

THE CARGO COURIER

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IRT to provide patient care in E. Ky.

By Lt. Col. Dale Greer
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

The Kentucky Air National Guard is teaming with the Kentucky Department for Local Government and other branches of the U.S. military to offer health care at no cost to residents in four Eastern Kentucky counties starting Friday.

Medical screenings, non-emergency medical treatments, sports physicals, dental exams, cleanings, fillings and extractions, optical exams, and single-prescription eyeglasses will all be offered, said Lt. Col. Amy Mundell, a medical administrative officer in the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Medical Group, which is serving as the lead military agency.

Sites offering care will be in Beatyville, Booneville, Irvine and Jackson. All four clinics will be open June 15 to 24, and patients will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis, Mundell said.

Called "Operation Bobcat," this Innovative Readiness Training program gives military health professionals an opportunity to provide medical, dental and optical care in a field environment, much as they would when responding to a natural disaster or military operation, while offering services to citizens who are uninsured or underinsured.

"This program allows our medical troops to conduct critical training and logistical movements that simulate a military medical response in the time of crisis, conflict or disaster," explained Mundell, who is the project's officer-in-charge. "This kind of training helps hone our expeditionary skills so we're ready to deploy at a moment's notice



Master Sgt. Phil Speck/KyANG

Staff Sgt. Jonathon Engler, an optometry technician from the 167th Medical Group, West Virginia Air National Guard, checks a child's vision at Graves County High School in Mayfield, Ky., July 20, 2016, during an Innovative Readiness Training exercise. The Kentucky Air National Guard and U.S. Navy Reserve are performing a similar IRT exercise in Eastern Kentucky this month, providing no-cost medical, dental and optometry care to underserved residents.

to provide care anywhere in the world.

"At the same time, Operation Bobcat will provide direct and lasting benefits to the residents of Eastern Kentucky by delivering expert medical, dental and optical services to residents in need of quality care. We're extremely pleased to be participating in this outstanding program."

Operation Bobcat is a joint-service mission comprised of about 215 Airmen and Sailors from the Air National Guard, active-duty U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy

Reserve and active-duty U.S. Navy. A similar effort, led by the Kentucky Air National Guard in Western Kentucky in 2016, offered care to more than 4,000 citizens, providing 13,000 medical, dental and optometry procedures with an economic impact of \$1.5 million. That team also provided 1,800 pairs of prescription eyeglasses and \$20,000 worth of medications free of charge.

This year's program is co-sponsored

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Chief Atwell concludes 30-year career

By Master Sgt. Vicky Spesard
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Chief Master Sgt. Joseph E. Atwell Jr. retired from military service during a ceremony held here April 15, concluding a career that spanned more than 30 years of service in both the active-duty Air Force and Kentucky Air National Guard.

“When I think about (Chief Atwell), what comes to mind is ‘Joe will go,’” said Brig. Gen. Warren Hurst, Kentucky’s Assistant Adjutant General for Air, during the ceremony. “You went all over the world and gained a lot of experiences and brought those experiences to us. You’ve had a remarkable career and contributed a lot to the Kentucky

National Guard and to Air Force, and I personally thank you for that.”

Atwell is the outgoing operations-plans Non-Commissioned Officer at Joint Force Headquarters-Kentucky, where he coordinated the airflow of state aviation assets in the event of a crisis.

He entered the Air Force in 1980 and initially served as an air traffic controller before becoming a control tower operator and radar approach controller.

After a three-year break in service, Atwell joined the Kentucky Air Guard as a command post controller. Later, he moved to the 123rd Airlift Control Flight, deploying to austere airfields to provide rapid mobility airlift.

Atwell served in many locations around the world, including Pakistan

and Afghanistan. Additionally, he has deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Coronet Oak, Joint Forge, Joint Enterprise, Red Flag Alaska and Unified Response.

He also participated in humanitarian missions in Louisiana during hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, as well as the earthquake relief mission in Haiti in January 2010.

“I stand here today a very blessed individual,” Atwell said, addressing the audience. “I’ve been blessed with a God-loving family and friends who have supported me throughout my career. I have also been blessed with a great military family at the Kentucky National Guard. My time here has been very rewarding, and I am very thankful.”

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by the Kentucky Department for Local Government (DLG), charged by Gov. Matt Bevin to provide assistance to local governments. The agency is working closely with communities and local leadership to host the participating troops and provide logistical and programmatic support, said DLG Commissioner Sandra K. Dunahoo.

“As the U.S. Department of Defense’s community partner, the Kentucky Department for Local Government is working closely with local officials in Lee, Owsley, Breathitt and Estill Counties

to help facilitate the project’s success,” Dunahoo said. “During Operation Bobcat, DLG also plans to host a resource center that will offer information on wellness, nutrition and immunizations, among other health topics.

“We’re very pleased to support a program that gives our military health-care troops essential training in field operations and logistics, keeping their skills sharp so they can be prepared to respond wherever they’re needed,” Dunahoo added.

“At the same time, the program will be providing crucial services to citizens of the Commonwealth who may not have ready access to care. This is a win for everyone.”

The four clinics will be open June 15-24. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

Locations are Lee County High School in Beattyville; Owsley County High School in Booneville; Estill County High School in Irvine; and Breathitt County High School in Jackson.

Patients will be accepted on a first-come, first-served walk-in basis. The clinics are open to anyone, ages 2 through adult, regardless of place of residence. No insurance is required, and an ID is not necessary to receive care.

For the latest updates, visit www.facebook.com/OperationBobcatIRT

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