

# The Cadet

U.S. Army Cadet Command's quarterly magazine

Spring 2012 Vol. III Issue I

ALL-AMERICAN BOWL

## LEAP YEAR

*Leaders talk opportunity for America's youth,  
enlist help of community leaders, educators*

### Targeting gold

*JROTC shooters compete at Army  
level, gunning for national crowns*

### View from above

*Command's deputy commander talks  
about the job she loves*

Cadet Command news online at [www.army.mil/rotc](http://www.army.mil/rotc)

FEBRUARY 2012

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Spring edition



Cadets with Marion Military Institute in Alabama are administered the oath of office during their December commissioning. Submitted photo.



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On the cover: West running back T.J. Yeldon leaps over an East defender and toward the endzone during January's All-American Bowl at the Alamodome in San Antonio. Yeldon came down on the 1-yard line.  
*Photo by Steve Arel*

## The Cadet

The official magazine of U.S. Army Cadet Command  
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# Share your Army story

*By reaching out, educating others, we attract quality Cadets*



The Army has a great story, and it is up to each of us who wear the uniform to tell it.

This year started with some great football and a chance to share the Army's story with our nation through the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

The All-American Bowl is the premiere high school all-star football game in the country, boasting such stars as Adrian Peterson, Michael Oher and Reggie Bush among its alumni. It is broadcast nationally on NBC just before the first NFL wildcard playoff game.

But the game itself is only the capstone of a much larger outreach effort. Throughout the week leading up to the game, the Army has an opportunity to share what service to the nation is all about, through media opportunities and one-on-one interactions with the public and special invited guests.

We had a very successful event this year. Not only were thousands of people at home watching the game educated about the Army, but representatives from our organization got quality time with community leaders and educators from across the nation who are uniquely capable of helping us achieve success in our mission. Through the command's efforts, we are forging stronger partnerships with such distinguished organizations as 100 Black Men of America Inc. and the League of United Latin American Citizens to increase outreach efforts nationwide.

These engagements took many forms, from one-on-one meetings and public speeches, to participating in roundtable discussions on education and opportunities provided by the Army. The event also affords us the change to bring our message directly to high schools as the months-long player selection tour features Army leaders visiting the players' and band members' schools to talk about the Army at school assemblies.

Sharing our story is important for many reasons, but one specific benefit of educating more people about the Army is that it allows us to better attract the highest-quality Cadets to serve in uniform. In ROTC, when we bring in a freshman or sophomore with high potential and the qualities we are looking for, the better the likelihood that individual will grow into a world-class officer.

The All-American Bowl gave us a platform to broadcast our story. But what I want all of our Cadets and cadre to keep in mind is that you, too, have a part in telling our story. You are in a unique position, embedded in

your campus communities. In an era where fewer and fewer of the public come into contact with Soldiers, you could be the only person connected with the Army your fellow students or professors interact with.

So share our story, because we have a great story and history to tell.

February and March coincide with one of the great success stories of the Army. February is Black History Month, and March is Women's History Month. These months are a time to reflect on the accomplishments and contributions of two vitally important minorities who helped transform our Army into a much stronger and healthier organization.

The Army was in the forefront of integration early in the 20th century, outpacing the other institutions in the country. For instance, on Feb. 18, 1940, Benjamin O. Davis was commissioned as the first African American brigadier general in the U.S. Army. As a side note, he also served as a professor of military science at two universities in the 1920s and '30s, at Wilberforce University in Ohio and Tuskegee University in Alabama.

It was in 1948 when President Harry Truman signed the executive order integrating the military and mandating equality regardless to a Soldier's race.

Women have a distinguished history in our Army dating back to 1775. They now serve in 91 percent of all Army occupations and make up about 14 percent of the active Army force. Women continue to make strides in our Army, whether it is Col. Peggy Combs, Cadet Command's first female deputy commander who is scheduled in the near future to pin on her first star, or Maj. Gen. Marcia Anderson, who in September was the first African-American woman to be promoted to the rank of major general during a ceremony here at Fort Knox, Ky.

There are more great stories than we have time to recount in this column. I urge all of you to learn more about the Army's story and how it relates to women and African Americans during these designated months.

As I said, it is important for the Army to reach out and share its story. That can take the form of an event like the All-American Bowl, or it can be a series of interactions between Cadets and their peers in everyday situations on college campuses.

So make the effort. Share our story. After all, the story of the Army is its people, so if we aren't going to tell it, who is?

Army Strong!

**Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald**  
*Commanding General*  
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

# MacArthur Awards recognize top senior programs

Cadet Command has announced the eight winners of the annual MacArthur Awards for the 2010-11 school year.

The award honors the top school from each of the command's eight brigades, selected from among the 273 senior ROTC units nationwide, as the top programs in the country.

The awards, presented by the U.S. Army Cadet Command and the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Foundation, recognize the ideals of "duty, honor and country" as advocated by MacArthur.

The award is based on a combination of the achievement of the school's commissioning mission, its Cadets' performance and standing on the command's National Order of Merit List and its Cadet retention rate.

Cadet Command and the MacArthur Foundation have given the awards each year since 1989.

This year's eight winners are:

**The Citadel**, of Charleston, S.C., which represents Cadet Command's 1st Brigade. The brigade consists of the nation's six senior military colleges and five of the military junior colleges.

**Northeastern University**, of Boston, which represents 2nd Brigade. The brigade consists of the 41 Senior Army ROTC programs in the Northeast.

**Iowa State University**, of Ames, Iowa, which represents 3rd Brigade. The brigade consists of the 40 Senior Army ROTC programs in the Midwest.

**University of Maryland**, of College Park, Md., which represents 4th Brigade. The brigade consists of the 38 senior Army ROTC programs in the Mid-Atlantic region.

**University of Utah**, of Salt Lake City, which represents 5th Brigade. The brigade includes the 36 Senior Army ROTC programs in the Southwest.

**University of Mississippi**, of Oxford, Miss., which represents 6th Brigade. The brigade consists of the 39 Senior Army ROTC programs in the southeastern United States and Puerto Rico.

**University of Notre Dame**, of South Bend, Ind., which represents 7th Brigade. The brigade consists of the 38 Senior Army ROTC programs in the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee and Kentucky.

**Santa Clara University**, of Santa Clara, Calif., which represents 8th Brigade. The brigade consists of the 30 Senior Army ROTC programs on the West Coast, as well as Hawaii, Alaska and Guam.

## CG, CSM take on additional roles as Knox's senior leaders

Cadet Command's commanding general has taken on additional duties as the post commander of Fort Knox, Ky.

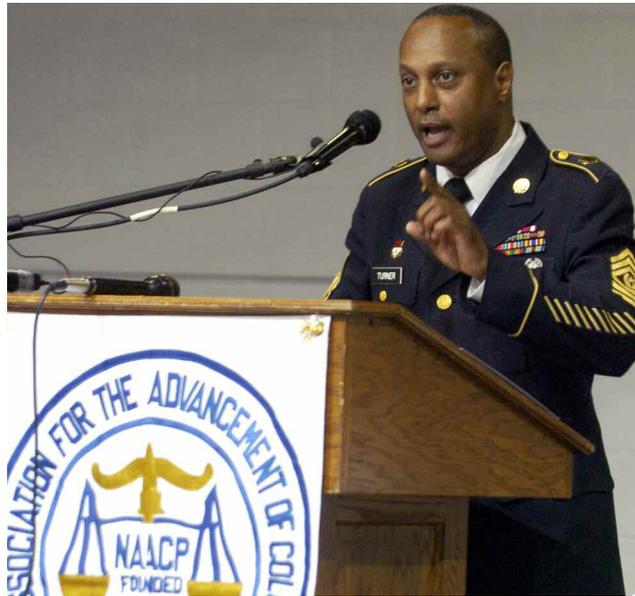
Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald became the post's senior leader in January upon the discontinuation of U.S. Accessions Command and retirement of its commander, Lt. Gen. Benjamin Freakley.

Freakley became Fort Knox's first three-star commander in 2010 when he and his command transferred to Kentucky from Fort Monroe, Va., as part of Base Realignment and Closure.

In addition, Command Sgt. Maj. Hershel Turner, Cadet Command's command sergeant major, has assumed the role of post sergeant major.

As the top commissioned and enlisted leaders of Fort Knox, McDonald and Turner will oversee garrison operations of the post, which is home to more than 40,000 Soldiers, family members and civilian employees, and engage in community relations on behalf of the command and Fort Knox.

McDonald already has begun weekly call-ins to the area's largest radio station's morning show, informing residents on Fort Knox events and providing updates on other post goings-on.



### Praising a King

Command Sgt. Maj. Hershel Turner, Cadet Command's command sergeant major, reflects on the contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the featured speaker Jan. 16 for a King holiday celebration sponsored by the Hardin County (Ky.) NAACP.

Photo by Jill Pickett/  
The News-Enterprise

## N.M. JROTC unit lands \$75,000 grant for spring project

FARMINGTON, N.M. – Aztec High School's Army Junior ROTC program has begun using a \$75,000 grant from the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps to maintain and improve the nearby Aztec Ruins National Monument while also learning skills and earning pay.

Cadets will work to replace pipes, build fences, grow gardens, remove invasive species, help with archaeological digs and complete any other projects needed to preserve the monument.

The students will be required to interview

and apply for a job, after which the students will earn \$2,000 to \$3,000 as employees of the National Park Service.

"Service learning is different than community service," said retired Col. Berris Samples, Aztec's senior Army instructor.

Service learning is something that teaches students from multiple angles, he said.

The funds will take the students through the end of July, though program directors hope to reapply for the grant in later years to build a stronger relationship between the program and its community.

# Developing leaders ‘job No. 1,’ Dempsey tells N.C. Cadets

DURHAM, N.C. – Service equities, the U.S. relationship with Iran and Pakistan, and the future of women in combat topped the questions put to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at a town hall last month with ROTC Cadets.

Gen. Martin Dempsey spoke to 400 tri-service Cadets from Duke University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Central University, St. Augustine’s College and Meredith College.

ROTC is a college-based officer-commissioning program that focuses on leadership development, problem solving, strategic planning and professional ethics.

“Think about leader development as job No. 1, and you’re off to a good start,” the chairman told his audience.

Faced with a dynamic between the two world wars similar to the Pentagon’s transitional situation today, Army Gen. George C. Marshall invested most heavily in leader development, Dempsey said.

“He knew that if he had the right leaders, once things clarified he’d call upon them to get it right, and that’s what we’ve got to do,” he said. “It’s about leader development. That’s the biggest lesson we’ve learned.”

The chairman made the Cadets laugh, told them stories and showed them a fast-moving music video of warfighters at work that boomed with the heavy-metal song “Indestructible” by the Chicago band Disturbed.

He reassured them that they had not missed their chance to test themselves on the fields of battle.

“You can see Iraq and Afghanistan stabilizing a

bit as you sit there wondering what it means for you,” Dempsey said. “(But) your country, I would suggest, needs you more than ever now to get us through (this) period of transition.”

One Cadet asked about the status of a change in the rules that keep women from serving in combat. Removing such restrictions is a two-step



Dempsey

process,

Dempsey said. “If you are a military intelligence analyst (in the Army), there are some restrictions about where you can serve in the battlefield,”

Dempsey said. “For example, you can’t be on a

military training team.

“That is completely ludicrous, because that’s not the kind of battlefield on which we operate. It’s not linear; it is circular – 360 (degrees). We’re going to knock that out of the way, so if you’re a female Soldier, sailor, airman or Marine, you serve where you’re needed.”

The second step is more challenging, he added, because of military rules and because the issue has attracted congressional interest. It involves lifting a ban on women serving in direct ground combat units – tanks, artillery and infantry.

“I personally believe that on my watch ... I think that will begin to change. ... It’ll change on your watch, for sure,” the chairman said. “And I think we’ll be better for it.”

# History of ROTC, Cadet Command chronicled in new promotional video

Cadet Command will release a new video this month looking at the history of Army ROTC and the role of U.S. Army Cadet Command over the last 25 years.

The production chronicles the development of the program beginning in 1916 by President Woodrow Wilson, spotlights several of ROTC’s top graduates such as retired Gen. Colin Powell, and looks ahead to the future.

The 10-minute video will be available for viewing and download through Cadet Command’s website, [www.cadetcommand.army.mil](http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil).

The video’s production coincides with the 25th anniversary last summer of Cadet Command, which moved in late-2010 to Fort Knox, Ky., from its 24-year home at Fort Monroe, Va., as part of the U.S. military’s Base Realignment and Closure.

The intent of the project, which had been in the works for the last several months, is to offer cadre another marketing tool to teach interested community leaders, educators and students about Army ROTC and the opportunities it provides for those who want to serve.

“There are all sorts of smaller videos and clips about ROTC out there that touch on various aspects of the program,” said Lt. Col. Matt Hackathorn, Cadet Command’s public affairs officer.

“What we wanted to accomplish was a means for bringing everything together into a complete package, and I believe we have successfully done that.”

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## 4th Brigade’s new commander plans to ‘continue developing competent leaders’

FORT BRAGG, N.C. – Fourth Brigade welcomed a new commander last month.

Col. Pete Edmonds accepted the reins from Col. Ron Elrod in a ceremony at the post’s Funk Physical Fitness Center. Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald, U.S. Army Cadet Command commanding general, presided over the change of command.

Fourth Brigade includes 38 Senior ROTC programs in South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Delaware.

Edmonds is no stranger to Fort Bragg, having

been stationed at the post several times during his career. Most recently, he was deployed to Iraq where he served as the chief of plans for United States Forces-Iraq with Lt. Gen. Frank G. Helmick, the XVIII Airborne Corps commander, who was also in attendance at the ceremony.

Edmonds, looking to the future, said he was eager to continue the 4th Brigade mission of producing the Army’s future leaders.

“I want to continue developing competent leaders who are excited about leading Soldiers in our

Army,” Edmonds said.

It was the development of those leaders that Elrod, who has since joined the U.S. Army Reserve Command at Fort Bragg, said he learned from and would miss most.

“I learned how the most important mission of Cadet Command is producing quality leaders for our Army, and I believe that long-term there is no greater mission in the entire Army,” he said. “The ones I will miss the most are the Cadets; they are all great Americans and full of energy.”

# C-app-tivating prospects

## Command unveils new smartphone downloads

By Steve Arel

*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

Smartphones run people's lives these days.

We use them to wake us. We use them to hustle us to meetings. And with the advent of countless applications, we have converted the smartphone into everything from mobile banking centers, to personal fitness trainers, to digital family scrapbooks.

Smartphones are tethered to many of us like an extra limb.

Cadet Command wants Army ROTC to connect to America's young men and women, too. So it has created a smartphone app that details the opportunities available to those looking to serve their country through Army ROTC.

The app is available for both the Android and iPhone platforms via links through the Cadet Command website, [www.cadetcommand.army.mil](http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil).

As Cadet Command looks for different ways to reach prospects and to inform others about Army ROTC's mission, development of the app was inevitable, said Col. Michael Armstead, director of marketing and outreach for Cadet Command.

"We constantly seek better methods of communicating the benefits of Army ROTC to our target audience. This smartphone app is a salient example of that effort," he said. "It provides a very cost-effective method of conveying information about our program in an era when people of all ages are increasing their use of digital technology."

The app, the logo of which is the command's leadership-excellence patch, puts most everything a prospect might want to know

about Army ROTC at their fingertips.

There's a list of each of the 273 host programs nationwide, along with links to those that have websites, including the 1,000-plus partnership schools.

Scholarship information is available, including breakdowns of the types of scholarships available, steps on how to apply and timelines. There's also a section dedicated to personal and professional development, explaining the types of schools and internships available to those in ROTC.

Curt Arbtin, who developed the app, describes it as the "digital handbook of Cadet Command."

The app was first developed for the Android, taking a couple of months to complete. It has had nearly 2,500 downloads since a soft promotion unveiling the app in mid-October.

The iPhone version took another six weeks of development for functioning on its operating system and has just become available this month.

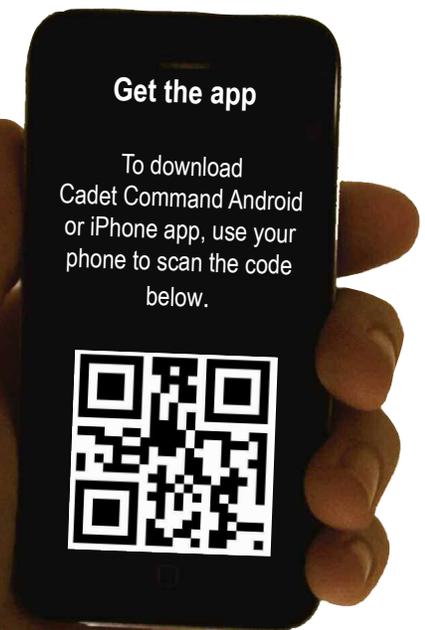
The University of Maryland, which developed its own Android and iPhone app last spring, remains the only program with such an app.

While the

school's app has met with success, only about 10 percent of the information is specific to the Maryland program, with the rest specific to ROTC in general, Arbtin said.

"We figured, why not build an app that meets the needs of all Cadets?" he said.

Those with feedback or suggestions on the app can contact Arbtin at [curt.arbtin@usacc.army.mil](mailto:curt.arbtin@usacc.army.mil).



*Photo illustration by Steve Arel*



Allen Rodriguez, of Carl Hayden High School in Arizona, motivates himself during the air rifle championship by posting a note to himself on the eyepiece that reads "I can shoot great." Photo by Rachael Tolliver

## Programs from Missouri, Alabama claim Army air rifle titles

By Rachael Tolliver

*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

ANNISTON, Ala. – He had never been in the finals of a major match.

Until now.

Perhaps just as daunting was the fact that Charles Hollis was pitted against one of the sports top shooters, a veteran air rifleman who's no stranger to stiff competition. But that inexperience didn't seem to matter.

Hollis walked away a champion.

The senior from Rayville High School in Louisiana won the sporter division, while Kevin Cruz won the precision division of the 2012 Army JROTC Air Rifle Championships. The competition was held Feb. 10-11 simultaneously at Camp Perry, Ohio, and Anniston, Ala., but the two champions both competed in Anniston.

"It was my first big match, my first time in the finals and it was important for my colonel because he is expecting to retire next year and I wanted to send him off with a bang," Hollis said.

"The hardest part was persevering through the finals. Tyler Rico has been in a lot of finals and has a lot of experience, and I was nervous. I made some mistakes and had to shake them off."

Cadets could compete in two different three-position air rifle events. Precision air rifle is modeled after Olympic-style shooting and allows the use of specialized target rifles and shooting

### More online

For a photo gallery of images from the Army JROTC Air Rifle Championship, go to <http://bit.ly/wr-jBxB>

For additional stories from the event, visit [www.army.mil/rotc](http://www.army.mil/rotc)

Complete results can be found at the Civilian Marksmanship Programs website at [www.odcmp.com](http://www.odcmp.com).

**AIR RIFLE on page 18**



# Tour de force

Leadership makes  
bowl blitz  
to tell ROTC's story

Story by Steve Arel • U.S. Army Cadet Command

SAN ANTONIO – Touring the Center for the Intrepid recently, the medical center where wounded Soldiers of America's Army receive critical physical rehabilitation, All-American Bowl VIPs found themselves taken aback by what they witnessed.

They applauded the efficiency of the facility and its in-house prosthetic-making operation. They praised the quality of care provided.

What struck Margaret Moran were the faces of the injured.

"They're so young," the national president for the League of United Latin American Citizens said.

Such observations were what January's VIP visit to the U.S. Army All-American Bowl and San Antonio were all about: to dispel misconceptions and educate people in positions to influence others about the Army by giving them an in-depth look at how it functions and by creating face-to-face dialogue between them and senior Army leaders.

Cadet Command hosted 30 people from across the country, allowing them to participate in activities such as tandem jumps with the famed Golden Knights and firing shotguns with the Army Marksmanship Unit. But the focal point of the visit – the All-American Bowl is the Army's largest single outreach event – was to teach them about widespread opportunities for America's youth to serve in uniform, and specifically how to do so through ROTC.

The intent was for the visitors to become advocates – or teammates, if you will – for the Army and ROTC back home, being able to effectively articulate the opportunities available to those willing and able to serve.

Among Cadet Command's VIPs were business people, educators and civic officials – people who wield influence in their communities and who do so on a national level.

Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald, Cadet Command's commanding general, solicited their assistance to help present the Army as a viable option to youth seeking lifelong personal and professional opportunities and to strengthen the defense of the nation.

"We can't do it by ourselves," he said.

Some of the unknowns about ROTC stem from its name – Reserve Officers' Training Corps. McDonald said many assume the command only commissions Reserve officers, when the reality is the command commissions officers for the National Guard and active components, too.

Though Cadet Command met its commissioning mission in Fiscal 2011, it did so not by merely casting a net to pull in prospects but by focusing on attracting well-rounded, intelligent people with a propensity to lead. It's those future leaders, McDonald said, who will be pivotal in protecting America's freedoms.

To illustrate how the American way of life is largely taken for granted, McDonald asked the VIPs how many of them lived in a small town. He then asked whether the streets were paved, and whether they had power to their homes around the clock.

Some of the VIPs chuckled.

Finally, McDonald asked whether the authorities routinely – sometimes in the middle of the night – rough

AAB continued on page 8



Donna Marsh, director at large for Women Business Opportunities Connections in New York, sights down the barrel of a shotgun as part of the week's festivities leading up to the U.S. Army All-American Bowl. She was one of nearly 30 VIPs brought in to the event to learn more about opportunities for young people to serve in the Army through ROTC. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

**AAB, continued from page 6**

up the townspeople.

“Evil people can’t stand the way we live and would keep attacking if we didn’t take the fight to them,” he said.

That’s why sustaining an all-volunteer force – men and women motivated to lead American Soldiers – is critical, McDonald said. And the VIPs, within their communities in positions of influence, can lead talented individuals to consider service by arming them with information.

“If we don’t do that (sustain the force), we won’t have those simple freedoms that aren’t simple at all,” McDonald said.

Cadet Command’s presence was prominent around downtown San Antonio throughout All-American Bowl week. Massive posters adorned hotel windows, ROTC banners hung from street lamps lining the way to the Alamodome and announcers routinely touted the program over loudspeakers to thousands visiting the Army Strong Zone and taking in the high school football game.

Cadet Command served as the primary sponsor of the National Combine for high school juniors. Senior ROTC Cadets from around the nation acted as marshals, ensuring participants were where they needed to be and on time. The Cadets also talked to them about their ROTC experiences, opportunities and the impact the program has made on their lives – and the impact it could make on the students’ lives.

There also were four public scholarship presentations, in which the command awarded roughly half a million dollars to high school seniors joining the Senior ROTC program this fall. McDonald made one presentation that aired on national television during NBC’s broadcast of the football game.

The information wasn’t lost on those community leaders who can help spread ROTC’s message.

“It’s up to us to let our communities know what the Army is doing,” Moran said.

Taking aim at clay targets with shotguns at the San Antonio Rifle Club, several of Cadet Command’s VIPs had taken up the challenge and were already devising ways to spread the word.

David Batie, of EMC Corp. and 100 Black Men of America in Atlanta, wants to look at developing a boot camp of sorts for high school juniors to instill in them discipline and structure as they enter their senior years and establish career paths. He also wants to foster dialogue with local parents to ensure they know about opportunities available to their children either through an enlistment or through ROTC.

**AAB, continued on page 20**



**(Top)** JROTC Cadet John Hernandez, of Memorial High in San Antonio, scales a climbing wall at the Army Strong Zone.

*Photo by Steve Arel*

**(Right)** Michael Scott, center, chooses to attend Baylor University on an ROTC scholarship. She made her selection during the third quarter of the All-American Bowl. The scholarship was presented by Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald, Cadet Command commander. He and Scott were interviewed by an NBC announcer. Also taking part were Scott’s parents, Gerald and Amber. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

**(Bottom)** Second Lt. Ishmael Velez, of the University of Texas-San Antonio, takes his oath of service prior to kickoff. Accompanying Velez is his wife, Maritza, and McDonald. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

**AAB on the Web**

For a photo gallery of images from the week’s events, go to <http://bit.ly/ydpwWB>. Additional information on the All-American Bowl is available at <http://www.usarmyal-americanbowl.com/>



# HIGH note



Junior ROTC Cadet Michael Thompson leads the All-American Bowl marching band, above, during its January performance. (Below) Thompson closes out the performance surrounded by Soldiers in the Alamodome stands. Photos by Steve Arel

## Miami senior first JROTC Cadet to lead marching band

By Steve Arel

*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

SAN ANTONIO – Michael Thompson scaled his perch at the 50-yard line of the Alamodome, his eyes shielded by the brim of his shiny black performance hat but his focus squarely on the band fanned out across the field in front of him.

Then Thompson executed an about-face, used both his hands to remove his headgear like a Roman gladiator and set it to his side. Pivoting back around, he raised his right hand and reached behind his head.

From Thompson's shirt he pulled what would be the source of his conducting power – a baton.

Then the drum major went to work.

Through nearly 10 minutes of patriotic hymns, the seemingly calm Thompson morphed into a feverish director, moving in concert to the beat and his face grimacing at times as he tried to rhythmically pull sounds from the instruments



like a wizard waving his wand to cast a spell.

"The adrenaline was pumping," he said.

Thompson serves as battalion executive officer for Miami Sunset Senior High School's Junior ROTC program. During January's All-American Bowl, he assumed the role of field general for the marching band.

As the ensemble's drum major, Thompson was tapped to lead the band through its halftime performance at the 12th annual game that pits

some of the nation's top high school football prospects. He was the first Junior ROTC Cadet to lead the marching band in its five years of existence, said Brian Prato, the band's director of operations.

A seven-year participant in school band, Thompson was quick to rank the All-American Bowl accolade.

"This is No. 1," he said. "It's huge."

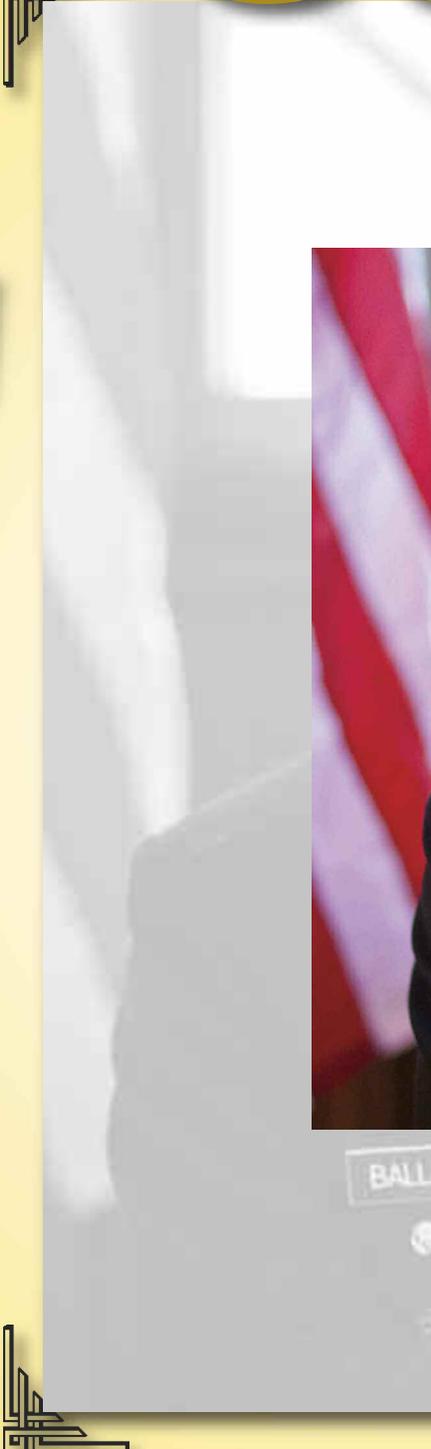
The All-American Bowl Band features 125 senior musicians and color guard members from

across the country. As the drum major, Thompson, an accomplished musician with the trumpet and French horn, was charged with leading the group during hours-long practices and rehearsals and carrying out the band director's instructions.

Thompson's selection came as no surprise to those who know him, considering his talent and potential.

**THOMPSON, continued on page 20**

# Go



(Above) Second Lt. Howard Ballard, of the sionees from the University of Minnesota commissioning at Marion Military Institute Wisconsin-Oshkosh. University of Wisconsin University of Cincinnati. Submitted photo

ember commissioning ceremonies nationwide where some 700 Cadets became second lieutenants

# Golden Age



the University of Kansas, has his rank pinned on by his girlfriend, Lauren Giacalone, and his son, Vincent Ballard. *Submitted photo* (From top left) Commis-  
sioning ceremonies nationwide where some 700 Cadets became second lieutenants. *Submitted photo* Brothers Kirklyn and Kendall Simpkins display their commissioning certificates after  
ceremony in Alabama. *Submitted photo* Second Lt. John Lee is kissed by his girlfriend, Samantha Beyer, after Lee was commissioned Dec. 16 at the University of  
Alabama. *Submitted photo* Second Lts. Courtney Stall, Marshall Reid, Michael Benjamin and Louis Sunderhaus flash thumbs-up signs prior to commissioning at the

For an online gallery of additional commissioning images, go to <http://bit.ly/ys5Co9>.

38-year-old California Cadet commissions and proves ...

# AGE is just a NUMBER



**N**ORTHRIDGE, Calif. – Kenya Nelson always knew he'd get by on his gifts. His mother and big brother both had flashes of music stardom, and Kenya had that talent, too – he had been involved in the music business singing, writing and producing.

But four years ago, with things going well and a budding family, a new idea came clear. Nelson felt the call to stop getting by on himself and to become part of something bigger.

He joined the Army.

In December, U.S. Army Cadet Command commissioned more than 700 lieutenants at colleges and universities across the United States. Nelson was among them, earning his commission at age 38, making him the oldest Cadet to commission this school year.

It's rare for people in their late-30s to join the Army – let alone earn an Army commission, Cadet Command officials said.

Maj. William Ritch, assistant professor of military science at the University of Califor-

Story and photos by Jeremy O'Bryan • U.S. Army Cadet Command

nia-Los Angeles, said it's a feat that would take "tremendous drive, focus and dedication" to achieve.

Nelson was ready for the challenge. His love of leadership, instilled by a single mother raising the Nelson boys in the poorest part of Philadelphia, led him to military service.

"My mother instilled in us that following others can get you into trouble," Nelson said. "With my mother and my aunts and uncles watching over us, it became easy for us to know how to find who I should and who I shouldn't surround myself with."

Nelson's mother, Phyllis, an aspiring R&B singer, whisked the boys, now young men, off to California in the mid-1990s when she was offered a recording contract. Kenya worked various retail jobs, pursued a business degree at college and followed his brother, Mark, a successful record producer and recording artist, into the Los Angeles music scene. He also married and started a family.

"I grew tired of the day-to-day with no one having my back," Kenya Nelson said. "The Army was the best organization I could think of to join."

Nelson went to basic training in May 2008, a day he won't forget. His desire to lead became clearer as his service as a non-commissioned officer in his California-based Reserve unit and his attendance at California State University-Northridge created a gateway to officership. The Reserve allowed Nelson to become a Soldier and a leader without leaving the Los Angeles area where he has established his family and has long-time friends.

Sid Mendoza, the recruiting operations officer at CSUN for the past two years, helped Nelson gain access to the program.

"Kenya is motivated," said Mendoza, a 10-year military veteran who is also a captain in the Army Reserve. "And he motivates others. He's enthusiastic."

Mendoza said most Cadets seeking a commission via ROTC are 18 to 30 years old.

Gary Tatro, an operations research analyst for Cadet Command, agrees. Nelson, he said, is among a tiny number of commissionees in their late 30s.

Nelson's commission at 38 was a surprise to Al Dixon, a longtime friend from the California music scene – but he wasn't surprised Nelson could pull it off even as an older Cadet.

Nelson, Dixon said, is "a guy that when he says he's going to do something, he gets it done. It's amazing to me."

Dixon's impression is shared by Cadets in Nelson's program. Mendoza said other Cadets performed a good-natured parody of Nelson's motivation at a recent formal military dinner. Nelson himself describes his fellow Cadets overacting his penchant for getting everyone amped up for physical training, yelling, "Good morning, Bravo Company!" and "What's gonna work?" The standard responses are "Good morning" and "Teamwork," respectively.

"He was constantly mentoring younger Cadets," Mendoza said, "not just about the Army, but about life."

Nelson, pleased with the role, considers it natural.

"The role kind of chose me," he said.

By all accounts, leadership comes naturally to Nelson. He

credits the influence of his upbringing. He uses tactics to raise his children similar to the ones his mother used to raise him and his brother.

Recently, he and his wife, Aubrey, amid their three children in a flurry of shoelaces and backpack straps, headed out the door to start their day. Dropping his charges at school, his leadership instincts kick in and the daily mantra begins:

"What are we?" Nelson asks.

"Leaders!" his kids reply.

"What do we do?" he asks.

"Lead by example!" they shout back.



**Kenya Nelson sings the national anthem during the Dec. 16 commissioning ceremony at California State University-Northridge. (Opposite page) Lt. Col. Sean Phelps, the professor of military science at the University of California-Los Angeles, administers the commissioning oath to, from left, Cadets Sabrina Baylor, Michael Frank, Arthur Gibford, Christian Munoz and Nelson.**

"What happens when we don't lead?"

"We get into trouble!"

Savion, 13, Ajani, 10, and Kadir, 6, poured out of the truck to school. As a father, and now as an Army lieutenant, leadership has become something Nelson breathes – not leadership for the sake of notoriety or self-promotion, but for the sake of service.

"I spoke with an Army general at Fort Knox," Nelson said. "I asked him, 'How did you become a general?' He said to me, 'When I was a second lieutenant, I thought about being a second lieutenant.'"

The lesson has stuck. Nelson graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration and branched military police. He'll head to the Basic Officer Leadership Course in July, then return to his Reserve unit to become the rear detachment executive officer.

"I'm not even thinking about becoming a first lieutenant," he said. "My main focus is knowing how to take care of my Soldiers. The rest will come with the territory."

# ‘Blessed’ with OPPORTUNITY

Six months into her tenure as Cadet Command’s first female deputy commanding general, Col. Peggy Combs talks about the quality of the Army’s future leaders, opportunities for those looking to serve and the job that feels like a homecoming of sorts

By Steve Arel,  
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*



Col. Peggy Combs talks to participants at last month’s U.S. Army National Combine in San Antonio as she introduces Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno.  
*Photo by Forrest Berkshire*



*Col. Peggy Combs makes no apologies for the way she carries herself.*

*She walks with bounce in her step. She smiles constantly. And she genuinely believes in being nice to people, regardless of whether they're bosses, colleagues or subordinates.*

*But early in her career, someone tried to change her into something she wasn't: A hardened leader with a surly demeanor.*

*A tactical officer in her basic officer's course recommended that she put a rock in her boot and walk around. His thinking was that Combs would develop the look of pain in her face and then, maybe, others would take her seriously.*

*Combs reluctantly gave it a try. Until three weeks into her first permanent assignment, some senior non-commissioned officers called her aside. They could see through the veil.*

*"They said, 'We don't know who you think you're fooling, but you ain't fooling us,'" she said. " 'You're not this person you're trying to be, and you're wasting too much energy trying to be that person.' "*

*Combs considers that the greatest lesson she learned as a lieutenant.*

*"For three weeks, I was one miserable," she said. "It takes a lot of energy to be someone you're not."*

*These days, Combs continues to be herself. And she carries that message – know yourself, be yourself, be authentic – to the scores of Cadets with whom she speaks regularly.*

**You have been Cadet Command's deputy commander for six months. In that time, what has stood out to you most from a positive standpoint?**

Seeing firsthand the quality of our young people - the future leaders of America's Army in our senior ROTC programs and the future leaders of America in our JROTC programs, has been an incredibly inspirational learning experience for me. These developing leaders inspire and motivate me and others around them.

The media today highlights all of our nation's economic troubles, but I have the opportunity to see what America's true treasure is, and that's our youth. You see the best of America's youth in our programs, and our future is bright. I truly am blessed to have this job.

**Where do you see opportunities for improvement?**

We have to continually assess – and we do continually assess – our program and our curriculum to ensure we're educating our ROTC cadets to best meet the needs of the Army in the contemporary operating environment.

Of course, the Army's environment changes on a day-to-day basis. We have to try to stay ahead of that change. That's hard to do in education with getting curriculum vetted, written and back out again. So we're relying on our professors of military science to really interject those contemporary issues and concerns into the curriculum. They're doing a good job of that.

Another area of improvement for our program overall is precision recruiting. We are

doing well with quality, but we have a high attrition rate which indicates that we probably need to do a better job on precision recruiting in order to get the right folks in the program.

With declining budgets and fiscal constraints, we can no longer afford high attrition rates. We need to be a bit more selective in our offers and a bit more selective in the entrance into our programs.

**With proposals to downsize the Army – and ultimately the size of the fighting force – how does that change the role of those recruiting the Army's future leaders?**

Regardless of end strength numbers, the Army is always going to have a need for high-quality people. I don't see end strength numbers particularly affecting how we recruit quality people. It goes to the notion of precision recruiting for the needs of the Army.

**The military as a whole has been faced with a prospect pool in recent years that, for one reason or another, isn't qualified to serve. Can the Army, and particularly Cadet Command, help turn things around?**

The partnership the Army has with America in Junior ROTC is an influencer of that generation to be healthy and disciplined and focused during high school, so that they can contribute to their communities when they graduate. We've shown it be a very successful program with over a 97 percent high school graduation rate. Whether those students choose to enter military service, go onto college, or just enter their local job market, these

**COMBS, continued on page 19**



Col. Michael Blahovec, commander of 1st Brigade, performs leg exercises earlier this month while wearing his fitted Intrepid Dynamic Exoskeletal Orthosis device. The brace immobilizes Blahovec's ankle, allowing him to run again at a near-normal gait. *Photo by Rachael Tolliver*

## New prosthetic device, cutting-edge procedure aid commander's recovery from severe ankle injury

By Rachael Tolliver  
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

Before becoming commander of 1st Brigade, Col. Michael Blahovec wondered if he would ever lead Soldiers again. He wondered if he would ever run, walk without pain and, most important to him, spend time doing traditional activities with his children.

Blahovec, who entered the Army through the ROTC program at Edinboro University, was stationed in Germany in 2006 when he hurt himself during PT playing a football-like game.

It can happen to anyone — even a senior leader.

"I went up in the air and came down wrong," he said. "I fell on my ankle just right, broke it in four places and ruptured a ligament."

Blahovec's goals at the time seemed simple — fix the ankle, rehab and get back to soldiering. After surgery and extensive physical therapy, he said he felt he was good to go. Then

he did a 15-month tour in Iraq. By the time it was over, the simple act of walking put him in terrible pain.

"By the summer of 2009, walking was so painful and by spring of 2010, weight-bearing was almost impossible," he said.

By 2010, Blahovec was working in Virginia. He had an initial appointment at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and went back for a second opinion. After much discussion about fusing his ankle, he and his doctor, Lt. Col. Scott Shawen, decided to use a relatively new joint restoration procedure called distraction arthroplasty.

The surgery is designed to preserve ankle motion, unlike fusion surgery, by pulling the joint surfaces apart and allowing the cartilage to soften, re-vascularize and produce a healing response. After the procedure, which is minimally invasive, Blahovic's ankle and foot had to sit in an external cage-like structure attached to pins inside the ankle that held the bones apart for several months.

"They took the cage off a year ago and now

"I was unsure at one point if I could stay in the Army. And if I did, could I do physical stuff? I can now do nearly everything everyone else can do," Col. Michael Blahovec

— just walking — it’s a 95 percent improvement from before surgery,” he said.

Blahovec’s goal wasn’t just to walk without pain, but to be as normal as possible — and keep his job in the Army. And he wanted to run.

Together, Blahovec and Shawen researched his options.

Shawen called San Antonio and talked to the therapist and prosthetist at the Center for the Intrepid. The center decided Blahovec was a good candidate for a new device prosthetist Ryan Blanck designed and physical therapist Johnny Owens teaches patients to use. The device, called the Intrepid Dynamic Exoskeletal Orthosis, is currently in a provisional patent process.

The IDEO fits under the foot, and comes up the heel where the heel-cuff acts as a patella bearing cup. Another piece extends up the back of the leg where it straps around the upper leg near the knee. Owens said that by immobilizing a patient’s ankle, he/she doesn’t move the ankle and it doesn’t hurt anymore. The IDEO, custom fit by Blanck, is made of fiberglass and carbon rods that come up the back of the leg, looking almost like a running prosthetic attached to someone’s leg.

Owens and Blanck have fit about 200 braces since Blanck first sketched his design in 2009.

The ankle is a hinge joint, and it can’t flex if the ankle is fused or severely damaged. That means the patient can’t run. But the unique design of the device allows patients like Blahovec to run, stay in the Army and even play sports with his son and daughter. He said it felt awkward at first, but now it feels like a part of his leg.

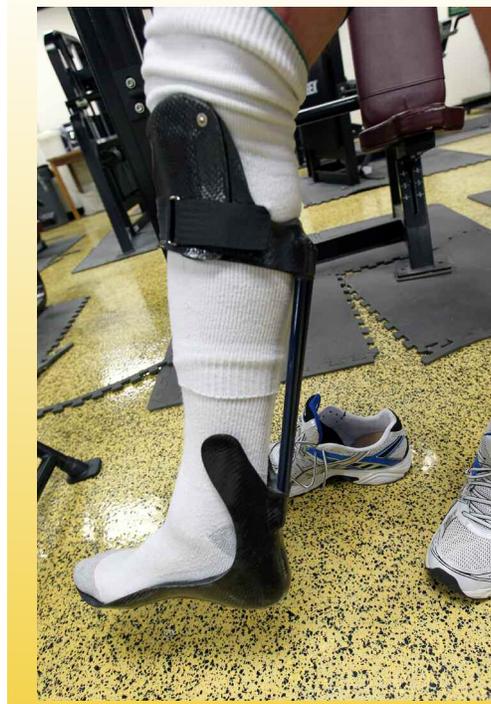
“It immobilizes my ankle, but allows me to run at near normal gait,” Blahovec said. “There is a sweet spot on the brace bottom (under the foot) that transfers energy up the back of the carbon fiber rods (strapped to the leg) and propels you forward. (The IDEO) feels so comfortable, in terms of my ankle feeling good, that I barely notice it is there.”

Blanck and Owens fit Blahovec with one of the devices about five months ago, and Owens taught him how to walk and run in it.

Owens said that for patients who have not been able to bear weight, or walk, it takes time and training to learn how to use the device, overcome the fear of pain and learn what they can do with their newfound strength.

“About four weeks is (standard operating procedure) for training,” Owens said. “One reason is that you are basically putting a prosthetic on your leg. Also, people who have a messed up leg don’t want to put force on the leg, and the hurdle is to overcome the desire to not put force on it.

“Patients do run training, cut training, jump training and deployment training. It takes several weeks to see if the brace fits right — no rub spots, we check for blisters and skin break-



## How it works

The Intrepid Dynamic Exoskeletal Orthosis, or IDEO, was designed by prosthetist Ryan Blanck at the Center for the Intrepid at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. It is a custom-fit device made from carbon and fiberglass that supports the foot and ankle.

The IDEO is custom-made using a mold from a person’s leg. The three-piece device fits in shoes and boots. The top piece that is shaped like the top portion of a prosthetic leg is placed just below the knee. Both pieces are held together by a sturdy and flexible support bar.

The upper and lower sections are joined by a carbon fiber dynamic response strut system originating from prosthetic technology used with the high-activity amputee population within the Department of Defense.

down. And we need to see if the brace will hold up to what you do with it. Sometimes Ryan has to reinforce it — he can tweak it so it fits well.”

Since he is the only prosthetist who works the brace he invented, Blanck said he has to individually work each one and that takes time.

However, as Blahovec found, the device is not just for Soldiers injured in Iraq or Afghanistan. In fact, he said Owen and Blanck were looking for people like him who were not injured in combat.

“The average NCO or officer who is in for 10 to 15 years and injured in sports, or jumping out of a plane — this is good for them,” Blahovec said. “There are a lot of people who were injured in training or PT whose career would otherwise end early.”

Blanck said plenty of patients rehabbing from injuries not sustained in combat have deployed with the device, mostly to Afghanistan. Nine of those are combat deployments — back to the same job they held before being injured, mostly Special Forces.

“The brace gives me confidence coming into this job,” Blahovec said. “I was unsure at one point if I could stay in the Army. And if I did, could I do physical stuff? I can now do nearly everything everyone else can do. I want to set a good example as a leader.”

The brace allows him to stay in shape, to lead Soldiers, walk regularly, work out and do extensive PT.

“It feels like nothing is wrong with me when I put that thing on. Mentally it gives me confidence, too,” he said. “Now I can run for 20 minutes on a treadmill or a track. I am working on building that time.”

But Blahovec credits the leadership he had at the time of his injury and since for the fact he is still in the Army and now running. He said his

leadership helped him find a second opinion when the first one was so negative, they gave him the time to heal without rushing him and they trusted him.

“Good leaders don’t give up on you, and mine showed that there are leaders that do what we talk about—taking care of Soldiers,” he said.

“No matter how complex your job or what your focus is, your Soldiers need to know you are there to take care of them. Help your folks get second opinions, (like his did) and allow them time to get healthy.”

He added that his leadership supported him beyond what was required when they didn’t have to and allowed him time to heal.

“Without that support, I’m not sure what I would have done,” he said.

“No matter how much you talk, the day you know you have an injury that will affect your life, it is different. You cross a mental line when it’s you. You don’t understand, ‘How can someone be so bad they can’t run?’ But when it’s you, you understand.”

Blahovec advises others who might try to use mental and physical toughness to overcome an injury.

“Don’t let bravado make you do stupid things,” he said. “But also, don’t let a physical disability limit you in overcoming obstacles. For example, my German doctor advised me not to run and I should have paid attention. When the doctor says slow down, it’s good to listen.”

Blahovec is among the lucky ones. Despite his hurdles, the medical community has given him back much of what he thought he had lost.

“I can now run around the basketball court with my son and daughter,” Blahovec said. “I can’t play a full one-on-one game yet, but I can play some ball and spend time with my kids. It improves the quality of my life.”

## AIR RIFLE, continued from page 5

equipment. Sporter air rifle is designed for competitors who want to compete with little customization or specialized shooting equipment.

Hollis and Rico were neck-and-neck most of the competition. After the first day, Rico edged Hollis by one point. While Hollis shot better prone, 197 to 195 on a 200-point scale, Rico had a better kneeling score—188 to 181. Hollis also bested Rico in standing 183 to 179.

The results put Rico ahead 562 to 561 after Day One.

Rico, a senior at Flowing Wells High School in Tucson, Ariz., is known in the air rifle world. He is on the President's 100 list and, according to his senior Army instructor, retired Maj. Robert Dewitt, the reigning junior high-power champion. He also shoots small bore.

"I've been shooting competitively since 2005," Rico said. "Before that, I shot recreationally with my dad."

The top eight shooters in each division advanced to the finals. Hollis was ahead of Rico 1,212 to 1,211 going into the finals.

A 7.9 on his next to last round, and a 7.7 on his final round negated the 7.8 Hollis shot on his first round. During the finals Hollis also shot a 10.9 — perfect — and a 10.2, while Rico's best score was 10.3 and a 10.1. All shots in the final round were fired from the standing position.

Cruz, a senior at Del Valle High School in El Paso, finished third last year in precision. This year, he held the lead the first day by scoring a perfect 200 in the prone position and built on it in Day Two with a 199 in prone and a 197 in kneeling.

By holding the lead both days and winning the finals, he beat Mercedes Romih, of Patch High School at Stuttgart Garrison in Germany, by a score of 1,266 to 1,265.

Tessa Howald, a senior Cadet at Ozark High School in Missouri, was on her way to winning the title until a mistake on the first day gave her a zero score on a round.

When loading a pellet, the rifle expelled air and shot the pellet into the backstop. Howald quickly acknowledged the error and received a zero for the round. If not for that mistake, offi-



(Above) A JROTC Cadet zeroes in on a target during a practice round at the Army air rifle championship in Anniston, Ala.



(Left) Retired Sgt. 1st Class Riess Pellegrino shows two of his Sarasota Military Academy freshmen what the shooting lanes look like and tells them what they can expect in competition.

Photos by Rachael Tolliver

cialists say she would likely have taken the title.

She ended in fifth place.

Last year, Howald won the sporter division, Rico finished 10th and Hollis was in the top eight. But this year Ozark started a precision team, which allowed several of the younger shooters to move up to the sporter team as last year's sporter team moved up to precision.

Makennon Doran, a junior with Ozark and a teammate of Howald, claimed fourth overall, behind Sarah Jameson of Walla Walla High School in Washington State.

Although this was the first year for Ozark's team in precision, they had the best overall team score with 4,626. Del Valle High School earned second with 4,596 and third went to Patch

High School with 4,576.

Daleville's overall sporter team score put them in first place with a score of 4,360, Flowing Wells High School owned second with a score of 4,349, and Killeen High School (Texas) claimed third at 4,334.

Retired Maj. Robert Dewitt, the senior JROTC instructor at Flowing Wells High School, said he was proud of his team's progress.

"We've been moving up each year — three years ago we took sixth, and last year we took fourth," he said. "We try to keep them focused, and they have to keep their grades up. They are learning discipline and responsibility and how to focus. Those are skills they can use anywhere they go and for anything they do."

### At a glance

A look at the winners from the 2012 Army JROTC Service Championship



**4,626**

Ozark High School,  
Missouri

### Precision



**4,596**

Del Valle High School,  
Texas

### Sporter



**4,360**

Daleville High School,  
Alabama



**4,349**

Flowing Wells High  
School, Arizona

## COMBS, continued from page 15

focused and disciplined graduates are going on to serve their communities in better ways.

So, yes, our Army is committed to assisting society with this problem through JROTC. JROTC allows us to reach into and partner with over 1,700 communities across the nation to better prepare our youth for the challenges of tomorrow.

**The All-American Bowl is the Army's largest outreach event. At the January All-American Bowl, there was significant dialogue between Army leaders and community leaders and educators from around the country. How critical is that group of people in the effort to inform America's youth about opportunities to serve in uniform, and how big a difference can they make?**

Through these advocates, we are able to spread the word about ROTC opportunities in areas we cannot reach. As you know, our professors of military science have one recruiting officer who works for them. They're limited on their reach. Their reach is primarily campus-based, and that's all we can reasonably expect from a recruiting officer – to get the best and brightest from the campus.

If we want to reach out beyond the campuses, we have to have those community leaders and educators who are influential within their communities, armed with what our standards are and what the opportunities are that we provide.

When our advocates see and interact with elite students, who may not know about our opportunity because they're not near an Army post or a recruiting station, they are able to refer the students to us.

**Cadet Command reached a significant milestone in 2011 – its silver anniversary. You are the first female DCG in the command's 25-year history. What does that distinction mean to you?**

My assignment here is really just a sign of the times, I believe. I don't think it's anything historic.

I am thrilled to have been selected to come do this job. This is like coming home for me because Army ROTC is where I got my start. I absolutely love what we do, and I believe in ROTC as a commissioning source for our Army, but more importantly, as an outreach to America – as the connection to America in academia.

Cadet Command has so much reach into the communities of America. That's why I find this job so exciting. We go out and see America. It's inspiring.

**Maj. Gen. Marcia Anderson, an ROTC grad herself from Creighton University, this fall became the first African American female to attain that rank. And the Cadet of the Year for 2011 is a female, the first time that has happened**

**since 2006. What message do those achievements send about opportunities for everyone in the Army?**

I'm often asked about being a female in the Army and what you have to overcome to succeed. The bottom line is that the strength of our Army is that it has never denied anyone opportunity. I truly believe that, and Maj. Gen. Anderson is indeed a shining example of that.

In our Army, talent creates opportunity. You have to cultivate your talents so folks present you the opportunity to further that talent. It really is all about talent management, and our Army does an exceptional job at talent management.

Talent and greatness to me isn't based on your gender or your color. I believe the good Lord gives everybody a seed of greatness, and it's how you cultivate that greatness that opens other doors. It's all about your attitude and how you contribute to team success.

**From a personal standpoint, you soon will be promoted to general officer. What does that mean to you?**

I've been told I'll be promoted sometime within the next year. For me, I wouldn't be here without Army ROTC. The Army gave me the opportunity to go to college. I was the first person on both sides of my family to go to college. If it weren't for Army ROTC, I wouldn't have gone to college.

The Army gave me the opportunity to develop my potential that would not have been there any other way. For me to have this opportunity to serve at the next higher level is a tremendous blessing. Service every day is a blessing when you see ordinary people do extraordinary things. It is a career you can't put a price tag on.

**In your position, you get a chance to regularly interact with Cadets from around the country. What is your impression of the next generation of officers Cadet Command is producing today?**

Wow, I see a lot of great talent. We are very fortunate.

We're doing a great job with character development and their maturity coming out of college. They're much better Cadets than I ever was. The future of our officer corps is bright and talented.

**What sort of lessons do you try to pass on to Cadets, and are they teaching you anything?**

What I have learned from these Cadets is first

of all, they have a tremendous desire to serve. Frankly, it's something I don't think I had as a Cadet. It took me much longer in my career to develop that passion. They have that passion as college students.

What I'm learning is they're coming into the Army much better equipped to deal with the issues our Army faces today. It is a much more complex Army today than when I entered in 1985. I believe these Cadets are equipped to deal with that as junior officers. Just their awareness of social issues ... they are more well-rounded on what is going on in the world and in our Army than I ever was as a Cadet.

**There are a number of changes on the horizon that will impact Cadet Command, from shrinking budgets to restructuring to changing technology. The Army teaches Soldiers to be adaptable. How critical will that trait be in the coming years?**

I believe we're shortsighted in saying we're adaptable. Adaptable means to me we are reactive, in that the enemy or the environment is causing us to change. They're drawing first blood, and we have to adapt and overcome.

To me, a better goal is innovative. We should be developing leaders and encouraging leaders to lead change and be innovative in how they lead change, as opposed to being forced to change by an environment or an enemy. Our Army now requires innovative leaders, and the Army of the future is going to continue to require innovative leaders.

It's a little bit of a different thinking skill we have to have, and we have to do a better job of not only encouraging critical thinking and systems thinking, but we must value and cultivate creative thinking skills so we can grow strategic leaders in the future. Our young generation is full of innovative leaders. They've shown it on the battlefield, whether you want to call it adaptability or innovation.

**Any advice for those Cadets who recently commissioned and for those who will commission a few months from now?**

My challenge always to Cadets is to begin their leadership development program by truly knowing who they are. Be who you are. Be confident in who you are, but you've got to know who that is.

You can't try to be General Patton or General Powell in a can. Cadets are always looking for this magical formula of what makes a great leader. To me the great leader is in each and every one of them. It's how it gets developed and emerges.

I tell Cadets, if you were awful people, we wouldn't commission you. If you didn't have the potential to lead, you wouldn't be sitting here. Take what you have, nurture it, feed it with different ideas. But you're not going to change who that person is. You have to be true to yourself.

### More on Combs

For Combs's bio, check out [www.cadetcommand.army.mil/deputy-commanding-general.aspx](http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil/deputy-commanding-general.aspx).

To read a more in-depth version of the interview, visit <http://1.usa.gov/co-2012>.



## AAB, continued from page 8

Batie said what he has seen and done so far this week has been eye-opening, reinforcing aspects of the Army he knew and enlightening him on areas he knew little or nothing about.

“Whatever you want to be in life, you can be in the Army,” Batie said. “Young people are doing great stuff. But we don’t do enough talking about it. They’re defending our country, and we don’t know it.”

Participating with the marksmanship unit also marked the first time Batie has ever shot a firearm. He was exhilarated after the experience.

Batie owns rifles that belonged to his father, but has never used them. That might soon change.

“They’ve just been collecting dust,” he said. “At least, I know what to do with them. It’s great to learn how to shoot and do it the right way.”

For Endon Anderson, the shoot reignited an interest to serve. An ROTC grad who spent

four years as a commissioned platoon leader and executive officer in the late-1980s, she left the Army as the Berlin Wall tumbled and the Cold War ended. The time of world change led Anderson to pursue change in her own life, deciding to attain a graduate degree and become a professor.

She went into the corporate world, eventually getting her degree and teaching on the side as she serves now as senior director of field sales for Chicago-based Urban Ministries Inc., an African American Christian publishing and communications company with national reach.

Anderson is the only member of her office with prior military experience. Her co-workers know some about her past, but Anderson doesn’t talk about it.

“Not that I’m trying to hide it,” Anderson said. “It just doesn’t come up.”

Army leaders say it’s people like Anderson, who are veterans, with whom they see missed opportunities to tell the Army story by telling their own story.

Anderson is proud of her service, proud to have defended her country and proud to have learned lessons while in uniform that have shaped her life. Firing the shotguns in January rekindled her enthusiasm to serve, saying the only regret she had about her time in the Army was that she didn’t stay longer.

Her visit to the All-American Bowl will change her approach when she heads home, leading her to share her military experience, whether it be in the office, attending workshops or promoting her organization’s publications. She’ll be showing pictures people took of her in action, too.

Keeping America’s Army strong stems from awareness, Anderson said.

“I’m very much on fire for this,” she said. “It’s one of the best things you can do for your life.

“When you hear about the Army on the news, you hear a lot about casualties and other problems. You don’t hear a lot of the day-to-day stories and how it changed (Soldiers’) lives. You don’t hear that it’s a great option.”

## THOMPSON, continued from page 9

“He’s a natural leader,” said CW4 Jose Santini, senior Army instructor for the Miami Sunset program. “They made a good pick.”

Some 30 students applied for the drum major role. Andre Feagin, the AAB band director, wanted someone who possessed charisma, a strong musical background and the ability to be a humble leader.

Reviewing Thompson’s resume and video, Feagin said he knew immediately he had his on-field commander. It didn’t hurt, either, that Thompson had experience leading his peers as a Cadet.

“These leaders rise to the top,” Feagin said. “Michael’s background in JROTC was intriguing, as well as what he felt about music and what (his selection) would mean to his program.”

When he applied, Thompson hedged on whether he could receive the nod. He figured he had the talent, but didn’t know how he would fare against students enrolled in specialized music-development schools.

“You don’t have to come from the largest band program in the district to have quality people,” said Tyrone O’Neal, Miami Sunset’s band director. “It’s not where you’re at, but what you do while you’re there.

“Michael understands esprit de corps, the code of conduct and the order of things. With Michael, his concern is the mission. Everything is geared toward the mission, and everything that deviates, he eliminates that and stays focused.”

Throughout All-American Bowl week, Thompson worked closely with Feagin to hone the game-day routine, titled “Rhapsody in Red, White and Blue,” and build rapport – as much as he could in a few days – with students he didn’t know. To help quickly develop a relationship, when band members arrived at their hotel, there was Thompson shaking hands with fellow students, introducing himself and chatting with them.

“Nobody told him to do that,” Feagin said. “But that’s exactly what he should do. He’s that guy that’s not afraid. He’s a great face for us.”

Thompson attributes much of his success in band, both as a player and as the drum major for Miami Sunset the last two years, to his JROTC experience. He said the program continually pushes him out of his comfort zone, forcing him to think critically, make quick decisions and understand the consequences of those decisions.

Thompson joined JROTC as a sophomore, though he had considered being part of the program for sometime previous to that. He just couldn’t fit it into his schedule.

So when he had a free elective open, he took advantage. More than anything, he said, he wanted to better himself as a leader.

Thompson quickly became engrained in the program, becoming part of the drill team and color guard and volunteering in various community projects.

His success and knack for leading others was so evident to Santini that he wanted to make Thompson the Cadet battalion commander this

year. But he said he couldn’t because of Thompson’s demands of being the high school band’s drum major.

Thompson, who’s considering a Senior ROTC scholarship, plans to attend the University of Miami after graduation and major in nursing. He had decided against medical school and becoming a physician because he said medical school is too long, and he wants to be in a position more quickly to help people.

As for the All-American Bowl performance, Thompson said the experience isn’t one he’ll forget.

Just a few days before the band was to perform, Feagin approached Thompson with an idea on how to end the show – an idea that rewrote the last act of the production.

At the waning moments, Thompson leaped from his stand and tore down the sideline, disappearing among the cluster of people milling about the field. Meanwhile, Feagin assumed Thompson’s spot, directing the musicians.

Then, suddenly, a roar came from the seats where thousands of Soldiers sat and Thompson emerged in the middle of them, his black and gold suit contrasting against their green uniforms. He and Feagin conducted the band simultaneously through its final crescendo.

When the music stopped, there stood Thompson with his white-gloved hands raised and surrounded by Soldiers offering high-fives.

“It was the perfect climax,” he said. “For most of us, the performance was all about the Soldiers. Having it end with the Soldier was great for all of us.”

# Cadet Spotlight

A quarterly look at some of ROTC's future leaders who are already making an impact on their campuses.

*James Williford, a sophomore Cadet at the University of Southern Maine, spent seven years as an enlisted Soldier before pursuing a commission through ROTC. The former combat engineer is a Purple Heart recipient and has deployed three times during his career. He was recently honored as a Soldier Hero during the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.*

## Hometown

Oakland, Maine

## Major

History

## Grade Point Average

3.5

## ROTC Activities

Williford serves as the company S4. He also is involved in various recruiting and training events.

## What motivates you to be an Army officer?

The desire to become an officer is two-fold. First, to command the world's finest Soldiers in defense of the Constitution. This strikes home for me as a former NCO, as I have had this privilege before, and it is one of the finest feelings I have ever had. I wish to command not a team, but a platoon and eventually a company, to develop them, see them succeed and be proud of their success as they advance and improve, developing into leaders (or stronger leaders) themselves. The second reason is that I understand that the Army has flaws, as does any institution. I wish to shape units I am in into the most professional competent and elite units they are capable of. I wish to ensure the basics that are the building stones of the Army are reinforced.

## What impact has ROTC had on you?

ROTC has aided in my development both as a planner and communicator. It has given me the opportunity to test and refine my skills at not only execution of missions, but development of the intricacies of simple items such as memorandums or even how an officer is "grown," which is more complex than initially thought.

## As a veteran, what advice do you have for Cadets who will soon serve?

Development of yourself is not the requirement of others. Dig in and read field manuals, Army regulations and training circulars. Knowledge is power, and never assume you know enough.



Photo by Steve Arel

# LAST LOOK



Soldiers in training in the San Antonio area render salutes as the national anthem plays prior to kick-off of January's U.S. Army All-American Bowl in the Alamodome. *Photo by Steve Arel*