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IRT provides over 13,000 health services in W. Ky.

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123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

MAYFIELD, Ky. — More than 200 members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including scores of Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard and Sailors from the U.S. Navy Reserve, completed a 10-day mission in Western Kentucky July 27 that served local residents with over 13,000 medical, dental and optometry procedures at no cost to the patient.

The mission, called Bluegrass Medical Innovative Readiness Training, was

a unique collaboration between the Department of Defense and the Delta Regional Authority, a federal agency charged with economic development in the Mississippi Delta region, explained U.S. Air Force Maj. Amy Mundell, a medical administrative officer in the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Medical Group.

Several types of care were offered at three sites — Carlisle County High School in Bardwell, Graves County

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Photos by Master Sgt. Phil Speck/Kentucky Air National Guard

Col. Michael Cooper, commander of the 123rd Medical Group, receives a hug from a Western Kentucky resident as thanks for the no-cost medical care she received at a military clinic at Paducah Tilghman High School in Paducah, Ky., July 23.

KyANG team assists local health departments

More than 150 military health care professionals provided thousands of medical, dental and optical services at three sites in Western Kentucky between July 18 and 27 as part of a mission to serve uninsured or underinsured residents, but a smaller team has been making a big impact, too.

That group of four Airmen, all from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing, is called Public Health, explained U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Carolyn Congleton.

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Williams retires after 32 years' service

Chief Master Sgt. Derek Williams retired with more than 32 years of honorable service to the United States Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Kentucky Air National Guard during a ceremony held in his honor here July 16.

Williams, Chief of Cyber Intelligence Operations for the 223rd Intelligence Flight, served 18 years with the Kentucky Air National Guard and has participated in numerous missions, mobilizations and deployments around the world.

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IRT

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High School in Mayfield and Paducah Tilghman High School in Paducah. Those services included medical screenings, dental exams and extractions, optical exams, non-emergency medical treatment, and single-prescription eyeglasses, said Mundell, who served as the mission's officer-in-charge.

From July 18, when the clinics first opened, until they shut down on July 27, the military team performed 1,834 medical procedures, 4,483 dental procedures and 6,685 optometry procedures, according to U.S. Navy Lt. Zach Remmich, mission training officer. The group also delivered more than 1,800 pairs of prescription eyeglasses, all made on site, and filled over \$20,000 worth of prescription and over-the-counter medications free of charge. In total, the clinics served more than 4,000 patients and delivered care with an economic impact of more than \$1.5 million.

IRT missions are designed to provide military health care professionals with an opportunity to train in a real-world setting, Mundell said — the members must deploy to a remote location, set up clinics and begin providing care, much as they would when responding to a natural disaster or military operation — but for many serving on this IRT in Western Kentucky, the larger benefit was the opportunity to make a difference in the community by caring for unins-

ured or underinsured patients.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Donna Stewart, special medical element officer for the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing and one of the primary care providers at Bluegrass Medical IRT, said she was proud of the work being done.

"We're helping the community," said Stewart, who is also a deputy medical examiner for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. "We are providing medical care in so many different ways for people who don't have access to easy medical care or are without enough money to be able to provide for basic medical needs or prescription medications."

The community deeply appreciated those services, according to Kim Durbin, superintendent of Graves County Public Schools, who addressed a group of IRT members during a meeting at Graves County High School on Monday.

"You are providing a service for our kids and our parents that is going to give them a leg up when they start school," Durbin told the servicemembers.

"There are many barriers students have when learning, like medical issues, dental issues and needing eyeglasses. As I was walking in tonight, I saw the cutest little kid with brand new eyeglasses, and he was so proud!"

"That does my heart good, because you are providing our students with a service that is going to help them be successful this school year. I personally want to say thank you."

Community reaction to the IRT can also be seen on the group's Facebook

page (@BluegrassMedical), where patients like Alma Parrott posted comments expressing thanks.

"God Bless all with this program in all three locations," Parrot wrote. "Thank you for being so wonderful to us. Your training and talents (were) top notch. Pray this program will come (back). Love n happiness to each!"

Among the many providers were junior troops like U.S. Navy Reserve hospital corpsman Hasmeed Machuca, who described the exercise as tremendously rewarding.

"It's a great feeling of satisfaction when you see the looks in people's faces and their eyes," Machuca said.

Bluegrass Medical IRT had other benefits, too, including the training opportunities provided to non-medical troops in logistics, communications, food services and the command element.

"The opportunity for our supporting troops to really put their professional skills to use is a tremendous benefit to all the units here and the development of our future readiness capabilities," Mundell said.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Ryan Starkey, mission assistant officer in charge, was equally pleased by the high level of integration between members of the U.S. Navy, the Air National Guard and Army National Guard during the IRT mission.

"This has been one of the most successful joint military operations I have seen in my 20-year career," Starkey said.

See more photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kyngpao/albums/72157668195283693>

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We welcome your feedback. Please contact the Public Affairs Office directly if you have suggestions for articles or photography. Our office is located in Room 1160 of the Wing Headquarters Building, 1101 Grade Lane, Louisville, KY 40213.

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