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CE renovates Maine Scout facility

By Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

CAMP WILLIAM HINDS, Maine — About 30 civil engineers from the Kentucky Air National Guard began renovating a Boy Scout camp here along with other service members June 18 in a two week-long training exercise.

According to Chief Master Sgt. Dwayne Lee, project manager from March Air Reserve Base, Calif., the operation was an Innovative Readiness Training endeavor, which provides training and readiness for military personnel while addressing public and civil-society needs.

“The way this works is that you have different DoD affiliates,” Lee said. “Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve. They’re all construction-specific jobs, and we are here to help support the Boy Scouts on construction projects. We give them free labor, and we get free training out of it. So it works hand-in-hand, and we’re doing something for the community.”

Members of the KYANG, Air Force Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve made up one of the final rotations for the project, which employed a different group of Guard and Reserve servicemembers every two weeks.

Some of the tasks included the installation of a fire hydrant and the construction of a pavilion, septic drain field, latrine building, a fireplace/chimney, bathroom, earthen dam and multiple Adirondack shelters, tables and benches. Additionally, the Airmen and Marines repaired a sewage lift system and a cabin while also providing electrical work and designing a drainage system for a newly constructed dining facility.

Maj. Jarret Goddard, operations officer for Kentucky’s 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron, said the exercise provided valuable training for unit members.

“I feel like the work that was done here was needed for our unit,” Goddard said. “With previous (Deployed Field Training exercises), we’ve done work that wasn’t as specific to our (Air Force Specialty Codes).

“Here, we’re actually getting the more specialized training for our individual shops,

which is important.

“It gives all of our shops training that we couldn’t otherwise get during (Unit Training Assembly) weekends or any other areas around Kentucky,” Goddard continued. “It gets all of our shops together, and we can form some bonds and camaraderie around our squadron, at the same time getting AFSC-specific training on materials and tools that we don’t have at our unit.”

Airman First Class John Meldrum, a new structural engineer for the 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron, saw the trip as an especially valuable training opportunity.

“I’m getting a lot out of the training,” Meldrum said. “What’s unique about structures is that you can’t really do it indoors like you could with utilities. It all has to be outdoors if you want to start from scratch. There are things that get in the way of training during drill, so this trip provides a unique opportunity to get hands-on experience. You learn small carpentry tricks that you wouldn’t ordinarily learn through reading a textbook. It’s something you could only get

through hands-on, tactile training.”

According to Scott Martin, the facility ranger and property superintendent for the Boy Scouts’ Pine Tree Council, the operation not only provides free labor for the camp, but also inspiration for the Scouts.

“It’s very meaningful to the Scouts when they get the benefit of having a brand-new building, brand-new facilities, rifle ranges, and so on,” Martin said. “Also, the youth get to see the military in action in hopes that it may let them think about joining the military when they get older.”

On the final day of the trip, Lee addressed the Airmen and Marines in an award ceremony while praising the servicemembers as the “best” he’s worked with over his many rotations.

“I want to tell you that you’re the number-one unit in my rotation,” Lee said. “I couldn’t have run this show without the leadership that came here on this trip. You’re by far the best rotation I’ve had.”



Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton/Kentucky Air National Guard

Airman First Class Trelyn Overall (left) and Tech. Sgt. Abe Hilbers, engineer assistants from the 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron, survey land June 26 at Camp William Hinds, Maine.

Connection saves lives: Be there to prevent suicide

By Peter Holstein
Surgeon General Office of Public Affairs

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — You can make a difference for someone struggling with suicidal thoughts with as little as eye contact and a friendly smile, an arm around the shoulder, or a kind word at the right time.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing suicide, a key theme of the Department of Defense's #BeThere Campaign, which encourages making a difference through every day connections.

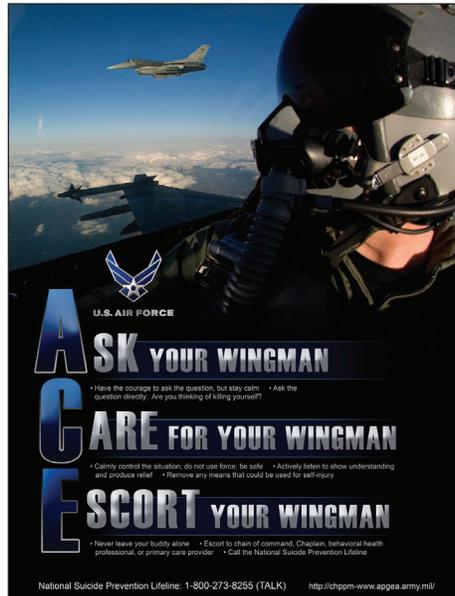
"Connection saves lives," said Col. David Linkh, the Air Force Suicide Prevention Program Manager. "Isolation, alienation and feeling of a lack of belonging places folks at risk."

Suicide is a major public health concern in the U.S., including for the Armed Forces. One of the most important and simplest ways to fight back against this threat is to build connections with people in your life, and make sure that people don't feel alone and isolated.

"If a fellow Airman seems to be struggling, make simple gestures," said Linkh. "Have lunch with them, talk to them, include them. Ask them how they are doing, or about their family. Stop by their desk and share a little bit about yourself."

In the right circumstances, those simple, everyday actions really can save a life.

Recognizing that someone is at risk of suicide isn't always possible. There isn't always an obvious or consistent sign that someone may be struggling with suicidal thoughts. People can hide or compartmentalize the underlying stress that lead to suicidal behavior, but there are things you can watch out for.



"We tend think in terms of two things – risk factors and warning signs," said Linkh. "Risk factors are some of the larger life factors that we sometimes see, like relationship, legal, financial or workplace issues. Warning signs are more behavior changes. That can include mood swings, irritability, anger, depression or social withdrawal."

This can be especially true for people who are usually engaged and outgoing. It can be a concerning sign if they start avoiding eye contact, skipping social events and stop associating with family, friends or coworkers. Drug or alcohol abuse is another critical indicator that a person may be dealing with issues that

could lead to self-harm.

There are some other warning signs that a wingman, supervisor or colleague might notice as well.

"Changes in work behavior, like showing up late to work, unexplained absences, or missed deadlines by folks who were previously on the spot can be concerning," said Linkh.

"Really, any change in behavior, especially one that suggests the person may be struggling in areas of their life. People shouldn't be afraid to engage on these issues in a supportive way."

If you are concerned about a person, start by just talking to them. It may seem simple, but not only can it help you get a sense of whether something is bothering them, it also reinforces relationships and can keep the person from feeling isolated. Being attentive to someone struggling with suicidal thoughts or depression can encourage them to open up and tell you that they are having trouble.

"We can't always know what our wingmen or coworkers are dealing with," said Linkh. "Taking the time to know one another and go out of our way to help each other can help change the culture. Small acts of kindness, small moments of connection can make us all safer."

For more information about suicide prevention and additional resources, visit the Air Force Medical Service Suicide Prevention page, or the U.S. Air Force Wingman Online page.

If you are having suicidal thoughts or are worried that someone you know may be about to engage in self-harm, call the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press "1" for assistance.

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