

MCRP interns visit Iowa Army Ammunition Plant



To close out their summer, 16 Minority College Relations Program interns took a trip from the Rock Island Arsenal to the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, in Middletown, Iowa, and they saw the production lines for 40 mm and 155 mm, as well as the Solid Waste Processing Center, also known as the recycling center.

Lt. Col. John Dunlapp, IAAAP’s commander, and Randy Doyle, the chief of the operations support division at the plant, shared experiences they’ve had in their careers from both a civilian and military government employee perspective. The pair also offered nuggets of wisdom for the interns to take with them while they are considering their future careers.

JMC is the executive sponsor for MCRP, which provides opportunities to students from Historically Black Colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges.

LEADERSHIP NOTE

Dear JMC alumni,

I am proud to share that our recent MCRP interns have made a significant impact on the government with their diverse skills and backgrounds. With majors spanning business management, finance, cyber, information technology, marketing, and computer science, these interns brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise to their roles.

Not only did the interns provide valuable contributions to the government during their time here, but they also gained valuable knowledge and skills that will benefit them in their professional and personal lives. The MCRP program provided them with a unique opportunity to apply their academic learning to real-world challenges, enhancing their critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication abilities.

We are grateful for the interns' hard work and dedication, and we are confident that they will continue to make a positive impact in their future endeavors. We are proud to have been a part of their journey and look forward to seeing all that they achieve.

Warm Regards,

RONNIE ANDERSON JR.
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding

RETIREE SPOTLIGHT

Linda Dothard

After 18 years, Dothard retired from JMC in March 2023, and what did the former ammunition systems analyst love most about her job?

“The challenges of working with our customers, which were the sites, helping them resolve their technical and system issues within load, assemble, and pack,” Dothard said.

Dothard may not be punching a time clock anymore, but she’s not sitting idle.

“I am teaching single mothers and people coming out of prison how to do basic budgeting,” Dothard said. “I am helping other people do a lot of stuff. Right now, I know someone that needs a personal assistant to help keep their life managed with all the responsibilities that they have.

“Helping others has always been one of my life goals,” she added. “I am most happy when I am helping people reach their goals and helping them achieve their dreams.”

One of the perks of being retired is the opportunity to work on her own schedule, and Dothard loves being able to manage her schedule daily. Besides aiding others, Dothard might be found making gift baskets, traveling, spending time with friends and family, or reading.

“I am reading a whole lot these days,” Dothard said. “I love to read about different people in our world, especially those who are on the screen. I like learning about their struggles and their successes they had getting to where they are at today.”

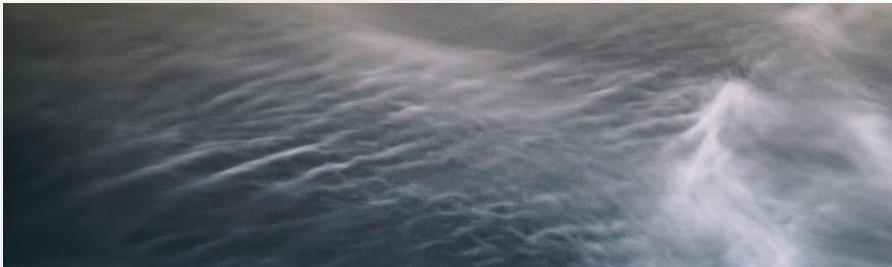


10 mental health tips...

- 1. Stay Active:** Regular exercise can help reduce anxiety, depression, and improve mood. Find a physical activity you enjoy, such as walking, swimming, or yoga.
- 2. Stay Social:** Maintain and build relationships with family, friends, and your community. Volunteering, joining clubs, or participating in social activities can help you stay connected.
- 3. Keep Learning:** Engage in activities that challenge your mind, such as reading, puzzles, or taking classes. This can help keep your mind sharp and provide a sense of accomplishment.
- 4. Practice Mindfulness:** Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga can help reduce stress and improve mental clarity.
- 5. Get Enough Sleep:** Lack of sleep can contribute to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Try to maintain a regular sleep schedule and create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- 6. Eat Healthy:** A balanced diet can help maintain your energy levels and overall health, which can positively impact your mental health.
- 7. Seek Professional Help:** If you're feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or anxious, don't hesitate to seek help from a mental health professional. They can provide you with strategies and resources to manage your mental health.
- 8. Stay Positive:** Try to focus on the positive aspects of retirement, such as having more free time, pursuing hobbies, and spending time with loved ones.
- 9. Set Goals:** Having goals can provide a sense of purpose and achievement. These can be small, daily goals or larger, long-term goals.
- 10. Manage Stress:** Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as through exercise, meditation, or hobbies.

CHAPLAIN’S CORNER *Chaplain (Capt.) Simon Jackson*

Prepare yourself for life’s challenges



In 2017, Hurricane Harvey devastated Houston, catching many residents unprepared despite repeated warnings. Gary Thomas, in “Making Your Marriage a Fortress,” recalls how he became complacent over time, relying on cardboard and blue painters’ tape in a desperate, futile attempt to keep out the floodwaters. This story illustrates a crucial truth: preparation can mean the difference between safety and disaster.

The same principle applies to suicide prevention. Just as residents underestimated the hurricane, we often neglect the importance of preparing for emotional and mental challenges. Recognizing warning signs is essential, but true prevention starts with proactive steps long before a crisis hits.

The **PATH** acrostic can guide our efforts:

- **Purposeful living:** Identify the purpose for your life.
- **Actionable steps:** Putting your purpose into action.
- **Training:** Practices for purposeful progress.
- **Human connections:** Who is going to help me reach this purpose?

Just as cardboard and tape were insufficient against Harvey’s floodwaters, last-minute efforts won’t suffice in mental health crises. By taking intentional, actionable steps now, we can strengthen our defenses and ensure that when the storms of life come, we are ready to stand strong against them together.

Contact Chaplain Jackson at Office: 309-782-3919 or Cell: 309-519-4243

Prioritize your health...

As flu season approaches, it is crucial to prioritize your health and the well-being of family, friends, and coworkers. An annual influenza vaccine is your best defense against the flu, helping to reduce the severity of the virus to vulnerable populations, and to save you from losing valuable time lost to illness.

Although it is typically recommended to get your flu vaccine in October to maximize protection during peak flu season (December to February), vaccines are now available at most local pharmacies or provider offices and recommended for people who may be more susceptible to severe influenza. Alongside this, a COVID-19 booster shot is recommended to strengthen your immunity, particularly as new variants continue to emerge. At present, the United States is seeing a "summer wave" of COVID-19 infections and an updated booster is now available.

For travelers heading to Africa, be aware of the recent resurgence of Mpox (formerly known as monkeypox). This viral infection, spread through close contact with an infected person, contaminated materials, or animals, presents with fever, headache, and a rash that can progress to painful lesions. The CDC recommends that travelers avoid contact with sick individuals, practice good hand hygiene, and consider discussing preventive measures, which may include vaccination, with a healthcare provider prior to departure.

By staying up-to-date on vaccinations and taking common-sense precautions, you not only protect yourself, but also contribute to the broader effort to curb the spread of these infectious diseases. Prioritize your health this season and stay informed to ensure a safe and healthy year ahead.



Lt. Col. Jeffrey Milch,
Command Surgeon



David Nelson
Andrew Witte



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Fred Hissong Jr.
Beverly Baker
Cary Biggart
James Collins
Lydia Dixon
Christine Hudson
William Rubel
Bill Sedlacek
Dan Stackwick

GOOD TO KNOW

- SEPTEMBER KEY DATES**
- 2 – Labor Day
 - 10 – World Suicide Prevention Day
 - 11 – Patriot Day
 - 17 – Constitution Day
 - 21 – International Day of Peace

Numbers to Know

Thrift Savings Plan
<https://www.tsp.gov/>
877-968-3778

Federal Employees Retirement System
<https://www.opm.gov/retirement-center/fers-information/>
888-767-6738

Army Benefits Center – Civilian
<https://portal.chra.army.mil/abc/>
1-877-276-9287

Social Security Administration
<https://www.ssa.gov/>
1-800-772-1213

CAC Card Issues
309-782-0596

Please feel free to contact us with your contributions, suggestions, or questions.
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Will Social Security payments increase in 2025?

The first of three numbers the Social Security Administration will use to determine the 2025 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is in, and it points to a more modest increase in monthly benefit payments next year.

The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers rose by 2.9% in July compared to a year ago. The COLA is based on how much that federal inflation gauge changes in July, August, and September from one year to the next. The final figure for 2025 will be announced in October.

Based on 2023 inflation figures, the COLA for 2024 increased monthly benefits by 3.2%. Due to the cooling of inflation, experts predict the adjustment for 2025 could be anywhere from 2.6 to 2.9%.

If the COLA matches 2.9%, the average retirement benefit of \$1,870 in June 2024 would increase by \$54 per month in January 2025. Survivor benefits would rise by \$44, and disability payments by \$45.

From 2001 through 2020, the COLA averaged about 2.2%. If there is no inflation, there's no COLA - that happened in 2009, 2010, and 2015. The biggest adjustment ever was 14.3% in 1980.

Source: [AARP](#)

Want to return to Federal civilian service?

Here's some things to know if you're considering it...

Retired Department of Defense employees who are rehired as Federal civilian workers while still receiving their annuity are known as reemployed annuitants. They are subject to different rules that govern their retirement and benefits.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, which was enacted on Nov. 24, 2003, stipulated that reemployed annuitants who are rehired by the DOD are not considered employees for purposes of title 5 U.S.C., Chapters 83 (Civil Service Retirement System) or 84 (Federal Employees Retirement System).

The NDAA FY 2008 amendment was enacted to address the unintended consequences of NDAA FY 2004 for Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) annuitants who experienced a reduction in their annuity but could not earn credit for their reemployment service with the DoD. This amendment created two categories of DOD reemployed annuitants: DSR and non-DSR.

For those rehired by DOD after Nov. 23, 2003, CSRS annuitants who retired under DSR provisions and rehired on a permanent appointment are now included as reemployed annuitants. National Guard Technicians who retired under a special disability due to loss of military membership (because of disability) are also included.

Reemployed annuitants must meet certain criteria to be hired within the DOD. They are not eligible to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan, and all appointment types are covered by Social Security only. There is no retirement contribution election opportunity, and reemployment will not increase retirement or death benefits. Salary is not offset for reemployed annuitants.

The NDAA FY 2008 Amendment allowed DSR reemployed annuitants the opportunity to elect to make retirement contributions to earn further retirement credit in lieu of receiving full salary and annuity. Elections are irrevocable and prospective. This amendment was enacted to remedy the unintended consequence of DSR annuitants who were subject to a reduction in their annuity but could not earn credit for their reemployment service with the DOD.