

AirScoop



104th Fighter Wing | www.104fw.ang.af.mil



March 2026



The AirScoop is a product of the 104th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

www.104fw.ang.af.mil

Phone: 413-568-9151

Email: 104.public-affairs@us.af.mil

Massachusetts Air National Guard

104th Fighter Wing

815 Southampton Rd, Westfield, MA

Copyright (c) 2025, 104th Fighter Wing Massachusetts Air National Guard. All rights reserved. This funded Air Force newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Military services.

Contents of the AirScoop are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Air Force, or the Air National Guard.

Cover Photo taken by A1C Ellen Ozkaptan, 104FW Public Affairs

THIS PUBLICATION IS INTERACTIVE

CLICK OR TAP TO VISIT THE
FULL STORY ON DVIDS

TRY CLICKING ME



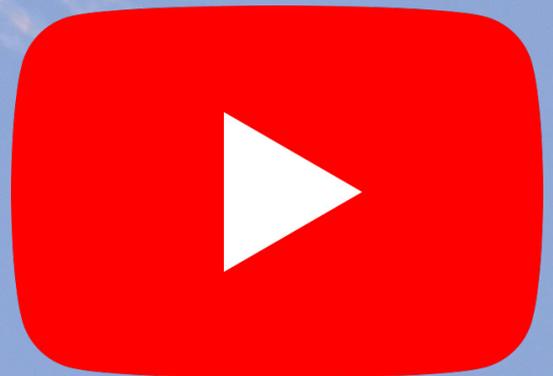
Follow along!



/104fw



@104fw



@104thfighterwing

From the AMXS Commander

Team,

Our transition to the F-35 will soon place us squarely on the front line of national defense: it is the best of the best, and that means we will be called upon when the nation needs us most, often with little notice. Our readiness is not just about the aircraft on the flight line; it's about the confidence and peace of mind we have knowing our families are secure back home.

The recent, rapid deployment of the Vermont Air National Guard serves as a powerful reminder of this reality. They were tasked to support Operation Absolute Resolve in Venezuela, and from there, pivoted directly to an overseas contingency in Iran for Operation Epic Fury. Their ability to focus on the mission was directly tied to the preparations they had made at home long before the call ever came.

This isn't about scaring anyone. This is about preparing, so you can focus on your mission with the unwavering confidence that your family has what they need to thrive in your absence. Continuous readiness on the home front is a critical component of our operational capability.

The time to start preparing is now, not when you're packing your bags. Think about the small things that can become big stressors: Who is the point of contact for a furnace repair? Are important family medical records easily accessible? Does your family have joint accounts, automatic bill pay, and access to passwords to handle the mortgage, car payments, and utilities? Are birth certificates, marriage licenses, Social Security cards, vehicle titles, and insurance policies in one, easily accessible location? Do you have a power of attorney? Starting these conversations and organizing this information today, during a period of normal operations, turns a monumental task into manageable steps. This proactive approach is the foundation of a truly resilient military family.

Taking these steps is not a sign of expecting the worst; it is a fundamental part of being prepared for the realities of our profession. It is an act of responsibility to our families and a direct contribution to mission success. When you can deploy with a clear mind, you are a more effective and lethal warfighter.

Let's be ready, on the flight line and at home.

*Major Mags,
104thFW AMXS Commander*



104th FW Honors 2025 Outstanding Performers

Story by Tech. Sgt. Leilani Peltz
104FW/PA

BARNES AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Mass. – The 104th Fighter Wing recognized the achievements of its Airmen during its annual Outstanding Airmen of the Year awards banquet at the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, Saturday, February 7. This marks the second consecutive year the event was held at the museum and the final banquet before the wing transitions from the F-15 to the F-35.

The banquet brought together senior leaders, Airmen, family members and prominent guests to celebrate excellence across the wing. Awards highlighted performance, leadership and dedication demonstrated throughout the previous year. The evening also served as a moment of reflection for the wing as it prepares for a historic transition in both mission and aircraft.

Married couple Senior Master Sgt. Diane Dowd and Senior Master Sgt. Sean Dowd narrated the event, eliciting laughter with their on-point jokes and applause for the sponsors, nominees and award winners.

Distinguished visitors in attendance included Air Component Commander Brig. Gen. Lisa Ahaesy, Massachusetts Air National Guard State Command Chief Master Sgt. Michelle O’Keefe, the command team and other leadership from the 104th Fighter Wing.

Following Chaplain (Capt.) Josh Carollo’s invocation, 104FW Command Chief Master Sgt.

Michael Gardner spoke to the crowd, thanking those involved for organizing the banquet.

“Nights like this don’t happen without extraordinary people to make them happen,” Gardner said. “In order to do that, it starts with picking the right people to recognize. Putting together something like this again is no small feat – the commitment, the coordination, the late nights, the phone calls...”

Gardner closed by reminding attendees of the incoming F-35 mission.

“126 days...I shouldn’t have to say much more to get you fired up as we sit here in February,” Gardner said. “To get where we are right now required such a tremendous amount of work from every section on this base. It’s not just the proximity to the iron; if you don’t do what you do, we cannot get across the finish line.”

With his F-15 Eagle positioned directly behind him, Col. Michael “Shot” Glass, the 104FW Commander, thanked everyone in attendance and reflected on the importance of acknowledging people for their accomplishments.

“There’s a reason we in the military take the time to give decorations and awards, to recognize the hard work that we do,” Glass said. “It’s not like anybody else’s work. When you have the chance of losing your life in service of your country, you should take the time to get together, celebrate and recognize the people who are the best of the best.”

Having the F-15 as the backdrop for the speakers gave a visual nod of the jet that has defined the wing for 15 years.

The New England Air Museum, housing more than 50 years of aviation history, provided a fitting





location for the event. The awards banquet occurred at the museum and reinforces the connection between the wing's heritage and its future as preparations continue for the transition to the F-35.

Eight award categories were presented during the ceremony, recognizing outstanding performance across a range of disciplines and career fields.

The 2025 OAY winners were:

Senior Airman Braedin Dobek, Airman of the Year
Tech. Sgt. Griffin Moore, NCO of the Year
Master Sgt. Dan Andreas, SNCO of the Year
1st Lt. Julianne Sharon, CGO of the Year
Maj. Allen Magdycz, FGO of the Year
Mr. Wilson Mathieson, State Civilian of the Year
Ms. Tanya Sullivan, Federal Civilian of the Year
1st Sgt. Howard Passley, First Sergeant of the Year

Master Sgt. Nathan Staples, a member of the awards committee, highlighted the effort that went into selecting this year's wing recipients and the high caliber of nominees.

"Being an Outstanding Airman is no easy feat, and it takes an extraordinary amount of effort and dedication to be awarded such an honor," Staples said. "Each member who was nominated this year did just that. They excelled in their career fields while executing the mission and supporting the F-35 conversion, which provided a long-lasting impact to the 104th Fighter Wing, which is nothing short of extraordinary."

Staples also emphasized the importance of recognizing excellence across every career field and highlighted why the awards matter.

"Our Airmen, no matter the rank or position, do

amazing things, whether it's a crew chief performing a pre-flight inspection, CE (civil engineering) clearing snow from the runway and ramp, a pilot flying their jet, services prepping and serving meals, or any other career field executing the mission and getting the job done," Staples said. "Everything we do as a total force is important and taking the time to celebrate and recognized the members who went above and beyond is a small way to show appreciation for all of the hard work and extraordinary effort each nominee put forth over the last calendar year."

One of the evening's award winners, 1st Sgt. Howard "Howie" Passley, said what a surprise it was to win in his category.

"I really wasn't expecting to be called. All our first sergeants are great," Passley said. "We all look out for our Airmen, making sure they have everything they need while in uniform and in their regular lives."

Passley, who is from the 104th Medical Group, won the award for first sergeant of the year, hopes junior enlisted feel they can achieve whatever they strive toward at Barnes.

"This is definitely an eye opener for young Airmen to see this is a place to grow and growth doesn't happen overnight, but you'll see you can thrive and to not give up on your goals," Passley said. "Nothing is impossible. The sky's the limit."

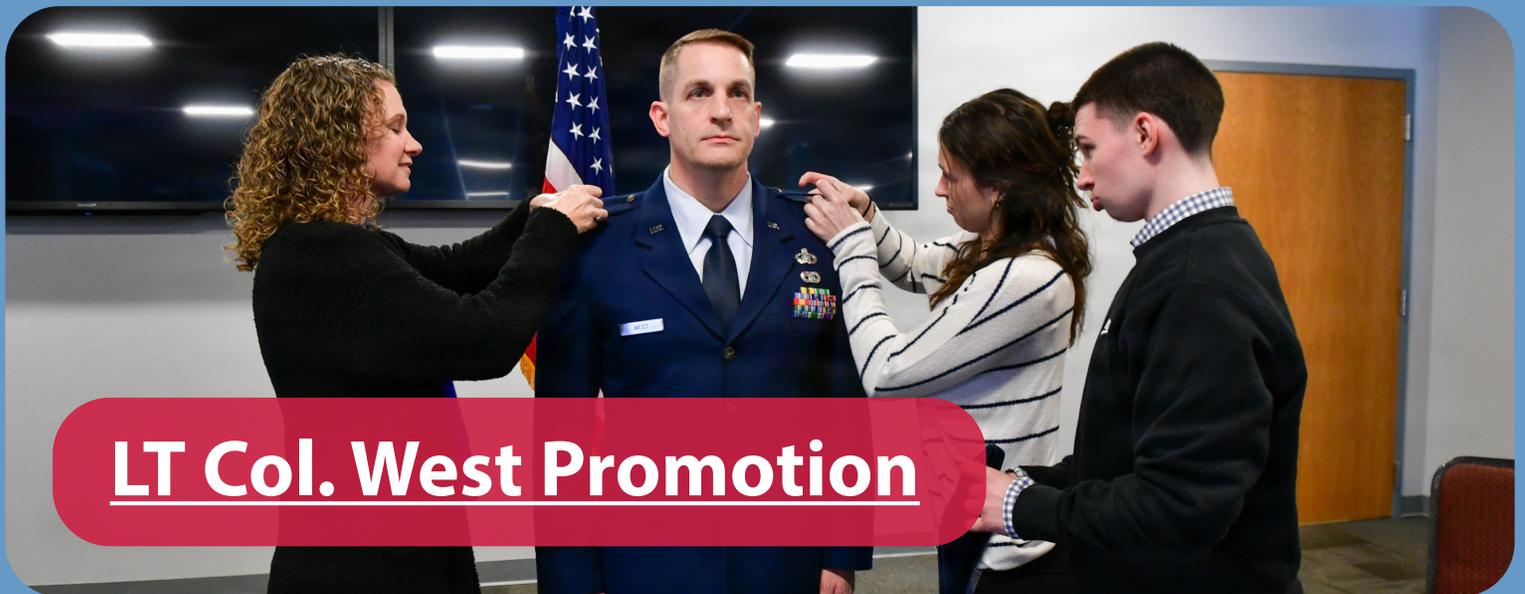
As the 104th Fighter Wing prepares for its transition to the F-35, events like the annual awards banquet remain essential for recognizing the dedication of its service members and contributes to the wing's legacy. The evening served as a celebration of past accomplishments and offered a look ahead into the wing's future.



HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



Founding Hockey member visit



LT Col. West Promotion



CM Sgt. Rizzo Promotion

BARNESTORMER COMMUNITY



Battle of Bases





MSgt Timothy Wachta
Occupational Safety Manager



Maj Martin "Hekir" Clark
Chief of Safety



SMSgt Denis Brennan
Weapons Safety Manager



SMSgt Matthew Leonard
Occupational Safety
Specialist



MSgt Jerry Paquette
Occupational Safety
Specialist

Meet the Barnes Aviation, Occupational and Weapons Safety team.

Here at the 104th, keeping everyone safe is the top priority. The main idea is: if you see something that looks unsafe, you need to say something. Before you jump into a task, it's smart to do a quick risk assessment when you think it's needed. Just take a moment to think through what could go wrong. It's not just the safety office's job to keep an eye out; it's on every single one of us. Think twice before you perform any task and keep an eye on each other!

Don't be afraid to speak up! You can report any hazard you find to your supervisor, the facility manager, your unit's safety rep, or just go straight to the main safety office. There's an official form for it (AF Form 457), and your commander should make sure you can easily get your hands on one.

Also, just a heads-up: the safety team will be starting their annual inspections of all the buildings on base this month and will continue throughout the year. This will include identifying hazards and assessing each section's safety programs such as JSTO's, fall protection, motorcycle safety and Unit Safety Representatives responsibilities.

The safety office is getting refreshed and is focused on making sure everyone has the knowledge and power to help build a better, more modern safety culture. Avoiding all mishaps by proper safety training, identifying hazards, and implanting risk management is key!

If you have any concerns or ideas, you can call the Safety office directly at 698-1009 or shoot them an email at 104.FW.SAFETY@us.af.mil.

Safety Corner

Motorcycle Safety

The Air Force Motorcycle Unit Safety Tracking Tool (MUSTT) is a mandated, web-based application (found within AFSAS) designed for on-road motorcycle riders to track required safety training.

All active duty, reserve, and guard personnel riding a motorcycle on base (and off base while in a military status) are required to have an active account and keep their records current!

Key MUSTT Requirements & Reminders

Initial Action: Upon becoming a rider or arriving at a new base, you must contact your Unit Motorcycle Safety Representative (MSR) within 30 days to establish a record in MUSTT.

Safety Briefing: An initial safety briefing with your commander or MSR is required.

Training Timeline:

- o Basic Rider Course (BRC): Required for all new riders.
- o Intermediate/Advanced Course: Must be completed within 60 days to 1 year of completing the basic course.

Annual Requirement: Riders must log into AFSAS/MUSTT every year to update their profile and receive an annual/pre-season briefing from their MSR.

PCS/Assignment Change: A new initial safety briefing and account update with the new unit's MSR are required upon arrival at a new duty station.

Required Protective Gear: Regardless of state laws (ie;CT), Air Force Instruction (AFI) 91-207 requires full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) both on and off base.

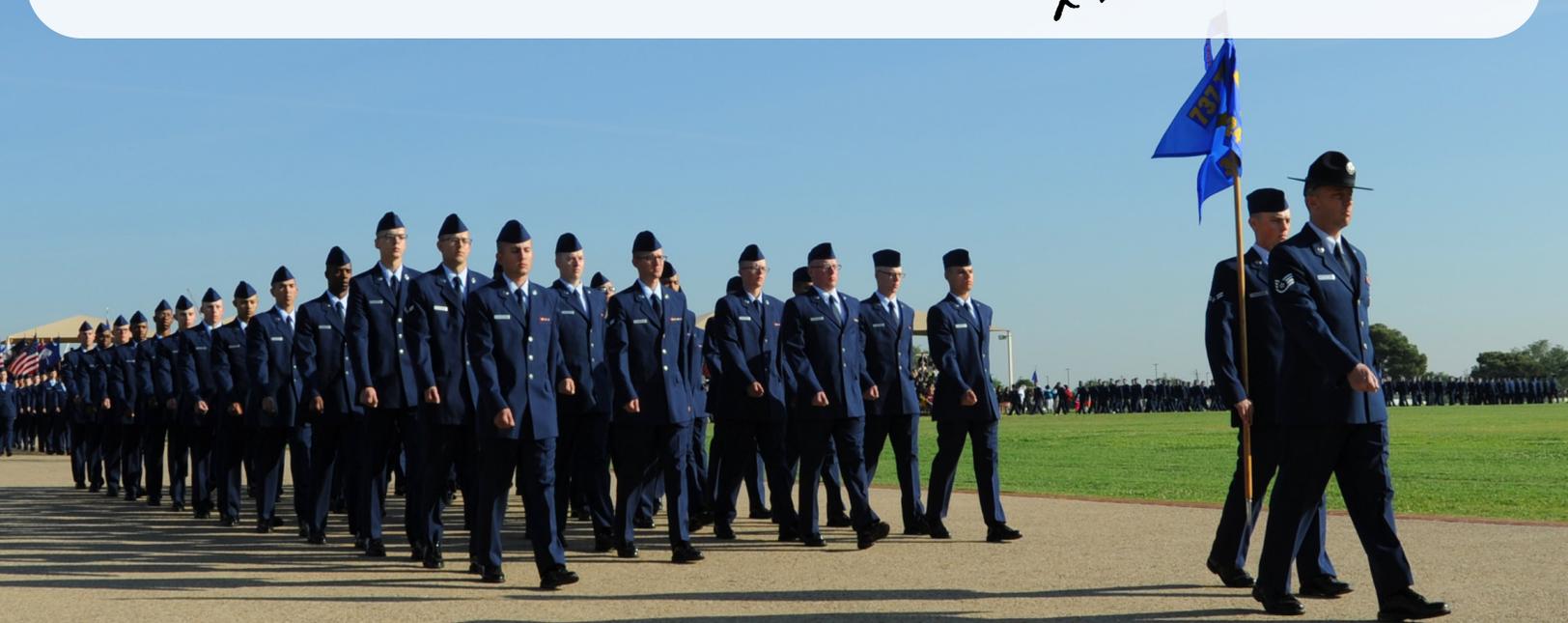
The 104TH cares about you...
Ride Safely!!

New Recruits

Good Luck Recruits who are leaving in March!

**KADJATU SOW
JACK RYAN BARROWS
JULIO FETIVA ESCOBAR
DICKSON KWAYISI
AIDEN TORRUELLA
JAMES SICURELLA
OLAWUNMI AINA
MARK SCHAAF
NICHOLAS MARTINS
TAJJOURDAN JOSEPH
JEN VELASQUEZ PEREZ
JOSE VILLASENOR
JAKE BURNETT
ISAIAH BERMUDEZ**

Aim High!



HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

A REGULAR COLUMN BY KINDA-HISTORIAN
MELANIE J. CASINEAU

Fighter jets to spacecraft, the 104th Fighter Wing's legacy extends to space

"Houston, we've had a problem."

That's not a phrase we hear at the 104th Fighter Wing, but it was spoken by one of our members.

The 104th Fighter Wing has a proud history of pilots who went on to become astronauts. The first was John "Jack" Swigert, who served with the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Interceptor Squadron from September 1957 to April 1960. During his time with the 131st, Swigert flew the F-86H Sabre jet as a fighter pilot. He later transferred to the Connecticut Air National Guard, serving from 1960 to 1965 and flying the F-100 Super Sabre.

Between both assignments, Captain Swigert logged more than 6,430 hours in jet aircraft. While serving in the Guard, he also worked as a test pilot for Pratt & Whitney and North American Aviation.

At the 131st Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Swigert was known as both a skilled fighter pilot and a bachelor who never married. However, he became best known as the Command Module Pilot for NASA's Apollo 13 mission in 1970. Swigert was a last-minute replacement for Ken Mattingly, stepping in just 72 hours before launch after Mattingly was exposed to German measles.

During the mission, an oxygen tank exploded, crippling the spacecraft. Swigert calmly radioed Mission Control with the now-famous words, "Houston, we've had a problem."

On April 17, 1970, Apollo 13 safely returned to Earth in what became one of NASA's most remarkable rescue missions.

Swigert had been accepted into NASA in April 1966 and previously served as a support crew member for Apollo 7 before being assigned to Apollo 13's backup crew. Though Apollo 13 was intended to be the third mission to land on the moon, it instead became a powerful testament to teamwork, ingenuity, and resilience.

Swigert did have a sense of humor. In addition to reporting the spacecraft malfunction, he made another memorable request from space, an extension on his income taxes.





"Things kind of happened real fast down there and I need an extension. I'm really serious," he told Mission Control, prompting laughter. Flight Director Glynn Lunney reassured him that Americans out of the country received a 60-day filing extension, which, he noted, presumably applied in this case.

The 104th's second astronaut reached space while still serving in the Guard.

Lt. Col. Byron K. Lichtenberg, a pilot with the 104th Tactical Fighter Group, became the first NASA payload specialist to be launched on a space mission.

"When the original astronauts went into space, I realized they were all military test pilots," Lichtenberg said. "So I figured I would have to do that, too."

Lichtenberg served 23 years as a fighter pilot in the 104th Tactical Fighter Group, Massachusetts Air National Guard, flying the F-4, F-100, and A-10 aircraft. During the Vietnam War, he flew 138 combat missions and was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses, ten Air Medals, and numerous other decorations.

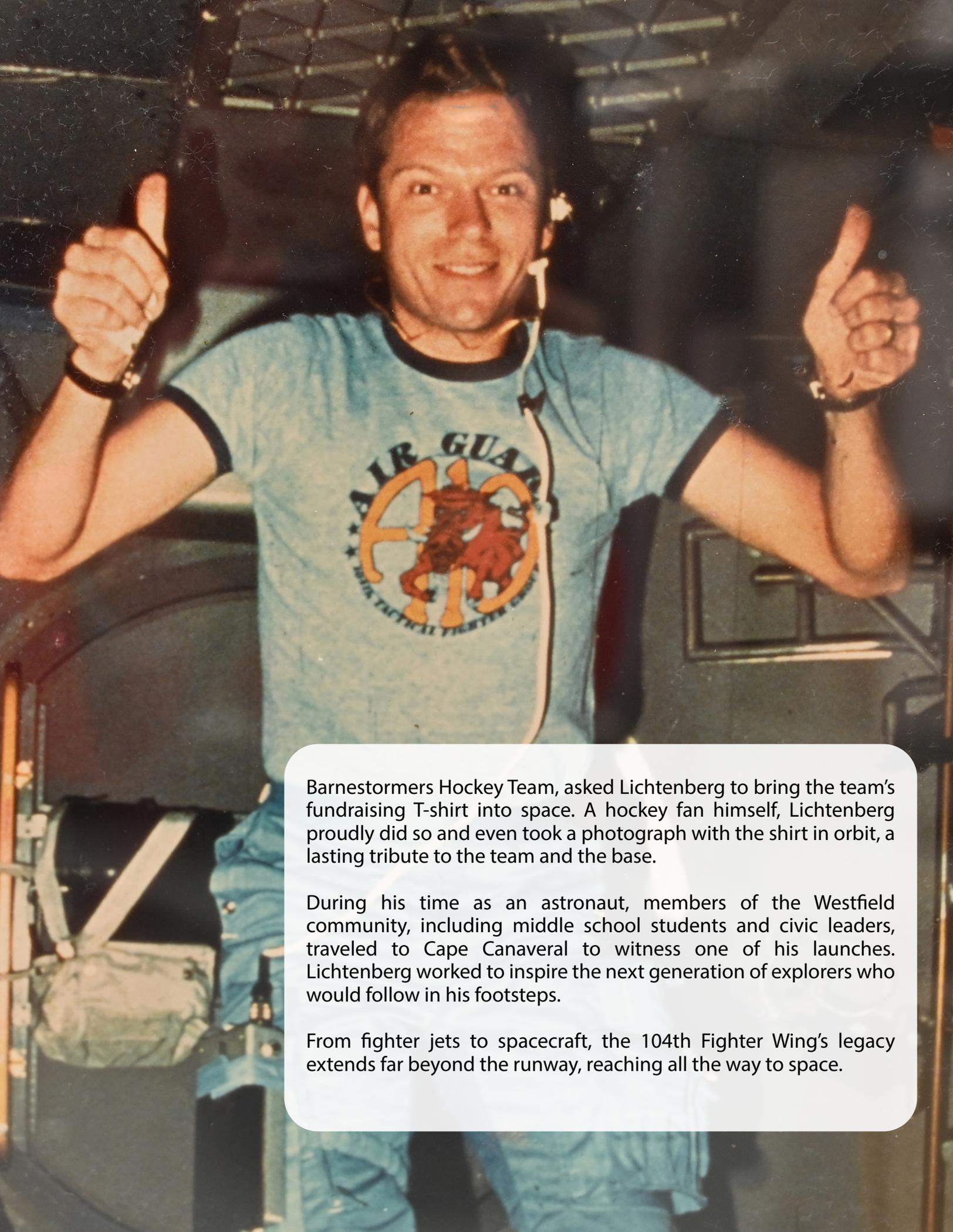
After graduating from Brown University in 1969 and completing his Air Force service in Vietnam, Lichtenberg pursued advanced degrees at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning master's and doctoral degrees in mechanical and biomedical engineering.

"I realized if I was a fighter pilot with a doctorate, I would have a better chance of getting into space," he explained. His determination paid off.

While still serving in the Guard, Lichtenberg flew on the 10-day Spacelab-1 (STS-9) mission aboard Space Shuttle Columbia in 1983. The mission carried the first Spacelab laboratory module into orbit and conducted numerous experiments in life sciences, materials science, astronomy, atmospheric physics, and more.

He later flew on the ATLAS-1 (STS-45) Spacelab mission aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis in 1992, spending nine days conducting 13 experiments in atmospheric sciences and astronomy. Over his two missions, Lichtenberg completed 310 Earth orbits and logged 468 hours in space, all while serving with the 104th Tactical Fighter Group in Westfield.

Even while reaching for the stars, Lichtenberg remained deeply connected to the 104th community. TSgt. John DeVeche (now retired Chief), who founded the 104th Tactical Fighter Group



Barnestormers Hockey Team, asked Lichtenberg to bring the team's fundraising T-shirt into space. A hockey fan himself, Lichtenberg proudly did so and even took a photograph with the shirt in orbit, a lasting tribute to the team and the base.

During his time as an astronaut, members of the Westfield community, including middle school students and civic leaders, traveled to Cape Canaveral to witness one of his launches. Lichtenberg worked to inspire the next generation of explorers who would follow in his footsteps.

From fighter jets to spacecraft, the 104th Fighter Wing's legacy extends far beyond the runway, reaching all the way to space.

F-35 CONVERSION CORNER

The conversion journey began in Spring of 2023 when the secretary of the Air Force approved Barnes ANGB as the preferred location for a new fleet of F-35s. This selection drove the requirement for favorable completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was achieved in November 2024. Upon favorable completion of the EIS, the Secretary of the Air Force signed and reported to Congress the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD was approved in December 2024, which means that the decision to station the F-35 at Barnes is official! We completed divesting F-15s with the last to leave September 2025. We are preparing for the arrival of our first F-35s in June 2026.

- Maj. Brian 'Brass' Burke

An F-35 fighter jet is shown in profile, flying towards the left. The aircraft is white with grey and blue accents. It is surrounded by a colorful, multi-layered outline in shades of yellow, red, and blue. The background is a solid blue color.

36

**Personnel currently
off-base training
(2 LRS | 34 Maintainers)**

4

**Fully Qualified Pilots
7 currently in training**

15

**New construction projects
scheduled throughout the
conversion - starting with OPS**

20

**The number of F-35s
scheduled to be delivered
by Summer 2026**

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT PATRICK J. SHAUGHNESSY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP 2026

**Application
Deadline
15 April**

ABOUT THE CHIEF

CMSgt Patrick J. Shaughnessy dedicated 35 years of service to the Massachusetts Air National Guard before his passing on June 21, 2006.

Renowned for his unwavering commitment to leadership, mentorship, and camaraderie, he embodied the principles of service to community and country.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- ✓ All current senior students enrolled in the city of Westfield (Westfield High School, St Mary's High School, and Westfield Technical Academy).
- ✓ Proof of enrollment or acceptance to a 2 or 4 year college or certified trade program.
- ✓ Minimum 3.0 GPA

APPLICATION PROCESS

Submit application package to school guidance counselor. Winner will be notified on or before the 30th of April 2026

**Email
applications to:
104fw.pa@gmail.com
Subject: Scholarship**

Visit 104FW.ANG.AF.MIL

