



# Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

November 2011



## Sharing best practices

India looking to model Levee Safety Program

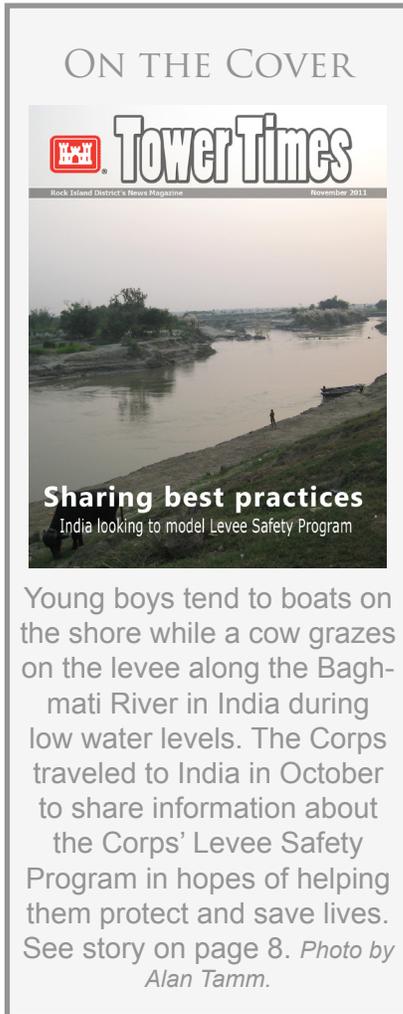


**US Army Corps  
of Engineers** ®  
Rock Island District

# Tower Times

**Contents**

**November 2011**



Young boys tend to boats on the shore while a cow grazes on the levee along the Bagmati River in India during low water levels. The Corps traveled to India in October to share information about the Corps' Levee Safety Program in hopes of helping them protect and save lives. See story on page 8. *Photo by Alan Tamm.*

### **3 Reduction in funding is the new norm as we head into FY12**

Col. Shawn McGinley, District Commander

### **4 Ribbon cut on first Section 206 project**

Ventura Marsh Restoration project completed

### **5 Leadership Development Programs kick-off**

### **6 A tough job made even tougher receives award**

District uses roller-compacted concrete for first time

### **7 New tools for applying for jobs**

### **8 Levee expertise shared in India**

India learns about Levee Safety Program tools

### **10 Espirit de Corps Toastmasters marks anniversary and receives recognition**

### **12 Safety Corner - Prevent slips, trips and falls**

### **14 Around the District**

## *Tower Times*

Rock Island District, Clock Tower Building  
P.O. Box 2004  
Rock Island, IL 61204-2004  
Email: [cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil](mailto:cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil)  
Phone: (309) 794-5729

Commander: Col. Shawn McGinley  
Deputy Commander: Capt. James C. Millman  
Chief, Corporate Communications: Ron Fournier  
Editor: Hilary Markin

This publication is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Tower Times are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

It is published monthly by the Corporate Communications Office, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Articles or photographic submissions are welcome and should be submitted by the 15th of each month preceding publication. Circulation 1,500.

**On the web at:** [www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes](http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes)

*A message from....*

## Colonel Shawn McGinley, District Commander



### Reduction in funding is the new norm as we head into FY12

Several months ago I wrote in this space about our District's budget and what lies ahead. As we just closed out FY11 and are in the midst of FY12 funding, it is a good time to reiterate the challenges we face but also remember that there is no need to panic.

It is true that funding for our District is at reduced levels compared to previous fiscal years. Much of that can be attributed to our nation's need to address the debt, a moratorium on congressional earmarks and funding that is required to address the many natural disasters which have occurred across the United States. The reduction in funding is not unique to Rock Island. All government organizations have to take in a little less to help our country address those issues.

Our funding for FY12 includes several areas which will see less money than in years past. We saw a reduction in funding for Investigations in FY11 and we are expecting more of the same this year. Large, much talked about programs like the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program and the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management project may see little or no funding this year.

NESP has typically been allocated about \$6 million in previous fiscal years. This year we don't expect to be allocated any funds to continue Preconstruction, Engineering, and Design (PED). Nor do we expect any new start Construction funding for NESP. There does not seem to be enough congressional support to begin construction, plus the Inland Waterways Trust Fund doesn't have the money to pay the industries share of the navigation improvements.

With the Cedar Rapids project, we are slightly more optimistic. The PED phase will continue to be funded. We anticipate receiving about \$3.5 million in federal funds. It is expected that work can continue well into second quarter of FY12 without additional federal funds this fiscal year. If we receive federal funding we should have plenty of work through the entire fiscal year on this project.

Another area where funding is considerably unpredictable is the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Study. Congressional add-ons have funded this program in past years but that may not be the case this fiscal year. If we don't receive an allocation this year, work is expected to come to a stop within the first quarter of FY12.

Appropriations for construction will also be less than in previous years. Projects like the Des Moines Recreational River and Greenbelt will most likely be affected because of the reduction in construction funding. We had been receiving about \$4 million annually for this project but because it is recreational in nature, it is likely that Congress will not see the project as a priority.

Funding for our Continuing Authorities Program has been reduced. We are expecting \$410,000 for CAP this year which represents a significant reduction. This reduction can be attributed to the USACE requirement to help pay down the national debt with \$100 million of unobligated CAP funds.

What I have written to this point represents most of what could be construed as the "not-so-good" news. But, there are bright spots in FY12.

Our Operations and Maintenance budget remains unchanged. We will receive about \$100 million this year which mirrors what we have received in recent years. This amount is sufficient to provide the base level of service to the region along with addressing some critical maintenance items.

Funding for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration - Environmental Management Program remains robust as we expect to receive somewhere between \$16 and \$21 million to execute that program this year.

Overall, our program comparison over the last few years has gone from \$150 million in FY10 to \$169 million in FY11 to a projected \$135 million this fiscal year. Certainly that shows a decline in funding but I would argue that is representative of budgets across the Army, Department of Defense and other organizations. And, we are looking at ways to bridge the gaps brought on by the budget reduction.

This year, we continue to look outside of our normal areas of operation to find potential workload that can help bolster our bottom line. For example, we have contracted work with the 88th Reserve Support Command that will equate to nearly \$4 million. We are also in contact with the Rock Island Arsenal folks to see if there are ways we can help support the infrastructure of the installation. Regional workload sharing will create opportunities as well and support to programs like Operation Watershed.

What I want everyone to realize is that our budget reductions do not represent doom and gloom. The reduction may present a challenge but this District is more than capable of meeting that challenge. It's also important to know that these reductions are most likely the norm for the foreseeable future. FY13 is shaping up to be much like FY12. We anticipate about \$137 million next year but nothing is set in stone yet. It is possible congressional add-ons may be allowed in FY13, in one form or another. For planning purposes we've anticipated that a few projects that are traditionally funded by congressional add-ons will receive an allocation in FY13, in addition to projects in the president's budget. All of that will become clearer in the months ahead.

In the meantime, continue to consider prudent fiscal responsibility in all that you do. It is imperative that everyone in the District is cognizant of the challenges we face with regard to our funding. Regardless of the decline in funding, we still have a lot of very important work ongoing and on the horizon. I continue to be impressed by the Rock Island District team and I'm sure FY12 will be yet another successful year. Thanks for all you do and continue **BUILDING STRONG®** 



**David Knoll, Clear Lake Preservation Association, demonstrates with a Secchi disc how much clearer Ventura Marsh was in 2011 compared to previous years.**  
*Photo by Allen Marshall.*

# Ribbon cut on first Section 206 project

By Hilary Markin, Editor

A project that broke ground in May of 2010 has cut the ribbon signifying the completion of the Rock Island District's first Section 206 project. Ventura Marsh Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration project cut the ribbon on Nov. 1 on a project designed to restore aquatic vegetation and water quality.

Construction of the project was awarded to Anderson Excavation Company of Omaha, Neb., for more than \$2.5 million in March 2010 and work started in June of that year. The contractor demolished the existing stoplog structure, constructed a new stoplog structure and a pump station with an outlet to Clear Lake, Iowa. They also dredged a water flow channel from the deepest section of the marsh to the pump station and a forebay immediately adjacent to the pump station structure. This infrastructure and work will allow the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to raise and lower the marsh water levels promoting the growth of aquatic vegetation.

"Prior to this project the area was mostly a mudflat with very little aquatic vegetation," said Hank DeHaan, program manager. "The restoration of aquatic vegetation will naturally clean the water that eventually feeds in to Clear Lake."

One of the other goals for the project is the management of invasive species. Animals like the common carp, who feed on aquatic vegetation as well as rooting the marsh bottom, have contributed to the degraded water quality.



**Vegetation is beginning to grow at Ventura Marsh following the completion of the Section 206 project.**

The development and construction of this project was a partnership between the Iowa DNR and the Corps. It is located within the Ventura Marsh State Wildlife Management Area, an 800-acre wetlands complex, owned and managed by the DNR. It is directly west of and connected to Clear Lake, a 3,600-acre lake in north-central Iowa.

The purpose of Section 206 of the 1996 Water Resources Development Act is to develop aquatic ecosystem restoration projects that improve the environment, are in the public's interest and are cost effective. The Rock Island District is also working on several other Section 206 projects. 

# ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT

## Leadership Development Program

---

### Level II Initial Retreat

The 2011-2012 Leadership Development Program (LDP) Level II program kicked off in October followed by the initial retreat in November. This year's class includes Jason Appel, Charles Bishop, Andy Goodall, Nathan Gorham, Eric Hackbarth, Brant Jones, Laurie Kotecki, Andy Leichty, Sherri Lewis, Bryon Ray, David Reynolds and Matt Stewart.

The participants will spend the next 10 months developing and enhancing their personal and professional leadership skills. To facilitate their growth, contractor Robert (Bob) Walsh of Evans and Associates Consulting Corporation, is administering the program for a second year in a row.

"We are looking forward to another year in Rock Island," said Walsh. "We are more familiar with the organization and look forward to helping more employees develop their leadership potential."

There have also been some changes to the program to help it meet the needs of employees and the District.

"We have made some changes this year based on feedback from last year's participants," said Sara Paxson, professional development specialist. "Last year was the first time we had contracted the program out in quite some time. We are looking forward to the program this year and hope to continue building on its success for years to come."

The curriculum focuses on different topics at each monthly meeting that continue to build upon one another. Starting with personal development, looking at their strengths and weaknesses, and then moving into communication skills, and ending with team dynamics and how to resolve conflict and delegate responsibilities.

Participants have also selected mentors to help them along the way, to serve as a resource, sounding board and share some of their organizational wisdom.

Mike Cox, chief, Operations Division, will serve in the new role of LDP Working Champion. His role is to serve as a liaison between participants and the senior leadership including the LDP Committee and the Executive Steering Board.

"I have a good group of people to work with. I am a Rock Island District LDP graduate and I am looking forward to helping current participants develop their potential," said Cox.

The program continues to evolve and is a key element of the District's comprehensive employee development program and supports the USACE Campaign Plan, MVD Implementation Plan and District Operations Plan. Learn more at [www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/CampaignPlan/CPHome.htm](http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/CampaignPlan/CPHome.htm). 



**Mike Cox, chief, Operations Division and Leadership Development Program (LDP) Working Champion addresses the LDP participants and mentors during the initial retreat.** *Photo by Sara Paxson.*

---

### Launching of Level I

Becoming a more effective communicator, learning how to manage your time, and developing interpersonal skills are not things that happen overnight. Those skills take a lifetime of trial and error while learning from your mistakes. But you can take action to broaden your knowledge and put your personal development on the fast track.

The Rock Island District's Leadership Development Program Level I is getting ready to launch. The program has been revamped to a self-managed program that includes a mentor to help

you become a better team member and develop leadership skills that provide a building block to enhance your career in federal service.

Stay tuned for more information on how you can be a part of the program and on the road to becoming a better leader. If you have questions please contact the District's Professional Development Specialist, Sara Paxson, (309) 794-5635, [Sara.R.Paxson@usace.army.mil](mailto:Sara.R.Paxson@usace.army.mil). 

# Team overcomes obstacles to complete job, net award

By Hilary Markin, Editor

**A** project to repair the portion of NW 78th Avenue that crosses the Saylorville Lake spillway, was anything but an ordinary job. During construction to repair 2008 flood damages caused by overtopping of the spillway, water threatened to overtop the spillway again as lake levels reached historic pool levels in 2010. The race against time was on and the team of engineers, construction personnel, Saylorville Lake staff and contractors worked round-the-clock to place roller-compacted concrete to protect the gorge and roadway.

In two days, 3,600 cubic yards of concrete was placed before water flowed over the spillway 24 hours later. For their efforts and the use of roller-compacted concrete, the American Concrete Institute of Iowa presented the Corps and contractor with a 2011 Excellence in Concrete Award.

Following the floods of 1984, 1991, 1993, and 2008, the road that crosses the spillway required reconstruction. In some cases the road was closed for more than two years. Geologists and engineers from Geotechnical Branch have also been keeping a

close watch on the gorge area below Saylorville Lake's spillway. The frequency of spillway events has accelerated the erosion of the gorge and could potentially compromise the Saylorville Dam. The design team recognized that a more resilient approach was required.

"This is the first time the District has used roller-compacted concrete," said Adam Ziegler. "When we were looking at options to replace the road it made the most sense."

The design elements and use of concrete will help prevent future erosion and will stabilize the dam's infrastructure.

"This sort of draws a line in the sand," said Tom Mack, chief, Geotechnical Division. "The roller-compacted concrete is a hard point that will survive during a spillway event and allow the roadway to go back into service quickly after the water has passed."

The American Concrete Institute of Iowa presented the award during the Iowa Better Concrete Conference in Ames, Iowa, on Nov. 3. 



**Clockwise above, the contractor places another layer of roller-compacted concrete in June 2010.**

**The contractor compacts the roller-compacted concrete just days before water overtopped the spillway at Saylorville.**

**The NW 78th Avenue roller-compacted concrete embankment is complete. Traffic can once again travel from Johnston, Iowa, to Ankeny across the Saylorville Lake spillway.**



*Photos by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*

# New tools for applying for jobs

By the Rock Island District Civilian Personnel Advisory Center

The Army is transitioning from one automated recruitment tool, Resumix, to another USA Staffing. The Rock Island District transitioned to USA Staffing in March 2011 and other Army organizations are targeting to transition by April 2012. During the transition, each job announcement has instructions to guide job seekers through the application process, so be sure to read carefully.

USAJOBS has changed. If you haven't been there for a while – take some time and check it out. System enhancements have been made, such as new profile questions along with new tools to explore. Some of the things you will notice include storing up to five resumes as well as supporting documents in your USAJOBS account. Once the documents are loaded you can reuse them for future job applications. You also receive timely feedback on the website during the application process.

If you have never registered in USAJOBS and are considering applying for a promotion or different job – don't wait until the last minute. Start planning by getting all of your information in USAJOBS so when a job announcement opens you are just a few steps away from successfully applying.

## Prior to applying for a vacancy listed on USAJOBS, applicants must:

- Create a USAJOBS account - USAJOBS website address: <http://www.USAJOBS.gov/>
- Build and/or upload a resume into USAJOBS.
- Upload supporting documentation into USAJOBS (ex. non-award SF 50, DD 214, copy of official transcript, VA Letter, etc.)

Instructional slides on how to register for a USAJOBS account, build or upload a resume, and upload supporting documents are available on the District's shared drive in the CPAC Civilian Personnel Advisory Center folder.

When applying on a job announcement, you will need to create an Application Manager account at <https://application-manager.gov/> if you have not already done so. USAJOBS will redirect applicants to Application Manager during the application process to fill out personal information, occupational and eligibility assessment questionnaires, etc. This is also where applicants follow up on the status of their job applications.

## Looking for Jobs

- Applicants can view job announcements at the Army Civilian Service Web site (for Department of Army positions) [www.armycivilianservice.com](http://www.armycivilianservice.com) or USAJOBS (all federal jobs) [www.USAJOBS.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.gov).
- Narrow the search by clicking Advanced Search to fill in specific information such as job announcement number, series, location, etc.
- Important – when conducting a search, applicants need to correctly answer “yes” or “no” in the Applicant Eligibility question in order to be directed to the appropriate announcements.



- Be sure and read job announcements thoroughly. It is critical that you click on the “How to Apply” tab and follow all instructions accurately and ensure that you upload all supporting documents listed under the Required Documents section.

## The Application Package

- The application package includes your resume, responses to the assessment questionnaires, and the required supporting documents.
  - o Resume – you may create and store multiple resumes and choose the best for each application you submit.
  - o Assessment Questionnaires – your qualifications and eligibility will be determined based on your responses to these questions.
  - o Supporting Documents – Required supporting documents will be listed under the “How to Apply” tab in the Required Documents section of the announcement.

If you apply for a job (and before the announcement closes), use the Application Manager tool to confirm you have successfully applied. It is very important to double-check the status of your Application Package. The bottom line is that if you do not upload a required supporting document as listed in the job announcement, your application will be eliminated from consideration.

## What's different?

- Applicant's resumes are no longer viewed for skills in word form in conjunction with the position description to determine the best-qualified candidates.
- Applicants self-assess by answering questions based on position-specific competencies and mission needs (Occupational Assessment Questionnaire).
- Applicant's resumes are still reviewed for basic/minimum qualifications for the position in conjunction with the rating of occupational assessment questionnaire.
- Major Change: Applicants must attach supporting documents. If applicants do not submit the required documents listed in the announcement, their application will be marked as incomplete and will not be considered.

If you have questions, please contact the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center for the Rock Island District at 309-794-5568/5354. 

# Levee expertise shared

By Hilary Markin, Editor

Sharing knowledge is a passion for many and traveling to India to do just that is a privilege; one that two Rock Island District employees had the opportunity to embark upon in October.

Alan Tamm, levee safety program manager, and Padmaker Srivastava, geotechnical engineer, traveled to Bihar, India's most flood-prone state, to meet with Indian officials and share their knowledge of the Corps Levee Safety Program. Approximately 76 percent of the north Bihar population lives under the recurring threat of flood devastation.

The two participated in a workshop organized by the World Bank in Patna, Bihar, Oct. 17-21, for the engineers and officials of the Flood Management Improvement Support Center of Bihar Water Resources Department (WRD).

Prior to the workshop, the team made a two-day field trip to visit the Baghmati River levee system in Sitamarhi (close to the border of Nepal), to get a firsthand impression of the actual embankment conditions.

"It was interesting to learn that the WRD does not have any geotechnical engineering on staff. This is in stark contrast to the USA, where the geotechnical engineer is involved right from the inception of the levee's design and construction project," said Padmaker Srivastava.

The site visits were very informative to Tamm and Srivastava who learned how India builds and manages their embankments. Bihar, at present, has more than 2,254 miles of embankments.

On several reaches that they visited there was a thick forest of 40- to 50-foot-tall trees with diameters exceeding 18 inches. Indian officials stated the trees were cultivated by the Forest Department and cannot be removed without their permission.

"We were informed that in India it is preferable to plant trees on the land side of the levees," said Srivastava. A practice not advised in the United States.

They also did not observe any pump stations on the land side of the levee and many of the side slopes were populated with huts in which people were living.

The team talked with Indian officials about their inspection processes. Their levee inspections are done before the monsoon season, during the period from June to September, and also during a flood event.

"The results of the inspections are reported in a notebook in Hindi," said Srivastava. Hindi is one of two official languages in India, the other is English.

"Their levee checklist is not standardized. The items to be checked depend upon the experience of the inspector, which varies from person to person," he added.



**Padmaker Srivastava, right, listens to Bihar Water Resources Department personnel and World Bank representatives discuss the Baghmati River levee system during a field trip to see the embankment conditions firsthand.**

# d in India

The inspections are also performed by a single person compared to the six-person team that conducts the Periodic Levee Inspections in the United States. Indian officials also said the levees in India serve three purposes: flood control, transportation and shelter; which differs from the United States where the main purpose is flood control.

The International Approaches to Manage and Plan Embankment Assets workshop was designed by the World Bank and the USACE National Levee Safety Program Manager to share information about the National Levee Safety Program and the tools and procedures the United States uses for levee management.

“The World Bank’s anticipated outcome was that using the tools presented would allow the levees in India to be operated and maintained with a greater degree of performance assurance thereby protecting their critical infrastructure and saving lives,” said Tamm. “There was some confusion at the beginning regarding our intentions, but we took actions to clarify our purpose and revised the agenda.”

The revised approach focused more on the inspection criteria including the levee inspection tool. They used photos and information gathered during the pre-workshop field trips to facilitate discussion and share information on the United States’ Levee Safety Program.

“They were impressed by the concept and practicality of the Levee Inspection Tool and immediately sought to purchase five computers to be used in development of a Bihar Levee Inspection Tool and inspection data repository,” said Tamm.

During the workshop, Srivastava facilitated a discussion on geotechnical instrumentation that could be used for the Indian embankment system. He described various ways in which they could address the excessively steep slopes, cracking and settlement that was noted during the field trip. They also saw ongoing construction projects that indicated the levee materials were excavated by hand, transported by wagon and deposited and spread by hand.

“At present, NLD (National Levee Database) and geotechnical instrumentation are not used routinely in India on levee projects,” said Srivastava. “But they expressed strong interest following the presentations.”

The team also had an opportunity to meet with numerous officials including Afzal Amanulla, principal secretary of WRD, and shared their field observations and findings with him on the conditions of the levees in Patna.

Following the workshop, the team identified several areas that have potential for future discussions with officials in India. The primary focus of the Corps Levee Safety Program is public safety and the sharing of information will hopefully help protect and save lives in India. 

**A woman and children sit along the Baghmatai Levee in India.** *Photos by Alan Tamm.*



**During the field trip, participants noted evidence of slope failure and an animal burrow along the crest of the Baghmatai Levee in India. Levee vegetation practices were also visible.**

# Equal Employment Opportunity News

## National Native American Heritage Month

November 2011

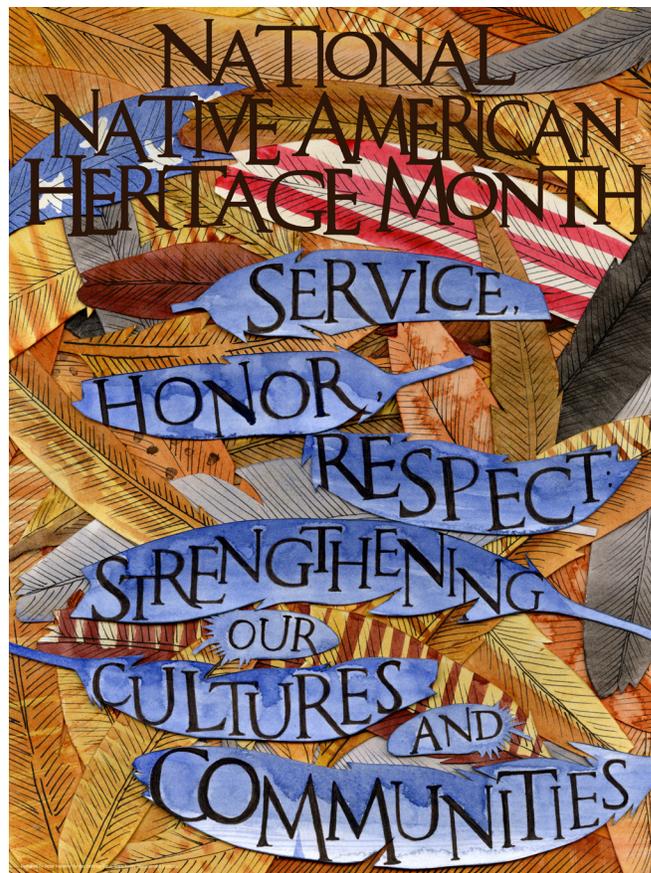
November is National Native American Heritage Month honoring the many contributions and accomplishments of American Indians and Alaska Natives. During November, we remember the legacy of the first Americans and celebrate their vibrant culture and heritage.

A local Quad City college revealed a new logo incorporating elements of the areas rich Native American heritage this year. Black Hawk College, formerly Moline Community College, was renamed in 1962 after Black Sparrow Hawk, a war leader of the Sauk tribe.

The college launched their new visual identity in April artistically depicting a sparrow hawk. For the Sauk tribe, the hawk is a sacred bird, and the sparrow hawk is the rarest and most sacred of all hawks. The hawk faces east because it was an important direction to the Sauk representing not only the rising sun but a source of growth and renewed life. The logo also features a wing that extends

upward so that an open flame may be seen in the design symbolizing education and intellectual growth.

All of the elements together tell the story of Black Hawk College's past and share their exciting vision for the future. 



Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute



Can you name where this photo was taken? If so, send your answer to [Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil](mailto:Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil). The first correct answer will receive a special prize and be recognized in the next Tower Times.

008	<a href="#">Family Membership. (\$50 value)</a>	Quad
009	<a href="#">\$20 Gift Card</a>	Pinno
010	<a href="#">2 foot Party Sandwich</a>	Hungry

**October Answer: Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Auction Site**  
**Winner: Aimee Vermeulen, Office of Counsel and CFC Chair**

# Esprit de Corps Toastmasters marks anniversary - receives recognition

By Bob Riebe, Esprit de Corps Charter Member and Retired District Employee

**M**ore than two decades ago a few Corps employees met to form a Toastmaster club in the district office. Little did they realize that 26 years later, after serving at least 180 members, they would still be going strong and in fact having their best year ever.

In 1985, the prospective club found 20 interested people and chartered the "Esprit de Corps" Toastmasters club here in the Rock Island district office. Shortly after the charter was official on Sept. 27, the club members started giving their "Ice Breaker" speeches and the learning process began. There were only one or two members with previous Toastmaster experience, but the members were willing workers and participants, and the club was functioning quite well in a fairly short time. Soon the club had about 35 members.

The first part of the Toastmaster program consists of presenting a series of project speeches, from a ten-speech educational manual. Each speech includes adding new speaking elements or skills thereby improving the presenter's communication abilities. After the completion of the first manual members are recognized as "Competent Toastmasters" (CTM). With about 35 members it took several months for everybody to get their Ice Breakers completed since there was only time for about four speakers per bi-monthly meeting.

While some of the members were still working in the Competent Communications manual others began exploring some of the advanced manuals which teach different skills and culminate with recognition in other specific areas, the Able Toastmaster for instance. Conceivably several different people can be working in unique manuals at the same time. After completing the requisite number of speech manuals further educational levels or designations are awarded. Since listening and leadership are also part of the Toastmaster program some of the manuals are focused on the skills and the designations are different than the ones focused strictly on speaking skills. The program is not as complicated as it seems here, but members need to decide what their focus is and follow the correct paths to achieve that goal.

A person may stop at any level of accomplishment they wish. Some members decided they only wanted to achieve the CTM level. Others wanted to go a few steps farther, and some were really serious and worked on attaining the highest level, Distinguished Toastmaster. After a few years as people reached their goals and left the club, and others transferred to other Corps offices or moved to private industry, the Esprit de Corps membership dropped quite significantly. The club membership sank to about seven and the attendance sometimes as low as four or five. There were hardly enough members to conduct meaningful meetings. Some changes needed to be made!

It was then that the club discovered the "Distinguished Club

Program" (DCP). This program contains a number of club goals to measure the club's success in teaching speaking, listening, and leadership. Simply put, "If you don't have goals how do you know how effective you are?" The club all pulled together and followed the criteria set forth in the DCP program and things improved measurably for the club. They were back up to more than 20 members in just a few months. Toastmasters District 54 awarded the club the "Phoenix Award," the only one it has ever awarded, for seemingly rising from its own ashes. Esprit de Corps continues to participate successfully in the Distinguished Club Program to this day.

For the recently completed 2010-2011 Toastmaster year, Esprit de Corps has been named a "President's Distinguished Club" for attaining all 10 goals in the program. Although the club has achieved as many as seven of the goals in the past this is the first time they have achieved the top level in the DCP program. This success can be attributed to the work of the officers and the members of the club who have all worked hard to improve their speaking, listening and leadership skills, in turn reflecting the overall quality of the club. Several current members have over ten years with the club and one of the charter members is still an active member.

Among the 180 or so members of the club through the years, several have progressed to leadership positions in Toastmasters beyond their work in Esprit de Corps. Three members have gone on to be area Governors, one has been a Division Governor, several have led Toastmaster Leadership (training) Institutes, some have led higher level speech contests, and many have served as contest judges and other contest officials. Two members of the club have earned the "Distinguished Toastmaster" designation, the highest educational award in Toastmasters. Other members are rapidly approaching that goal.

Outside of Toastmasters several members and former members have risen to the highest echelons of civilian management here in the Corps. Additionally, one Deputy District Engineer was a member during his tour of duty here. Surely Toastmaster training has been an asset to them.

Esprit de Corps Toastmasters has been successful in its mission here and is looking forward to continuing for many more productive years. Employees are encouraged to attend a few meetings and see what the organization has to offer.

The Esprit de Corps Toastmasters meet the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month primarily in the ABC Conference Room of the Clock Tower. If you have additional questions please contact Michael Cummings, club president; Liz Robinson, vice president of public relations; or Kirsten Brown, vice president of education. 

# SAFETY CORNER

## Prevent slips, trips, and falls

Slips, trips, and falls account for more than 20 percent of lost work time incidents in the United States every year. That's a figure that underscores the need for a good, effective fall prevention plan.

Slips, trips, and falls account for the majority of injuries sustained in our District. In most workplaces a variety of slip, trip, and fall hazards can develop during the course of a workday or workweek:

- Wet spots
- Grease
- Polished floors
- Loose flooring or carpeting
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Clutter
- Electrical cords
- Open desk drawers and filing cabinets
- Damaged ladder steps
- Ice



### Working Surfaces—Housekeeping

Supervisors and workers should adhere to the following requirements to keep working surfaces clear of tripping and other hazards:

- Keep work areas clean and orderly.
- Maintain aisles and other walkways clear of trip hazards, like cartons, stored materials, tools, etc.
- Pick up fallen items from the floor.
- Keep walking surfaces dry.
- Post warning signs for wet floor areas.
- Use nonslip footwear to decrease slip and fall hazards in areas that are frequently wet.
- Report or clean up spills immediately.
- Clean only one side of a passageway at a time.
- Use only properly maintained ladders to reach items. Do not use stools, chairs, or boxes as substitutes for ladders.
- Safely store scrap, debris, and waste, and promptly remove them from the worksite.
- Tape or anchor temporary electrical cords that cross aisles and post a warning sign.



### Walkways

Management should implement measures for aisles and passageways such as these in all work areas:

- Provide adequate lighting for work areas, halls, and stairwells.

- Ensure aisles and passageways are kept clear and marked as appropriate.
- Provide secure handrails on all stairs.
- Use no-skid waxes and surfaces coated with grit to create non-slip surfaces in slippery areas such as toilet and shower areas.
- Cover wet surfaces with nonslip materials such as rubber mats by entryways on wet days.
- Re-lay or stretch carpets that bulge or have become bunched to prevent tripping hazards.
- Repair holes, cracks, and other damage to floors, sidewalks, or other walking surfaces. Cover these hazards otherwise made safe until proper repairs can be made.
- Ensure safe clearance for walking in aisles, and provide adequate headroom for the entire length of any aisle or walkway.
- Provide standard guardrails wherever aisle or walkway surfaces are elevated more than 30 inches above any adjacent floor or the ground.
- Provide bridges over conveyors and similar hazards.
- Clearly identify changes of direction or elevations.



### Elevated Surfaces

The following measures should be implemented for work on elevated surfaces:

- Post signs, where appropriate, showing the elevated surface load capacity.
- Provide standard guardrails for surfaces that are elevated more than 30 inches.
- Provide permanent means of access and exit to elevated storage and work surfaces.
- Ensure adequate headroom where necessary.
- Make sure employees stack, rack, or pile materials on elevated surfaces in a manner to prevent them from becoming trip or fall hazards.
- Provide dock boards or bridge plates for transferring materials between loading docks and trucks or railcars.





# Spotlight on the District

## Eric Aubrey

### Military History Program Specialist

**Ordnance and Explosives Engineering Section, Technical Services Branch,  
Engineering and Construction Division**

Opportunity to travel is not something you usually see when looking for jobs with the Corps of Engineers – but it is one of the best kept secrets. For some traveling is all they have ever known especially when they are a military brat. Add to that deploying seven times, to date, in support of Overseas Contingency Operations and Eric Aubrey just keeps adding to the list.

Aubrey, whose dad was in the military, has called Bettendorf, Iowa, home the longest. Although there is a catch to that - since buying a house 10 years ago he has only actually lived in it for a combined total of four years.

Following college, Aubrey joined the Army and served four years on active duty and has been in the Reserve for the last 28 years.

In the months following 9/11, Aubrey's unit (U.S. Army Soldier, Biological and Chemical Command) activated designated reservists to provide state-side support for Operation Noble Eagle. He was assigned to Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland as the night shift leader in the operations center for one year overseeing eight personnel during the overnight hours. After four months home, he was called up again for another year, this time to the U.S. Army Tank, Automotive and Armament Command at Detroit Arsenal in Warren, Michigan, serving as a battle captain in the operations center.

Aubrey has a bachelor's and master's degree from Missouri State University, Springfield, Mo. He started with the Corps in 1996 as a Quality Assurance Specialist (Ammunition Surveillance) (QASAS) in Engineering and Construction, which recently evolved into the position he holds today as a Military History Program Specialist.

As a Military History Program Specialist he has a unique position traveling to national and regional federal archive's searching for records of military chemical production, transportation, storage, usage and disposal dating back to World War I.

"We are researching information related to chemical warfare agents – not necessarily weapons, but military chemical agents that have been produced," said Aubrey. "We are tracking down

information as to what may have happened to the materiel and preparing reports used to help identify what, if any, remedial actions may be required."

On paper he has always been a Rock Island District employee deploying in numerous capacities throughout his career. That includes six deployments to Afghanistan and one to Iraq in support

of Overseas Contingency Operations with the Corps.

Throughout his Afghanistan deployments, Aubrey has served as a project manager on projects that support building facilities and infrastructure for the Afghan National Army.

"Basically we were building a military base from scratch in most cases," said Aubrey.

"Projects included barracks, dining facilities, office buildings, water treatment and sewage plants, command and

control facilities, medical clinics, ranges and more."

"The work is really rewarding. It is fast-paced and very challenging. You gain so much experience in such a short time. There is constant pressure from the customer (NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan) to meet short timelines with often-changing requirements and with Afghanistan being land-locked it was sometimes a difficult process to get construction materials to project sites in a timely manner."

According to Aubrey the mantra while deployed is "be flexible." Things change so fast. Especially when traveling from project to project and he learned quickly to pack more than needed if going out to a field site...as the possibility of getting unexpectedly stuck somewhere is high.

"You never knew if you were going to get bumped from a flight or if a road was going to get shut down due to a security threat," said Aubrey. "Being in a third-world country puts things into perspective."

Most of Aubrey's deployments have been six months at a time, working every day with Fridays usually being a half day.

"Fridays were usually relaxing days spent watching movies



**Eric Aubrey, poses for a photo during a fenceline reconnaissance mission for a fence project that would encompass the Pol-e-Charki Afghan National Army Base in June.**

*...continued on page 15.*

# Around the District



## Sympathy ...

**Hans-Dieter Drehsler**, 60, of Littleton, Colo., died Aug. 11.

Drehsler worked for the Rock Island District.

He also served in the U.S. Army.



**Gene White**, 82, of Morris, Illinois, died Oct. 15, at home.

White worked for 30 years as a lock and dam operator at Dresden Island.



He also served in the U.S. Army during World War II.



**Rodney Jones**, 72, of Burlington, Iowa, died Oct. 17, at home.

After his retirement in 1992, Jones worked as a lockman at Lock and Dam 17 in New Boston, retiring in 2006.

## Retirements ...

**Gary Elliott**, lock and dam operator, Lock and Dam 18, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Oct. 31, after dedicating 22 years and five months to the federal government.

## Congrats ...

Congratulations to Chad and Hilary Markin, on the birth of a baby girl, Aubree Lou, Aug. 5. She was 7 pounds, 8 ounces and 21 inches long.



Congratulations to Beth Crutcher, emergency management specialist, and her husband Colin on the birth of a baby boy, Colton Michael, Sept.



28. He was 7 pounds, 6 ounces and 19 inches long.

Congratulations to William and Sandra Verlinden of East Moline who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 4.



Mr. Verlinden was employed by the District for 32 years, retiring in 1991

as an audio-visual reproduction manager.

Please send birth announcements, engagements, weddings, obituaries, and other items of interest for the Tower Times to Hilary Markin at [Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil](mailto:Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil).

## Team "Hard Corps" does it again

For the sixth year in a row a team from the Rock Island District participated in the Quad City Marathon in September. Improving their time by one minute (compared to last year) the team placed third in the QC Marathon Corporate Division.

The team was led by Corey Delong and included Tom Mack, Jim Barteck, Heather Anderson and Rodney Delp.

"The first three runners Cory, Tom and Jim completed their respective runs before the rain. It started raining towards the end of Heather's run and I ran the entire last leg in the pouring rain," said Delp.

Despite the weather, the team finished the race in three hours, eight minutes and 44 seconds; missing second place by seven seconds. The team has always been very competitive in the event and is already training for next year. 



From left, Rodney Delp, Corey Delong, Heather Anderson, Jim Barteck and Tom Mack pose at the awards ceremony following the Quad City Marathon.

# Support & Sacrifice for Corps

Thanks to our employees who are deployed to the Afghanistan Engineer District - North (AEN) and the Afghanistan Engineer District - South (AES)!



Andrew Barnett, AEN



Robert Balamut, AEN



Charles Bauer, AES



Peter Corken, AEN



Mark Hoague, AEN



Celeste Iverson, AEN



Brian Lane, AEN



Mark Miller, AEN



Gordon Rush, AEN

## Spotlight on the District, cont.

and using our own popcorn machine, playing sports or doing other fun activities. There was also the weekly bazaar at Camp Eggers – which had some interesting things for sale,” said Aubrey.

In Afghanistan he was stationed at the district headquarters in Kabul, known as Qalaa House, a compound of mostly Corps employees.

“The dining facility was pretty nice...lots of food,” said Aubrey. He also said that it was bit of an adjustment to sharing a small room with someone. “There were some single rooms available which could be earned based on longevity – six months was not longevity.”

“You meet a lot of good people from all over the Corps – many of which you build a camaraderie with that will last a lifetime,” said Aubrey.

That is one of the reasons why Aubrey kept going back - the great people that he worked with.

The travel bug has definitely bit Aubrey – he only has five states left to visit. Some of the countries he has toured include Germany, Austria, Kenya, Tanzania, Peru and Bolivia. He also has a list of places around the world he would like to see one day, ranging from Japan to Australia to Iceland.

“If I hit the lottery – I would be gone,” said Aubrey.



**Capt. James Millman, deputy commander, welcomes home Eric Aubrey from his most recent deployment to Afghanistan in support of Overseas Contingency Operations.**

When asked about advice he offered this – “Never quit. If there is something that you really want to do – make time to do it. If it is important enough to you, you will find the time. Just keep trying.” 

---

# Open Season for Federal Benefits

## November 14 - December 12

**O**pen Season is the time of year when you have the opportunity to make decisions about your benefits under the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.

**Why should you care?** Open Season is the time to make elections you usually can't make any other time of the year. All health or dental or vision plans are not alike. Open Season is about exercising your right of choice. Failure to consider your health plan choices could leave you without the health care services or supplies you need or with a premium you can't afford. Dental and/or vision coverage can fill in the gaps of any coverage you now have or pay for services you now don't get. A flexible spending account lets you save money and pay less tax.

**Can you sit out this Open Season and do nothing?** If you are already enrolled in FEDVIP and FEHB, those enrollments **will** continue automatically although benefits and premiums may change. (Also, be sure to check that your plan is still participating.) If you do nothing this Open Season and are later unhappy with your 2012 benefits or premiums, you cannot cancel or change your enrollment until the next Open Season. If you already have a FSAFEDS account, it **will not** continue automatically - you **must** re-enroll.

### **Where can you find more detail on the choices available to you?**

- For FSAFEDS go to [www.FSAFEDS.com](http://www.FSAFEDS.com), the 2012 Guide to Federal Benefits, the FSAFEDS Program Brochure or call 1-877-372-3337.
- For FEDVIP go to [www.opm.gov/insure/dental/index.asp](http://www.opm.gov/insure/dental/index.asp) or [www.opm.gov/insure/vision/index.asp](http://www.opm.gov/insure/vision/index.asp), the 2012 Guide to Federal Benefits, or 2012 Plan brochures.
- For FEHB information go to [www.opm.gov/insure/health](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health), the 2012 Guide to Federal Benefits, the 2012 Plan brochures or [www.opm.gov/FEHBbrochures](http://www.opm.gov/FEHBbrochures).

### **How do you make an Open Season election?**

- Flexible spending accounts under FSAFEDS (employees only): go to [www.FSAFEDS.com](http://www.FSAFEDS.com) or call 1-877-373-3337 or TTY 1-800-952-0450.
- Dental or vision under FEDVIP: everyone - go to [www.BENEFEDS.com](http://www.BENEFEDS.com) or call 1-877-888-3337, TTY 1-877-889-5680,
- FEHB: Employees - use the Health Benefits Election form (SF 2809) or use an online self-service system; the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center can also help. Retirees - go to Open Season Online at <https://retireefehb.opm.gov> or call Open Season Express at 1-800-332-9798, TTY 1-800-878-5707. 