



The Bag Dragger Newsletter

April - June 2023



A Note from the President

I hope this finds all of you safe and healthy. We are upon the summer months and that means traveling, hot temperatures, days at the beaches/lakes etc. Please be safe on your travels and protect yourselves from the elements. Most of all, enjoy the summer and those visits with family and relatives.

The second quarter showed more discussions and progress made in getting funding for the monument. This is still a doable project and there is the sincere desire and drive to get this done. We have the backing of the folks at JBSA-Lackland. We must find those folks that will help us fund this monument for our deserving Air Force Recruiters, past, present and future. I ask each of you to continue to help find anyone you think would be interested in supporting this monument.

We have also reestablished our connection with the Recruiting School to attend graduations and present the Top Grad Award. Unfortunately, during the “COVID years” we were not allowed in the schoolhouse and had to stop our visits. Thanks to Sal Lagudi for stepping up to take control of this program.

I would like to thank recently retired AF Recruiting Commander MG Edward Thomas Jr and his wife Dinah as well as recently retired AF Recruiting Command Chief, CMSgt Antonio Goldstrom and his wife Mary for their commitment and accessibility to AFRAA. For three years AFRAA has had a great working relationship with all four individuals in accomplishing our goal of supporting the USAF Recruiting Service. Their willing cooperation with Blue Suit and projects helped recognize Air Force Recruiters and their spouses as well as support staff, in a manner deserving of their achievements. AFRAA wishes the Thomas’ and the Goldstrom’s nothing but the best in their retirement.

Again, have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Retirement Ceremonies celebrate incredible careers ...

By Mary Gandolfo

This quarter we saw the close of two careers that culminated in assignments with Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS), Major General (MG) Edward Thomas, Jr and Chief Master Sergeant Antonio Goldstrom. Due to many technical difficulties, there are regrettably no photos of these ceremonies.

The first week of June was filled with pomp and circumstance as MG Thomas was the first of the dynamic Thomas/Goldstrom duo to officially retire and step into his next chapter. The ceremony was truly a family affair. Capt Wyatt Thomas, the general’s son, was the retirement officer. The Thomas children gathered to record the national anthem for the opening of the ceremony and Capt Thomas was joined by his brothers, both cadets at Texas A&M, as they saluted their father for a final farewell to his active duty service as a group. Tears and goose bumps were abounding! The ceremony was scheduled for 45 minutes and it was 45 minutes!!

The ceremony was held at JBSA Randolph in Hangar 5. Vintage aircraft greeted guests as we were seated in the hangar. These aircraft were also dedicated to very special groups of retirees, if memory serves one of them was the Tuskegee airmen.

The following day was time for the party and it was done true Texas style. The Air Force Band provided the music and there were food trucks for the dinner. It was a really neat way to say goodbye and thank you for the years of service from the Thomas family. Gifts were given and tokens of appreciation were presented to both the General and his wife, Dinah. It was a wonderful evening attended by many out of town guests and well-wishers from the local community.

The next week was Chief Goldstrom's ceremony and celebration. His ceremony was held at JBSA Lackland and the reception was immediately following. His family was joined him from many places in the country, one of whom was a niece that is just starting her career. Chief Goldstrom presented her with a set of chief stripes he had worn with the hope that they would serve as a symbol of her potential goals.

One of the most unique honors paid to the Chief was from his First Sergeant community. It is the Diamond Ceremony. Chief Goldstrom was the Command First Sergeant, a position most of us more seasoned folks remember as being the senior recruiter/advisor to the commander. Chief thanked his family and recognized his wife, Mary, and son, Caleb, as being his backbone for most of his career. All in all it was a great way to transition into his next chapter, which will be working with a local Junior ROTC unit.

Congratulations to both MG Thomas and Chief Goldstrom as they leave us as active duty members and transition to their next challenges and chapters.

New commander takes reins at Air Force Recruiting Service

By Master Sgt. Holly Patterson

Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas –Brig. Gen. Christopher R. Amrhein took command of Air Force Recruiting Service June 2, 2023, in a ceremony here with Lt. Gen. Brian S. Robinson, commander of Air Education and Training Command, serving as the presiding officer, at Hangar 5.

“You are getting a phenomenal commander,” Robinson said about Amrhein. “He’s ready to lead, innovate and succeed as a team. It’s no secret that recruiting today is a challenge and it will take all of us working together to tell the Air Force story to America’s youth. General Amrhein is the right leader to guide us through this current challenge. He will continue to shape our efforts to

modernize recruiting and recruit the Airmen and Guardians we need for the fight of tomorrow.”

Previously, Amrhein was the vice commander at 19th Air Force, a numbered Air Force, charged with the management and execution of the entire AETC flying training mission, from initial screening to advanced combat crew training, that makes up more than 45% of the Air Force’s annual flying hour program.

“I am truly humbled to serve as the AFRS commander and along with Chief Master Sergeant. Rebecca Arbona, the new AFRS command chief, we are eager to join this team of professionals in a challenging time,” Amrhein said. “With challenges come opportunities and I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working with all as we continue the great work being done daily, while exploring those new opportunities. Together this will further hone our mission to recruit America’s sons and daughters to serve in the world’s greatest Air Force. Combat readiness begins with recruiting, and our task is to find and recruit the Airmen and Guardians we need to defeat our adversaries.”

Amrhein entered the Air Force in 1996 after earning his commission as a distinguished graduate from the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of Texas at Austin. He has served in operational and training assignments, logging more than 3,200 hours in a variety of aircraft, as well as commanding at the squadron and wing levels.

AFRS accession is more than 26,000 new members each year, with emphasis on recruiting people with no prior military service into one of more than 130 enlisted career opportunities, plus recruit prior and non-prior service officer candidates for Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, and recruit chaplains and medical professionals such as physicians, dentists, nurses, healthcare administrators and biomedical science corps members. AFRS also oversees total force recruiting marketing and advertising program for the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

AFRS is composed of three active-duty groups and 28 squadrons as well as an Air Force Reserve group with four squadrons. These groups are: the 360th Recruiting Group at New Cumberland, Pennsylvania; the 369th Recruiting Group at JBSA-Lackland, Texas; the 372nd Recruiting Group at Hill AFB, Utah; and the 367th Recruiting Group at Robins AFB, Georgia.

There are about 1,300 recruiters located in 1,040 recruiting offices throughout the United States and also a recruiting presence in England, Germany, Italy, Japan, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas, the outgoing AFRS commander, took command in June 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when recruiting was undergoing a transformation in virtual processes. Robinson credited Thomas for

leading AFRS during an exceptional time in military history. He said, “Your leadership is inspiring and we know that the initiatives created during your tenure will carry us through to recruit the next generation of America’s Airmen.”

Thomas’s retirement ceremony was also held this week. He commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps in 1990 following his graduation from Texas A&M.

Recruiting and Airman Leadership School partner to enlist next generation

By Mark Wyatt

66th Air Base Group Public Affairs

HANSCOM AIR FORCE BASE, Mass. – The 319th Recruiting Squadron and the Airman Leadership School (ALS) here recently partnered to visit local high schools and share their stories of service with young people who might be interested in enlisting. The Hanscom AFB-based pilot recruiting program provided high school students with an opportunity to ask currently-serving Airmen about their experiences in the Air Force.

“Recruiting is at the forefront for our Air Force senior leaders,” said Chief Master Sgt. Wayne Rutland, 319 RCS senior enlisted leader and brainchild of the first-of-its-kind initiative. “This program sent ALS students and staff, along with recruiters, into the local community to build relationships.”

The program follows Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr., asking leaders in January to “connect the Air Force with the American public.” “When the public meets our amazing Airmen, sees the exciting missions, and understands the value of military service, it can be life changing,” wrote Brown.

Rutland said the partnership aligned with Gen Brown’s “We Are All Recruiters” initiative. “We had this class of ALS students that are at the right age demographic and have the best capability of telling their stories to our audience,” he said.

According to the ALS commandant, students are required to complete at least one community service project per class. “This was an opportunity for our students to do something different in the community,” said Master Sgt. Talisa

Bell. “Our students really enjoyed the chance to serve as advocates for the Air Force.”

Chief Master Sgt. Gervacio Maldonado, 319 RCS production superintendent, discussed how it also provided leadership opportunities for students. “Instead of doing a three-to-five-minute presentation in an ALS classroom, they [ALS students] got to do it for real and see their impact firsthand,” he said. “It tied in leadership and what wearing the uniform means.”

The recruiters and ALS teams visited six schools throughout the day on April 11. In addition, the unique partnership offered ALS students an opportunity to learn more about recruiting, a development special duty program. Following their visits to schools, teams also ‘painted the city blue,’ placing pamphlets in off-base establishments to increase recruiting opportunities for the Air Force.

This recruiting initiative is one of several the 319 RCS has undertaken to meet goals. Last month the 319th Recruiting Squadron announced the winners of the inaugural Air and Space Forces’ Sentry Educator Award. The program recognizes the top 10 educators, including counselors, teachers, coaches and principals, throughout New England. The 319 RCS, headquartered at Hanscom AFB, covers 105 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, as well as the six New England states.



Calderon Service Soars Long After Retiring from USAF

Courtesy of June 2023 Afterburner

By Anthony DeCristofaro

Office of Personnel Management, Office of CFC

More than 43 years ago, Lloyd Calderon became a 17-year-old Airman in the U.S. Air Force from his home state of Oregon. Over his military career, Calderon served as a security specialist and a recruiter in many locations. Today, he works as a civilian with the Small Business Administration (SBA) as a Business Opportunity Analyst focusing on promoting opportunities for targeted socio-economic categories.

His service also extends beyond the reach of the SBA and through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). At work, Mr. Calderon is a connector bringing together people and businesses. In his voluntary services, he continues in that role of bringing together people and causes through CFC support, leadership, and engagement.

"Lloyd's dedication to service is instrumental in creating business opportunities. That same dedication helps the charities and causes in the Combined Federal Campaign with philanthropic opportunities," explained CFC Director Keith Willingham. "He also is an example of how military retirees can keep their support of charities going through the CFC." Among the jobs Mr. Calderon has held for the CFC include screening national and international charity applicants for OPM's Office of CFC Operations.

"If you love serving your country, the CFC is a great additional way to do that," explained Mr. Calderon, who is not just a contributor. He also has served in a variety of volunteer leadership roles including as a Keyworker, Campaign Manager, Charity Reviewer, and Loaned Executive.

During his time in the USAF, Calderon was stationed at Malmstrom AFB (Montana); Iceland; Frances E. Warren in Wyoming; and with the Air National Guard. Ultimately, he retired as a Senior Master Sergeant (E-8).

As the largest workplace giving campaign in the world, federal employees and now retirees pledged more than \$8.6 billion to their favorite local, national, and international causes in the last 60 years. Since retiree giving through annuity deductions in 2017 that segment of givers is the fastest growing in the CFC. "Once a campaign exclusively for Federal employees, thanks to an executive order in 2016, civilian and military retirees can now continue their give through CFC with the ability to make a direct deduction to CFC right from their annuity," explained Mr. Willingham. Last year, giving through CFC topped \$80 million. "CFC and the charities in this campaign are so appreciative of the leadership and generosity of retirees like Lloyd and so many others. We could not do what we

do without retirees who voluntarily support the annual campaign," said Mr. Willingham.

"Everything goes back to services impacting the lives of thousands of people you will never meet," Mr. Calderon explains. For example, he said that when he and his spouse had a baby and the child was sick, a charity came along with assistance. So, today, when he hears stories of others who are helped, those stories resonate with his experience.

"We all go through STUFF. But we are made up of core values that are a part of us long before we face a crisis. I am a public servant. I am proud of that. We take an oath to take care of this nation. Service, then, is a part of my oath – an extension of who we are as federal employees or military retirees. My oath never ends."

Today, his civilian career puts him in touch with some of the 200,000 Americans who become veterans every year. "We have been given a lot; education, experience. Therefore, I look to pay that back as much as I can." CFC provides an easy way to make a difference in the causes that are most important to Mr. Calderon: diabetes and health care. Health care became important early in his life because he was raised by his Spanish-speaking grandmother. But a disease caused her to have a stroke. Ensuring that people have good nutrition that supports a healthy lifestyle has remained important in his life, career, and charity. Anyone who becomes a retiree even outside that window can open or move their account to be funded through their annuity," explained Mr. Calderon, who was a loaned executive in the National Capital Area CFC zone.

If you previously supported CFC charities in a former civilian, postal, or military career, you could transfer that gift to your annuity by updating your CFC profile in the Donation Portal. If not, you can enter a new pledge. Visit www.givecfc.org to learn more about the campaign, participating charities, and opportunities. If you have questions, then call the CFC Help Center at 1-800-797-0098 or visit: cfcgiving.opm.gov/contact.