinator within the 180FW headquarters, Inspector General's office. Martin went above and beyond in her duties as the inspection coordinator for the wing during a Large-Scale Readiness Exercise. She also prides herself on community engagement by coordinating The Stinger 5k, an on-base run hosted in honor of 9/11, that encourages the outside community to participate alongside service members.

Martin joined the 180FW on June 13, 2002. She was drawn to serve after the events of September 11, 2001. Martin has always been one to show that she is not afraid to take on a challenge. After taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test, Martin decided to do something that not everyone else does. "When I took the ASVAB my weakest area was mechanical," said Martin, "so I thought, why not try to go into a career field that would strengthen my weakest area." That gave Martin her first career field at the 180FW in the engine shop as an F-16 engine mechanic. It was in the Maintenance Group where Martin learned the concept of high-intensity work and attention to detail that she has taken with her throughout her career. It was also where she met great mentors that helped pave the path to where she is now.

"My Maintenance Group commander saw the potential of where I could go and help the unit through Quality Assurance," said Martin. The Maintenance Group commander at the time, saw an area where Martin could focus her skills and excel.

"Stay true to yourself, because your uniqueness brings diversity."
~ Master Sgt. Melissa Martin

After a year-long temporary tour with Quality Assurance, it was realized she was a perfect fit for that position and it soon became her full time career, and where she would meet another mentor. "I would say my greatest mentor was in Quality Assurance, his name was Chief Master Sgt. James Duty," said Martin. Martin admired how Duty led by example, was always working hard and was accountable with regulations. "The mentorship I've received, that's key," said Martin. "From those that mentored me, it's taught me the things that I want to do. You never know when you're influencing someone else."

Martin embodies that leadership style in a multitude of ways. One example is with The Stinger 5k. Running was a weak area for Martin that she saw as a challenge she needed to conquer. After struggling to pass her Physical Fitness Test (PT) for a couple years, she decided to do something about it. She started walking groups during lunch and had to teach herself how to love running. After facing her struggle head on, Martin is now passing her PT test with excellent scores

and has learned to love running. So much so that she started The Stinger 5k to combine her love of running and love of the U.S. Air Force. Now, in its third year Martin hopes the 5k is a way to help Airmen who also may be struggling with their PT test. "There's some of these Airmen that have never done a 5K before, they've only faced the mile and a half, so that is when you can take some of your greatest struggles and turn them into your strengths," said Martin.

Throughout her years at 180FW, Martin has shown how she embodies what it truly means to be an Airman and to support not only her wing in her duties but also the Airmen around her. Advice she gives to Airmen who strive to be their best is, "never give up, your struggles can be your greatest strengths. Stay true to yourself, because your uniqueness brings diversity." Martin actively leads by example and finds great joy in helping others, creating an environment that allows the 180FW to continuously be mission ready and serve the community of Northwest Ohio. 🇺🇸





A Future Without Limits

Story & photos by: Staff Sgt. Sarah Stalder Lundgren

At 21 years old, Senior Airman Nina Van Tassel, an Intelligence Operations Analyst assigned to the Ohio Air National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing, has propelled her future opportunities with an array of impressive military and civilian achievements in just her first three years in the Ohio Air National Guard. While serving her country, Van Tassel is attending college and has volunteered more than 150 hours for her community.

Following in her older brother's footsteps, Van Tassel said she joined the Ohio Air National Guard for the educational, financial and life benefits.

"I saw the benefits it provided for my brother and once I graduated high school, I thought to myself 'why not join the military and set myself up for success in the future?'" said Van Tassel.

Using her Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program (ONGSP) benefits she is pursuing a degree in Security and Intelligence at The Ohio State University where she maintains a 4.0 GPA.

"My major is really a mix of political science, criminal justice, and psychology classes. It is so interesting. I'm a history minor too and it all ties into my military job really well."

As an Intelligence Operations Analyst, Van Tassel plays a pivotal role by analyzing, reporting, and distributing information to key stake holders to streamline decision processes and ensure mission success.

"I describe my job as being a personal Google for the pilots, where they can ask me questions about the mission or systems, and I help them find the answers", she explains. "But my greatest motivation comes from knowing that when I attend drill with my coworkers, we play a crucial role in operations and the overall mission at the 180th."

Since enlisting in 2021, Van Tassel has consistently demonstrated her abilities and unbridled potential through meticulous research and a spirited desire to propel mission readiness.

She played a critical role as a member of the Intelligence Flight team during a recent readiness exercise, conducting

the Opposed Surface Attack Tactics briefing for 112th Fighter Squadron pilots- an intelligence function typically reserved for senior analysts, briefed 48 F-16 pilots on integrated enemy threats, ensured compliance with handling of classified information as the Intelligence Oversight Program Manager and was awarded the 180FW Outstanding Airman of the Year for 2023.

The Toledo, Ohio native said her most proud military accomplishment to date took place during Exercise Northern Lightning 2023 where she served as the Intelligence Team Lead.

"I had never been put in a position of leadership at that level", said Van Tassel. "The collaboration with other intelligence analysts who are extremely smart and tactical was really empowering."

During this exercise, Van Tassel spearheaded joint intelligence processes, refined techniques and integrated intelligence assessments across U.S. Navy, U.S. Marines Corps and U.S. Air Force platforms and her performance earned her a coin from the Ohio Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Brig. Gen. David B. Johnson.

"I couldn't have done it without my family as my support system and great intelligence community at the base," she said. "I was so thankful that my team was willing to give me the opportunity to prove myself."

Van Tassel's college and personal record serves as an equally impressive example of her consistent drive for service, self-improvement and excellence.

The Dean's List recipient is a committed student athlete and volunteers her time with The Ohio State Equestrian Team, giving lessons to children and participating in community clean-up and clothing drive events.

When asked how she finds the motivation to keep pushing herself to achieve, Van Tassel explained that she maintains a mindset that prioritizes self-improvement over recognition.

"I never aim for awards or recognition, I just try to challenge myself when tackling difficult tasks so that when more challenges arise, I know I can face them head-on," she said.

Despite her long list of accolades in such a short time span, Van Tassel is quick to express her genuine gratitude and appreciation for her two most important motivators in her life: her family and her military leadership.

"I am so thankful for my brother leading the way and showing me that with hard work, great things are possible. I am also thankful that my parents encouraged me to be somebody that strives for success and does not stop until the job is done," said Van Tassel. "Without the leadership and guidance I have been given from my coworkers, I would not be nearly as successful. They have provided me with the opportunities, challenges, and the support I needed to be a great analyst."

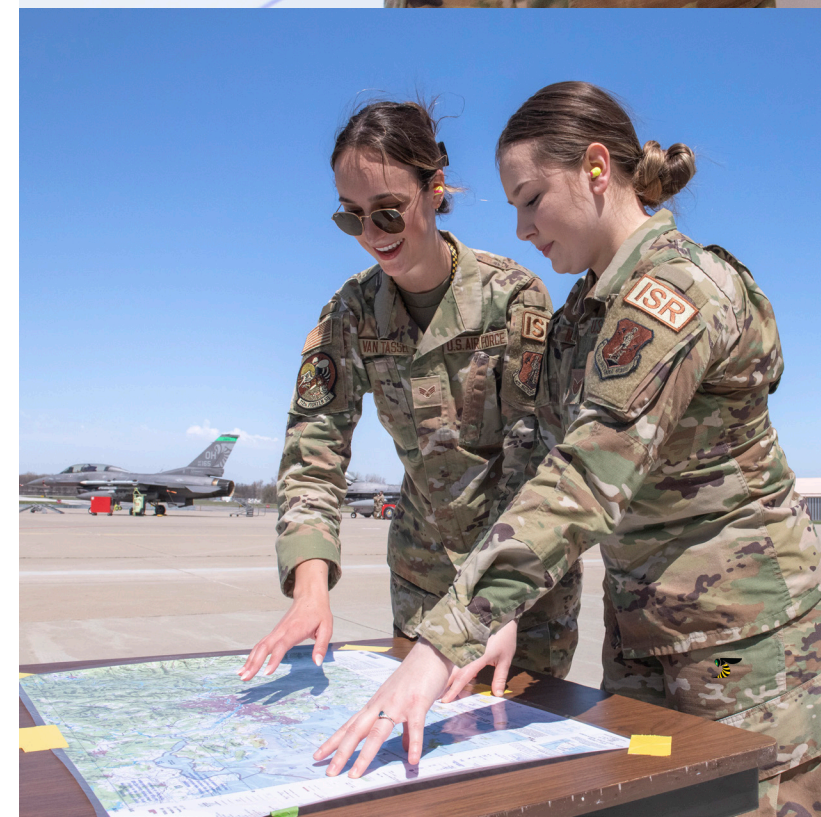
As for the future, Van Tassel is swift to acknowledge that her future would be difficult to forecast but is full of different pathways, truly a future without limits.

"I like to keep my options open. I know there's always going to be a place for me in the military," Van Tassel said. "I'm always exploring different paths to see where I can be most useful."

This summer, Van Tassel is looking forward to working with the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC) and continuing

to learn and explore her talent and interests.

"I just want to make a difference. Whether it's in my community or my nation, I just try to be as helpful as possible."



Lessons in Leadership

Story & photos by: Senior Airman Nick Battani

A Non-Commissioned Officer is the backbone of the Air Force. They take the lead in developing subordinates and exercising effective fellowship. An outstanding NCO, strives to exceed the standards and expectations levied upon them.

Every year the 180th Fighter Wing recognizes and awards outstanding Airmen for their exemplary leadership, job performance, individual accomplishments and service to their community. Airman of the Year, Non-commissioned Officer of the Year, Senior Non-commissioned Officer of the Year, First Sergeant of the Year and Company Grade Officer of the Year. Throughout that year the winners of these awards showed how they embodied what it means to serve as an Airman.

The 2023 Non-commissioned Officer of the Year award was presented to Tech. Sgt. Austin Bly, a logistics plans specialist assigned to the 180FW, for going above and beyond his duties during multiple deployments this past year including Operation Northern Lightning and Operation Spartan Shield.

Bly, who joined the Ohio Air National Guard in 2015, started to see these qualities in NCOs during his first deployment with the 180FW.

"I really started to notice the leadership looking out for the Airmen underneath them when I deployed," said Bly. "I think NCOs need to be patient and relate to their Airmen, these qualities really help Airmen develop into NCOs."

Bly also looked to the leaders above him to provide a core blueprint to becoming an exemplary NCO.

"I started to realize that I like taking leadership skills from other leaders," said Bly. "I think what makes a good NCO is to develop multiple skills shared from different people."

One of the more difficult aspects of an NCO can be relating to the Airmen they are charged with developing.

"I think sometimes Airmen forget that NCOs used to be in their position," said Bly. "When I see one of my Airmen struggling, I pull them aside and tell them that I was in their shoes once and it's okay and show them the way to improve."

This method has helped Bly be able to relate to his Airmen and provide them with guidance and mentorship.

"I've been very fortunate to have really good Airmen that are really high performing," said Bly. "I think relating to them and showing them that I used to be in their position makes them feel better and more relaxed."

Another way Bly can relate to his Airmen is utilizing the education benefits provided by the Ohio National Guard.

"I used the Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program to complete my associate degree," said Bly. "I would absolutely recommend using it to my Airmen, the 100% tuition cov-



erage really helped me save money and grow as a leader."

Bly gives advice to his Airmen beyond the education benefits as well.

"My advice is just to be patient," said Bly. "When you're enlisting there's a lot of things that get thrown at you. Just be patient and enjoy the time you have and the experiences you're going to have in the military."

While Bly stated he was extremely proud to win the Non-commissioned Officer of the Year award, he is already looking forward to molding his leadership skills to become a Senior Non-commissioned Officer and helping his Airmen become award winning NCOs just like himself.

"The skills I need to develop to become a good Senior Non-commissioned Officer are to develop that NCO underneath me to lead their Airmen," said Bly. "As a Senior NCO you're in a more manager and mentor role."

Bly originally planned to complete his initial six-year contract and then transition out of the National Guard, however, his time with the 180FW, while deployed, changed his perspective for his future.

"When I first joined, I was going to do my six-years and get out," said Bly. "My deployment changed my perspective, I'm at ten years coming up in February and I want to complete my 20 years and make this a career."

Bly has shown himself to be an exemplary NCO and tremendous asset for the 180FW. Throughout the remainder of his career, he will continue to grow as a leader and develop quality NCOs and Airmen at the 180FW. 🇺🇸

180FW Participates in Guard Care

Story & photos by: Airman 1st Class Camren Ray



Airmen from the Ohio National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing, traveled to Xenia, Ohio to participate in Guard Care, an event where medically trained Airmen provide free health care to community members at no cost.

The event, Greene County Guard Care, took place at the Greene County Career Center, August 11-12, 2024, and provided free health care for more than 1,000 community members.

Greene County Guard Care worked hand-in-hand with the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program to gather supplies, funding and support.

The event was a joint effort between U.S. Air Force active duty and guard, U.S. Army active duty and guard and the U.S. Public Health Service.

Members of the 180FW provided a range of care from dental services, vitals, vaccines, registration check-in and escorting patients who needed a translator.

"An IRT can take place anywhere there is a great need for health care," said Staff Sgt. Blayne Flickinger, an aerospace medical technician assigned to the 180FW. "It is awesome to be able to use my training to help Americans locally."

Flickinger's role in Guard Care involved operating the My Accessible Real Time Trusted Interpreter (MARTTI) system, provided to the IRT by

Kettering Health, a system of medical centers, emergency center and outpatient facilities, to help with translations between families and medical providers whose first language wasn't English.

"Being flexible and adaptive greatly helped because there were IT issues when we started and we had to identify them and work through them," said Flickinger. "We also used alternative methods of translation, like cell phone translation apps, when we were having these IT issues."

Interacting with the community is one key component in events like these, as these medical providers are the face of the military to the community members who attend.

"We are offering free health care to many people in the community that don't have access to basic health care in their present situation, so for them to come takes courage and humility. That's commendable," said Lt. Col. Jennifer Durbin, a clinical nurse assigned to the 180FW. "I think the impact for the patients is also in knowing that we care and we are here to help them."

The main goal of Guard Care is to provide the local community free health care while Airmen receive real world training in the field.

"Airmen become more comfortable and confident in their clinical skill as well as their ability to come together with Joint Forces to provide medical care," said Durbin. 🇺🇸



180FW Nurse Gives Back to Her Community

Story & photos by: Senior Airman Nick Battani

COVID-19 had a dramatic effect on many. For Senior Master Sgt. Ashley Young, the senior enlisted leader of the Ohio National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing Medical Group, it infused her with a desire to change careers so she could give more back to her community.

"During COVID I was activated for over six months, traveling all over the state providing tests," said Young. "It felt good to help people during a scary time and ease their nerves and fears about what was going on, and I wanted to keep doing that for the community."

After this life-changing experience, Young, a prior operating room nurse, decided to pursue a master's degree in public health, from the University of Toledo and began working for the Ryan White Program at the University of Toledo.

"I began my master's degree in public health, and found this position with the Ryan White Program," said Young. "I was really excited that I could continue to pursue my degree and keep working to help the community."

The Ryan White Program, at the University of Toledo Medical Center, offers high quality, comprehensive HIV/AIDS care services through a multidisciplinary health care team. The program incorporates Adult Primary Care, Adult and Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Mental Health Counseling, Nutritional Counseling, Case Management, Consumer Advocacy, Financial Counseling and 340B Pharmacy Services using a "one-stop shop" model. The Ryan White program also provides HIV testing and education in Lucas County and the surrounding counties.

Young's duties, at the Ryan White Program, include taking patients vitals, ensuring they are taking their medications correctly, and keeping them up to-date on their immunizations, among other duties.

"In the clinic, I'm here to check-in patients, get them ready to see their providers, and assist the provider with whatever they may need," said Young.

Young has also recently taken on the role of the senior enlisted leader of the medical group with the 180FW, after prior serving as a dental assistant, and she is hoping that her work in the community with the Ryan White Program will provide a positive influence on the Airmen she supervises.

"I hope the Airmen see how I've grown over the years," said Young. "They should know they can do the same thing and that I can help guide them."

Young said that she can see that spirit of wanting to help the community within all of the Airmen throughout the entire medical group.



In addition to serving Airmen and maintaining medical readiness for the wing, the 180FW medical group aids communities in Ohio as well as surrounding communities through Innovative Readiness Training missions.

These IRT missions provide offer vital medical services to underprivileged communities as well as communities affected by severe weather events, while also providing joint training opportunities to increase deployment readiness among service members.

A recent IRT mission to aid a community by the medical group stood out for Young.

"The last place we went, a tornado took everything, and Airmen used their skills to help the community get dental, optometry, and general medical care," said Young. "It is inspiring to see the many things our Airmen do."

For Young, inspiration of her Airmen extends not only to helping their community, but also to improving themselves.

"I've seen Airmen working to get their degrees, as well as, gaining their citizenship through the Air Force," said Young. "It is always impressive to see the things our Airmen can accomplish."

While Young has only been at her position with the Ryan White Program for a month, she has high hopes and expectations for her career going forward.

"I hope to complete my master's at the University of Toledo and go out in the community to provide them with more education, testing, and interest in the Ryan White Program," said Young. 🦋

180FW Airman Coaches Youth Soccer

Story & photos by: Airman 1st Class Camren Ray



Being a member of the Air National Guard is a unique military experience. In the Air National Guard, Airmen can serve their country, while also being able to hold a civilian job, go to school and volunteer in their communities.

Lt. Col Bradley Luring, the comptroller commander assigned to the Ohio National Guard's 180th Fighter Wing, has always had an interest in sports. Playing soccer and basketball in high school, Luring has always been active with sports and activities.

When his youngest daughter, Audra, began taking an interest in soccer and basketball as well, Luring realized that he was not the type of parent to sit on the sidelines and watch the games, he wanted to actively be involved in their practices and games.

"It's hard for me to be on the sidelines," said Luring. "I just would rather be coaching because I feel I would be able to get these girls to where they need to be."

Luring has been coaching his daughter's soccer team since they were in kindergarten. He has been able to teach them how the game of soccer works and watch them grow into the game.

"One of the best parts of coaching is watching the progression," said Luring. "Especially when everything we learned in practice clicks during a game."

With the competitive nature of sports, Luring and his team feel down after enduring a loss.

"It's hard to lose," said Luring. "No one likes it, but it's character-building when you lose."

After a loss, the team can grow from their mistakes and improve. The hard work put into practice pays off during the games. The dedication the girls put into the sport can be seen through athletes they look up to as young aspiring athletes themselves.

Caitlin Clark is an example Luring likes to use to show

how hard work pays off. He cites how many hours she has put into her sport by going to the gym and practicing her game to become better.

"You see the way she shoots and think about how much she works," said Luring. "None of that stuff just happens."

But soccer isn't just about winning and scoring goals, it's about passing, formations, strategy and running. While all the things taught during practice are important to the game, some are favored less than others.

"Our coaches make us run too much," said two of the girls on the team.

Luring explains that even he doesn't like running, but while it is difficult and something the girls may not like, it helps make them better.

"You have to make yourself do hard things, so other things in life are easier," said Luring.

During games where the same girls keep scoring, Luring will encourage the girls to work together to help a teammate who hasn't scored, score. With goals like this, the girls build their teamwork skills while their teammate gains the personal accomplishment of scoring.

"I'll tell all the girls on the team let's get this person to score," said Luring. "Let's try to get her scoring."

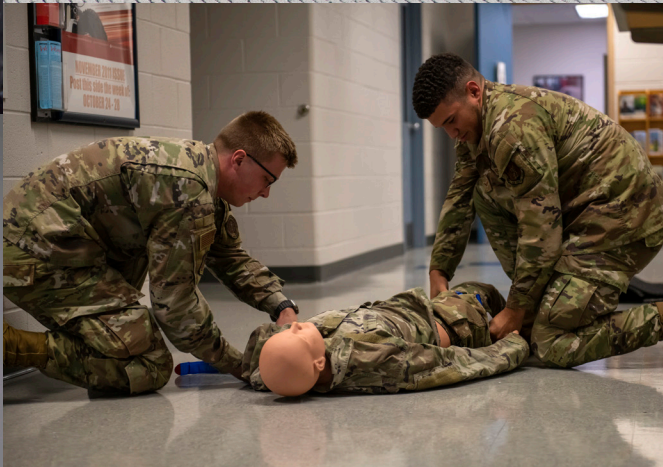
"The best part of soccer is winning, scoring and making new friends," said Sailor Benz-Peavy.

To Luring, the score doesn't matter, he wants to see how each of his players work together as a team to help a fellow teammate and how they encourage them to get involved in the game.

"The Air Force is a perfect example of a team," said Luring. "We all have different roles and if we work against each other, the whole thing doesn't work."

The principals that Luring teaches and instills in his team are the same principles that have shaped Luring as a military member and a coach. 🦋





CONGRATULATIONS

to the following Airmen on their recent promotions

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- David Birdsell
- Ronald Bischoff
- Chantah Chanthakham
- Rayann Collins
- Kaitlyn Custer-
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180th Fighter Wing
2660 South Eber Road
Swanton, Ohio 43558-9645

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Wing Commander
Col. Chad Holesko
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2660 S. Eber Rd.

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
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