

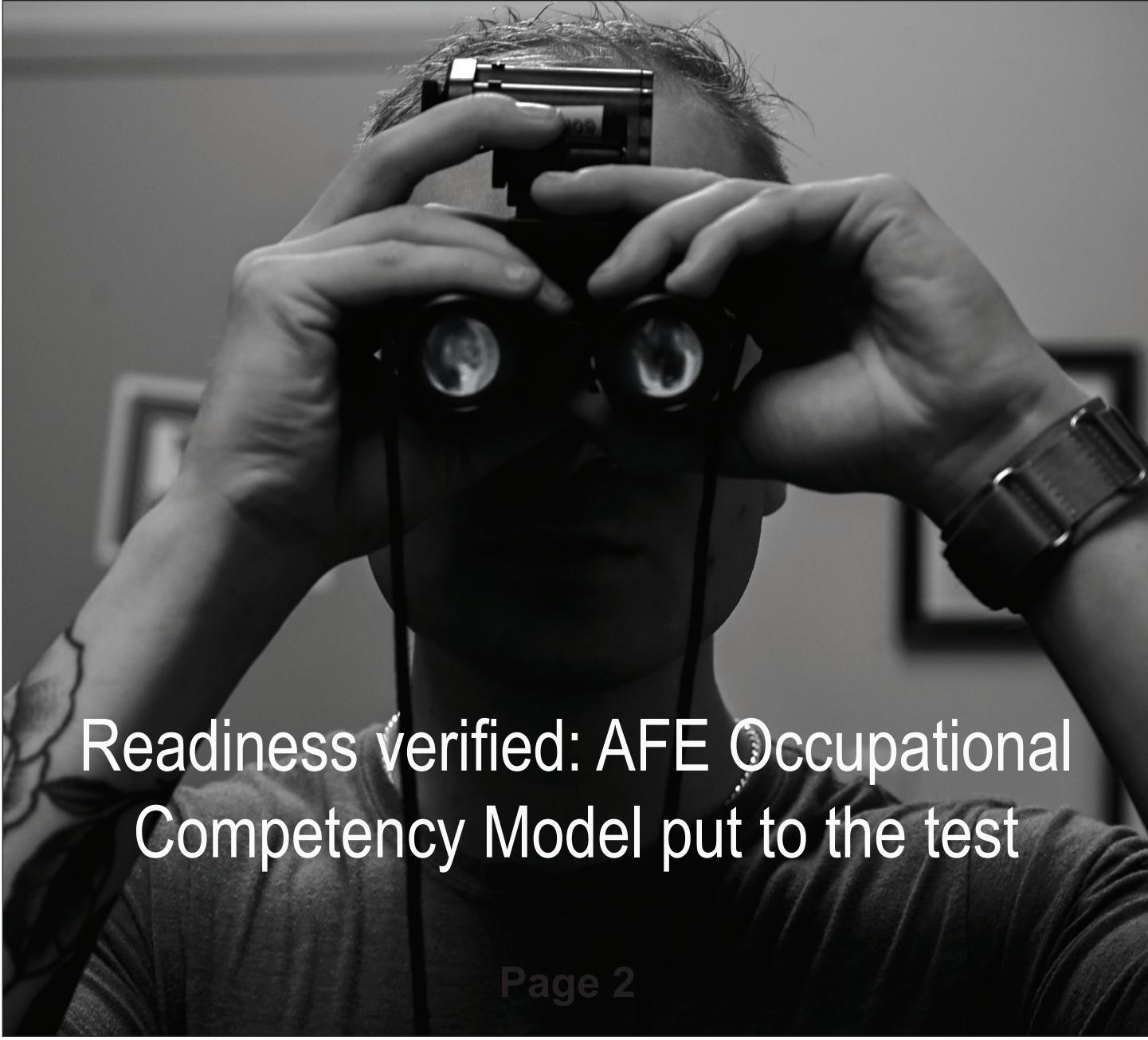
BUCKEYE FLYER



Wright-Patterson AFB, OH

Volume 66, No. 2

February 2026



Readiness verified: AFE Occupational Competency Model put to the test

Page 2

IN THIS ISSUE



New name for Wing's Innovation Cell

Historian's Corner

By Dr. Tara Simpson
445th Airlift Wing Historian

In 1946, the U.S. Antarctic Research Program (USARP) set up a primitive base, Little America IV, near Bay of Whales.

The project rapidly expanded to support 5 scientific stations in the Antarctic and a snow-compact runway. In 1956 Operation DEEP FREEZE launched.

The U.S. Navy Executive Agency for Logistical Support oversaw the operation and the U.S. Air Force was essential for airlift of critical supplies at the South Pole. Initially the USAF provided eight C-124 Globemaster aircraft to air-drop fuel and materials.

The airlift loads included everything from generators, and scientific equipment to crates of eggs, fresh fruit and passengers.

In 1965 the USAF incorporated its first use of a C-141 Starlifter in Operation Deep Freeze. This significantly improved flight time and cargo capacity from the staging base at Christchurch, New Zealand, to its landing site at McMurdo Sound, Antarctica.

As a demonstration of Total Force effectiveness, the Air Force Reserve was finally tasked to take part in the annual operation beginning in 1976. Col. Robert C. Mortensen, 349 MAW Commander noted the importance of the deployment as, "The role played by the Reserve in the Total Force Policy demonstrated our ability as a global force."

By the 2002-2003 Deep Freeze season, there was a higher demand for airlift around the globe, AMC provided minimal C-17 Globemaster III support to the C-141's effort to complete the mission.

With the impending retirement of the C-141, the 445th Airlift Wing was tasked to provide the final Starlifters that flew in the fiftieth season of Deep Freeze, which ended in February 2006.

Snow Shoveling Safety

By Hannah Gaither
88th Air Base Wing Safety

Shoveling snow may seem like a harmless activity; however, snow removal, particularly manual shoveling, presents a significant risk of injury to personnel. Understanding key safety considerations can help reduce risk and maintain readiness.

Risks Associated With Snow Shoveling

Snow shoveling combines heavy lifting and repetitive motion, increasing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries such as back and shoulder strain, as well as cardiovascular events.

Exposure to cold temperatures also increases the risk of hypothermia. Snow-covered and icy surfaces further increase the risk of slips, trips, and falls due to reduced traction. These conditions can lead to injuries ranging from minor sprains to serious fractures. To reduce risk, walk slowly and deliberately and ensure footwear provides adequate traction.

Pre-Shoveling Preparation

• Warm-up: Perform 5 to 10 minutes of light cardiovascular exercise and stretching to prepare muscles.

• Proper attire: Dress in layers to maintain body heat and prevent overheating. Wear waterproof boots with good traction, along with a hat and gloves.

• Shovel selection: Use a lightweight shovel with an ergonomic handle. Curved handles can help reduce

strain on the back.

Safe Shoveling Techniques

- Before you start:** Inspect the work area for ice, snow drifts, and other slip or trip hazards. Remove or mitigate hazards to maintain secure footing.

- Pace yourself:** Avoid overexertion by shoveling smaller amounts of snow more frequently. Take regular breaks of 5 to 10 minutes to rest and rehydrate.

- Proper lifting technique:** Bend at the knees while keeping your back straight. Lift with your legs, not your back, and keep the shovel close to your body. Avoid twisting; pivot your feet to change direction.

- Hydration:** Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Even in cold weather, dehydration can occur.

Cold Stress Awareness and Response

- Hypothermia:** Watch for symptoms such as shivering, confusion, drowsiness, and slurred speech. If hypothermia is suspected, move the individual to a warm location, remove wet clothing, and seek immediate medical attention.

- Frostbite:** Look for signs including numbness and pale or waxy skin. Do not rub affected areas. Seek medical attention.

Snow removal is a necessary task, but it does not have to be a hazardous one. By following these safety guidelines, personnel can reduce the risk of injury, maintain operational readiness, and help ensure a safe winter season.

Buckeye Flyer

445th Airlift Wing

Editorial Staff

Col. Douglas A. Perry Jr.-Commander
Capt. Mary Begy-Chief of Public Affairs
Capt. Rachel Ingram-Assistant Chief of PA
Amanda Dick-PA Specialist
Patrick O'Reilly-PA Assistant
Vacant-Superintendent
Tech. Sgt. Joel McCullough-NCOIC of PA
Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Quijones-PA Journeyman
Staff Sgt. Angela Jackson-PA Journeyman
Senior Airman Bernard Puller-PA Apprentice
Senior Airman Ethan Lamb-PA Apprentice

U.S. Government Printing Office 5-0001-445AW

This funded Air Force Reserve newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services. Contents of the Buckeye Flyer are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of the Air Force or Department of Defense. Editorial content is edited, prepared, and provided by the 445th Airlift Wing Office of Public Affairs. Photographs are U.S. Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.

5439 McCormick Ave.
WPAFB, OH 45433-5132
Building 4010, Room 171
937-257-5784
445AW.PA2@us.af.mil

Wing announces 4th Quarter award winners for CY 2025

By 445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

The 445th Airlift Wing announced its 4th Quarter award winners for Calendar Year 2025.

Airman of the Quarter

Senior Airman Janel Gipson, 89th Airlift Squadron aviation resource manager for the squadron (SARM), is the Airman of the Quarter. Gipson oversaw the SARM office functions by managing the go/no-go status, flight records and training requirements to support the execution of 355 sorties and 1,500 flying hours which directly enabled a 98% mission success rate.

Additionally, she drove the successful implementation of the air resource tool enterprise mission information system, or ARTEMIS, tracker by validating 180 aircrew profiles. Gipson corrected data failures to improve training data accuracy and streamlined personnel readiness processes.

She spearheaded a three-member team during a quarterly audit of all squadron aircrew records and reconciled multiple source documents to guarantee 100% accuracy in personnel qualifications to ensure mission readiness.

Gipson supported community wellness initiatives by running a 5K for Men's Mental Health and generating donations for The African American Male Wellness Agency during a charity sales event. She also provided support to a local family who was navigating a cancer diagnosis through a combined \$5,000 in financial contributions with emotional support, embodying Air Force values and ensuring mission readiness.

NCO of the Quarter

Staff Sgt. Samantha Schinker, 445th MXG maintenance management analyst, is the NCO of the Quarter. Schinker generated 13 weekly Flying Schedule Effectiveness reports and corrected 17 critical errors in sortie surge data which boosted home-station deployment reporting accuracy by 11% to enhance the overall mission.

Additionally, she coordinated the delivery of 306,000 gallons of fuel for the wing's C-17 aircraft. Her support led to the generation of 25 diverse missions that delivered critical supplies and personnel to more than 90 global locations.

She input over 300 maintenance jobs and generated 17 Quick Reaction Checklists which safeguarded the reliability of wing C-17 aircraft, preserved the health and safety of 300 plus Airmen, and ensured success of the first Reserve Command in-place deployment.

Schinker dedicated 50 off-duty hours as a youth soccer coach for her community where she coached 24 youth that fostered an environment of teamwork and sportsmanship that positively reflected Air Force values. She also volunteered for a deployment outside of her Air Force Specialty Code for 104 days where she dual-hatted as both an analyst and production controller while backfilling four vacant

deployment positions.

SNCO of the Quarter

Master Sgt. Jason Mufford, 445th Security Forces Squadron Combat Arms Training and Maintenance section chief, is the Senior NCO of the Quarter. Mufford led CATM operations where he managed \$1.6 million in assets and 11 cadre across 14 courses that led to the qualification of more than 200 personnel and exceeded annual results by 22% to ensure high unit readiness.

Additionally, he piloted the rapid inspection of over 350 weapons under emergency protocols. He deployed a five-person team for a Department of War-directed supplemental inspection where a 120-hour commitment guaranteed zero interruptions to the wing mission.

He co-organized a rapid-deployment weapons qualification through an active-duty partnership that ensured a short-notice U.S. Central Command deployer was equipped with tactical lethality within 24 hours of notification for a six-month rotation.

Mufford achieved a 3.8GPA while completing nine academic credits toward which bachelor's degree in business administration, using his success to mentor 10 Airmen on the value and importance of civilian education. He also coordinated Mission Focus Readiness Training for Airmen by generating 500 plus hours of advanced training across 112 core tasks that resulted in a nine-month reduction in upgrade training timelines and a 3% surge in overall unit readiness.

CGO of the Quarter

Maj. Joel Russo, 445th Logistics Readiness Squadron Material Management Flight commander, is the Company Grade Officer of the Quarter. Then-Captain Russo led a team of six Airmen in planning and executing a pre-deployment exercise to ensure the completion of 60 required certification inspections across five flights to support an upcoming deployment.

Additionally, he delivered a comprehensive briefing to the squadron on the deployed Command and Control by presenting a strategic overview of the communication flow from the Secretary of War to Airmen while underscoring the mission's critical objectives and commander's intent.

He led a home-station annual tour where he supervised the distribution of \$8,000 in clothing and supplies and five mission-critical assets valued at \$10,000 that enabled the execution of 20 sorties in support of deployed forces.

Russo volunteered at a "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" event where he sanded, manufactured and built the parts for more than 50 wooden beds that were delivered to single mothers, foster children and the less fortunate in the Greater Dayton area. He also developed and delivered a "Band of Brothers" inspired mentorship class that emphasized the significance of physical, mental and spiritual resilience to 20 Airmen while fostering team cohesion and enhancing self-awareness.





SPOTLIGHT

Rank/Name: Tech. Sgt.

Michael Tucci

Unit: 89th Airlift Squadron

Duty Title: Aviation Resource Management

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio

Civilian Job: Air Reserve Technician

Education: Bachelor's degree in health science from the University of Cincinnati



Hobbies: Gym, hiking, gaming

Career Goal: A career goal of mine is to go back to school and obtain a master's degree.

What do you like about working at the 445th?
What I like most about working at 445th is the camaraderie and how it feels like a second family here.

Why did you join the Air Force? I joined the Air Force because I saw an opportunity to be a part of a mission bigger than myself.

Resiliency Check: Overcoming obstacles

By Master Sgt. Jason Cordle
445th Airlift Wing Resiliency Integrator

Life in the Air Force and everyday life is full of challenges. Deployments, demanding schedules, unexpected changes and personal setbacks test our strength and resolve.

The difference between giving up and moving forward comes down to resilience – the ability to adapt, bounce back and grow stronger.

The first step is facing the challenge. Ignoring a problem does not make it go away. Take a clear look at what is standing in your way. Whether it is a heavy workload, a personal struggle or self-doubt, acknowledging it gives you control.

Next, focus on what you can influence. Some things are beyond our control, but our actions, choices and mindset are always within reach. Break challenges into small, manageable steps. Prioritize, plan and take action.

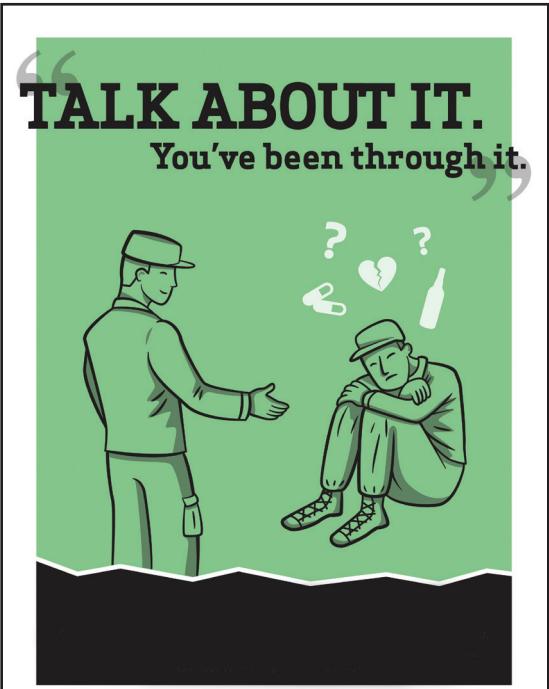
Even small steps matter. Momentum builds confidence. Obsta-

cles are not roadblocks; they are opportunities to learn. Setbacks are not failures; they are lessons that sharpen your skills, resilience and determination. Every challenge you face is a chance to grow stronger.

Support is also essential. Lean on your teammates, family, mentors and base resources. Sharing your struggles shows strength, not weakness. Encouragement and perspective from others can make a tough road feel manageable.

Taking care of yourself is equally important. Physical fitness, sleep, proper nutrition and mental downtime are essential to keeping your mind and body strong. Resilience is built when you are prepared, healthy and focused.

Obstacles do not define you; your response does. Face challenges, take control of what you can, learn from setbacks, seek support, and care for yourself. Every step forward proves your strength. In the Air Force and in life, difficulties are inevitable, but with resilience, determination and the right mindset, you will overcome.



News Briefs

Promotions

Senior Master Sergeant

Dustin Ellison, 445 SFS
Kody Novak, 87 APS
Christian Delacruz, AES

Staff Sergeant

Jordan Church, MXS
Carter Jones, MXS
Adeyinka Onanga, 87 APS
Jerry Napier, CES
Collin Sherwood, AES
Madilynn Potts, AES
Elliott Abrams, MXS
Technical Sergeant
Brandon Wallace, MXS
Joseph Poole, MXS
Christopher Vaughn, CES
Carter Kelly, AMXS
Alyssa Veopaseuth, 445 FSS

Senior Airman

Wesley Faulkner, MXS
Trenton Morrissey, AW
Seth Staiger, SFS
Dhyan Patel, CES
Kohlten Ratliff, CES
Raquel Dos Santos Galrao, AES
Gabriel Weaver, AMXS

Airman 1st Class

Hilda Appiah, LRS
Jarred Livesburger, SFS
Saroj Chhetri, FSS
Pranil Biswa, CES

Airman

Jillian Jones, MXG
Champayne McClain, 87 APS

Newcomers

2 LT Ashley Schaelling, CF
TSgt Stephen Osborne, AMXS
TSgt Anthony Jordan, LRS
SSgt Jacob Bowers, OG
SSgt Walter Daniels, 87 APS
SSgt Christopher Fawver, MXS

SSgt Annastasia Griffith
SSgt Kurtis Morgan-Callender, ASTS

SrA Sophia Hernandez, ASTS
SrA Jaret Mitzelfelt, SFS
SrA Blake Swarengin
A1C Wyatt Johnson, MXS
AB Juan Mighill Mendez, 87 APS
A1C Brandon Sheasby, ASTS

New Wing Website

As part of changes to Reserve Command websites, the 445th Airlift Wing has transitioned to a new, paired down website.

Main information will still be available like UTA schedule, key phone numbers, current Buckeye Flyer, studio and tour requests, Chaplain requests, Honor Guard requests, Recruiter information and more.

Check out the new website at <https://www.wpafb.af.mil/Units/445AW/>.

Participants Needed for Navy Research

The Naval Medical Research Unit-Dayton conducts human subjects research to better understand and mitigate challenges and threats aerospace operational environments post to servicemembers.

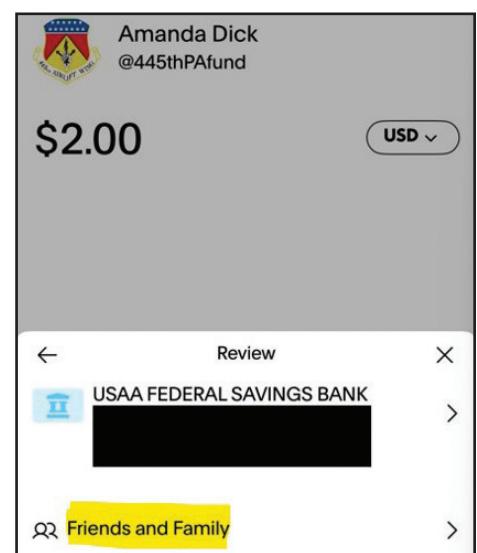
They are currently looking for volunteers to participate in several areas of research.

More information can be found at their new website <https://www.wpafb.af.mil/Units/Naval-Medical-Research-Unit-Dayton/NAMRU-Research/>, and in the February UTA Happenings email.

Online Payment for Annual Awards Banquet

The new PayPal account for this year's Annual Awards Banquet is live! Search for @445thPAfund under Send/Request. The account this year has "th" after 445 and is associated to Amanda Dick.

Please choose the Friends and Family payment option before submitting payment. More details can be found in a separate email sent to the wing.



PayPal information is also available at the end of the RSVP form by clicking QR code below (Feb. 20 deadline).



Readiness verified: AFE Occupational Competency Model put to the test

By Tech. Sgt. Jonathon Quiñones
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

For an aircrew flight equipment specialist, the margin for error is zero. While full-time personnel manage the daily rhythm of the shop, the true test of unit resilience lies with the traditional Reservists, the citizen Airmen who must be ready to operate a unit training assembly alone at a moment's notice.

To ensure this seamless transition from part-time to mission-essential, the 445th Operations Support Squadron AFE flight recently executed an internal evaluation based on the Air Force Occupational Competency Model, or AFOCM, shifting the focus from simple task completion to comprehensive, independent mission proficiency.

The 445th OSS AFE flight conducted a "TR-led" UTA weekend, evaluating their traditional Reservists at the 5-and-7-skill levels with six pre-determined objectives outlined in the Career Field Education and Training Program without pre-notification or pre-discussion of the objectives.

"The intent of this internal exercise is to begin the calendar year with a foundational understanding of where the Reservists are in their task competencies," said Master Sgt. Diego A. Cancino, 445th AFE superintendent. "Ultimately, AFE technicians will be trained by focusing on being capable and competent versus individual tasks."

Occupational competencies provide a clear roadmap for career progression, ensuring Citizen Airmen are matched with roles that maximize their expertise and improve long-term mission readiness.

"We focus a lot on our TRs during the UTA weekend," said Master Sgt. Seth Ravert, 445th AFE flight chief. "This was an opportunity for us to measure our training and see what we need to approve on. In AFRC, we need to be able



Staff Sgt. Nik Wroblewski, 445th Operations Support Squadron aircrew flight equipment journeyman, tests night vision goggles during a traditional Reservist-led unit training assembly at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, Jan. 10, 2026. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Johnathan Quiñones)



Staff Sgt. Aaron Lerro, right, 445th Operations Support Squadron aircrew flight equipment quality assurance assistant and Staff Sgt. Nik Wroblewski, left, 445th OSS AFE equipment journeyman, demonstrate how to disassemble a HGU-55/p helmet mask for proper cleaning during a traditional Reservist-led unit training at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, Jan. 10, 2026. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Johnathan Quiñones)

to deploy anybody in this shop at any time. That is why the OCM is important; it helps us measure who we can send down-range to make effective decisions."

Retaining experienced Reservists is crucial for maintaining operational readiness, as their continuity ensures that key institutional knowledge remains within the unit. This experience allows units to autonomously manage complex training events during the UTA, a process that directly translates to enhanced mission effectiveness and a more capable force.

"As a TR, the UTA is meant for us to keep up with recurring training," said Tech Sgt. Andrew Emmons, 445th AFE technician. "You train but then are off status for the month, making it easy to lose some of what you spent two days working on, so being put in this position is a good refresher to reinforce our training. It helps us remember what resources we have and gives us a chance to train each other as well."

By refining these skills, the unit ensures every Airman is prepared to meet the rigorous standards established by the AFOCM. Concentrating on professional growth transforms theoretical training into a state of constant mission readiness.

"After this exercise, we will be able to determine points of weakness and develop training objectives to strengthen individual and shop competencies to accomplish the mission, producing technicians that can execute worldwide taskings, anywhere, anytime," Cancino said.

445th SFS Airman to be honored as firefighter of year

By Capt. Rachel N. Ingram
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Tech. Sgt. Jake McCorkle, 445th Security Forces Squadron assistant noncommissioned officer in charge of Security Forces training, is scheduled to be recognized by Columbus Division of Fire as a firefighter of the year Feb. 13, during the agency's 36th annual awards banquet.

McCorkle recently celebrated his 9th anniversary with Columbus Fire, serving at Station 14: North Graceland.

"There's zero chance I will ever leave – zero," he said.

He enlisted in the Air Force Reserve in 2007, serving four years with the 445th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. As a Senior Airman, he then cross-trained to SFS, where he met retired Chief Master Sgt. William Arehart and retired Senior Master Sgt. Keith Ford.



Tech. Sgt. Jake McCorkle, left, and firefighter Andrew Kegley pose in front of the engine they're assigned to in Columbus, Ohio. (Courtesy photo)

Although McCorkle was considering a full-time civilian career in law enforcement, Arehart and Ford encouraged him to consider the fire department in Ohio's capital, where they both worked.

"That year, there were almost 10,000 applicants," McCorkle recalled. "They only hired about 150."

Two and a half years later, he finally joined their ranks. He commutes from Chillicothe, Ohio, to work at what he says is, "The best fire department in Ohio, bar none."

As a first responder, McCorkle works 24-hour shifts, responding to a range of emergency calls, including structure fires, car accidents, shootings and stabbings.

Station 14 is located on the southern edge of the city and is the sixth busiest in the agency. In total, Columbus Division of Fire employs about 1,600 firefighters across 35 stations.

McCorkle was nominated as firefighter of the year by his station's leadership and is one of three award recipients for 2025.

"Other people get up and go to their job for a paycheck," he said. "I go see my friends, and we respond to calls that come in."

Citizen Airman contributes new name for wing's Innovation Cell

By Tech. Sgt. Jonathon Quiñones
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Innovation is a continuous cycle of improvement, not just a static achievement.

As the 445th Airlift Wing looks to modernize how it operates, the need for a collaborative hub dedicated to empowering Reservists manifested into the AeroThink Innovation Cell.

By fostering a culture where every Airman can present solutions to improve workstations and processes, the wing ensures every good idea is supported, refined and launched into action.

More than just a workspace, the new hub needed a name that captured its mission, merging tradition with future-focused ingenuity.

One of nine total submissions in a naming challenge, Staff Sgt. Meggie Samuel, 87th Aerial Port Squadron passenger operations representative, submitted the name AeroThink.

"AeroThink combines our aerospace heritage with a strong thinking, innovation-centric brand," Samuel said. "I believed this would be a great name that represents who we



Staff Sgt. Meggie Samuel, 87th Aerial Port Squadron passenger operations representative, displays the Command Chief coin awarded to her after winning the 445th Airlift Wing's Innovation Cell naming challenge at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, Jan. 10, 2025. (Photo by Tech Sgt. Johnathan Quiñones)



CELL from page 7

are and what we do – a place where ideas and leaders are ‘built’ and launched with constant innovation through our core values to make aerospace readiness reimagined every day.”

The 445th AW is advancing its modernization efforts by implementing AeroThink, an initiative that integrates the command’s storied aerospace heritage with a forward-looking, innovation-centric approach to mission execution. This project empowers Citizen Airmen to apply critical thinking and creative problem-solving to ensure the Reserve remains a ready and lethal force in an evolving strategic environment.

“AeroThink Innovation Cell is a place for people to come and formalize ideas on what they want to improve or develop to assist the wing becoming better, to do things faster and more efficient,” said Monte Snyder, 445 Airlift Wing performance process analyst. “At its core, it’s here to educate structured problem solving, cultivate the facilitation of strategy and improvement events, and recognize favorable and innovative behavior that meaningfully moves



Major Michael Harrison, left, 87th Aerial Port Squadron commander, and Staff Sgt. Maggie Samuel, right, 87th APS passenger operations representative, pose for a photo with the Command Chief coin after Samuel won the 445th Airlift Wing Innovation Cell naming challenge at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, Jan. 10, 2025. (Photo by Tech Sgt. Johnathan Quiñones)

that not everybody is aware of all the different ideas that are coming in,” Snyder added. “We want to develop ideas so that other units in the reserve command, the Air Force and even Department of War can use.”

the wing in a strategically aligned direction.”

Establishing an innovation hub at the 445th AW empowers Citizen Airmen to pull from their unique civilian expertise and diverse backgrounds to directly tackle operational challenges.

As there is no physical location as of now, this collaborative online space presents the opportunity to develop grassroots solutions, such as new tools or improved processes, that increase efficiency and reduce costs. Airmen can use a QR code previously emailed by Snyder for all submissions.

By nurturing these bottom-up initiatives, the wing can accelerate modernization and significantly enhance readiness for global missions.

“Right now, there is so much innovation going on

More content can be found at www.dvidshub.net/unit/445-AW.

Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/445aw and Instagram at www.instagram.com/445awpa/



**445TH AIRLIFT WING/PA
BUILDING 4014, ROOM 113
5439 MCCORMICK AVE
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB OHIO 45433-5132**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
USAF PERMIT NO. 1161**