



USAG BENELUX Quarterly

VOL. 1, NO. 1, Spring 2021
LINE OF EFFORT 1: PEOPLE

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Vol. 1, Issue 1, April 2021

Line of Effort 1: People



Table of contents

A note on this publication, on lines of effort, on people	2
USAG Benelux leaders climb five 'Levels of Leadership'.....	3
USAG Benelux seeks connection, community for its members	5
Awarding excellence	8
Women's history month: Rosie the Riveter	9
Interns from Belgian university bolster USAG Benelux workforce	10
US Coast Guard spouse volunteers at Maastricht hospital, saves lives	15
AFNorth Battalion spouse earns AG Corps recognition	17
Volunteers keep mail running through holidays	19

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ON OPPOSITE PAGE, Spc. Arnando Smith, a mid-shift patrol for the Directorate of Emergency Services at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium, takes the written portion of the garrison's Best Warrior Competition Jan. 25 at the garrison's headquarters. (U.S. Army photo by Christophe Morel, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

ON COVER: community members of U.S. Army Garrison Benelux take part in the 9/11 "We Remember" run / walk Sept. 11, 2020 at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium. The garrison's three major communities, which also includes Brunssum, the Netherlands, and the Brussels area, held simultaneous run / walks. (U.S. Army photo by Bryan Gatchell, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



A note on this publication, on lines of effort, on people

By the editorial staff

This publication is the first in a series of quarterly online magazines scheduled to be produced by the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Public Affairs staff, compiled from new and existing stories.

Each online quarterly will focus on one of the garrison's major lines of effort in accomplishing its mission and vision. Those lines of effort are 1) People, 2) Infrastructure, 3) Protection, 4) Services and 5) Operationalizing the Garrison. All four quarterlies (and stories concerning operationalizing the garrison) will be compiled into one physical publication at the end of the cycle.

Behind every garrison effort is the garrison workforce, a unique and diversely talented group of individuals. They include Soldiers and other U.S. service members, civilian employees from the U.S., local national employees, and volunteers of three different nations at many different sites. Ensuring that the

people who run the garrison receive the professional development they require and that the garrison integrates employees smoothly is paramount to successfully accomplishing the garrison's mission.

The first line of effort is also taking care of community members, ensuring health in mind and body as well as taking into account emotional, social and familial wellbeing.

More than that, focusing on people means recognizing and appreciating the community members, who, during a year fraught by a pandemic, pulled together to make the best of a difficult situation. Some gained recognition for their work ethic, steadfastness and singular achievements. Some of those achievements are highlighted here and through other command information outlets, but they represent only a fragment of the achievements that have taken place on post.

The Chief of Staff of the Army's number one priority is on people – we hope you enjoy a few of our stories.



Michael Lee, workforce development specialist at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, follows up on leadership development training.

USAG Benelux leaders climb five 'Levels of Leadership'

Story and photos by Julie Piron,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

CHIÈVRES, Belgium – “Invest in You and Live up to your Greatness!” This is the motto from the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) Training Center to start the Game Changer Training: The 5 Levels of Leadership.

Twenty members from U.S. Army Garrison Benelux participated in this two-session workshop in March designed for supervisors but offered to anyone interested in knowing more about leadership.

“All employees possess leadership qualities and potential; it’s simply a matter of bringing that to fruition,” said Darrick Hinson, IMCOM instructor. “All of us can benefit from knowing just a bit more than we did before and tapping into our capabilities.”

The USAG Benelux Directorate of Human Resources team contacted Larry Doxtater, IMCOM instructor, last year after learning about the in-person course created in 2017 for IMCOM headquarters personnel based on the 2014 Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

“We found that the course was applica-

ble to all human beings,” said Doxtater. “We opened it to all personnel, changed the name to The Game Changer, and then started executing Mobile Training Teams in 2018. Garrisons began requesting the training in 2019 and 2020.”

Unfortunately, the pandemic did not allow the training to happen face to face.

“Mr. Doxtater went above and beyond to create a virtual training opportunity that suited our needs, and his team delivered it so that it would work for our time zone and the dates we had available,” said Chris Bridges, Employment Program manager.

USAG Benelux team members were eager to learn. They met the two instructors, Doxtater and Hinson, on MS Teams to follow what Hinson described as “a student-centered instruction which employs adult learning principles focusing on an interpersonal skills program intended for diverse employees with different attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and skill levels.”

Doxtater explained that the main purposes of this training, based on the five levels of leadership by John Maxwell, are “to improve

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confidence and credibility in influencing others beyond a title, to develop relationships so people give the leader permission to lead them, to produce and build momentum, to develop people and to train others to lead."

The instructors guided the students through the different concepts, and then initiated conversations and reflections, in small groups and then all together, around real life situations to define their own leader philosophy.

To be able to navigate through those different levels of leadership, Hinson highlighted that "experiential learning is key for learners to participate in peer-to-peer feedback, practice communications skills, conduct literature review, critical thinking, solve problems, conduct self-analysis, and self-reflect."

Hinson added that this is accomplished "in a collaborative effort to strengthen interpersonal skills, build relationships, create lessons learned, identify personality traits (in self and others), and take responsibility for learning outcomes."

The training reflected the variety of profiles unique to the USAG Benelux: Host nation employees, Department of the Army civilians, non-appropriated fund employees, and experienced as well as up-and-coming leaders.

"I'm kind of far in my career, but it reminded me that it is really important to recruit the right people and discover what they are good at and encourage and lead them so they are able to express themselves and develop the potential they sometimes don't know they have," said Brigitte Gabreau, manpower officer.

Mike Benson, European Infrastructure Consolidation program manager, enjoyed the training "primarily because of the conversations with coworkers in our small breakout groups."

"Although the concepts were not new for me personally," he said, "I still benefited by learning things about my coworkers that I would not otherwise have learned from meetings, emails, etcetera."



Ashley Dean, chief of Administrative Services at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, reviews her leadership development training.

For Bridges, employed by USAG Benelux since August 2019, the training offered a great opportunity.

"I'm not currently a supervisor, but I anticipate that I will be again in the future, so this helps me prepare for it," she said. "I liked the seamless nature of the breakout groups. The prompts we had for our breakout groups are ones that I can use for myself, but also as I help others prepare for leadership. I also felt that the leadership philosophy exercise was worthwhile – I had not written one in a long time."

Nearly 700 employees have already attended The Game Changer Training. In addition to this training, the IMCOM Training Center also offers other classes as Emotional Intelligence, Attitude & Trust, Generations in the Workplace, True Colors, and Crucial Conversations. DHR is currently working on offering garrison personnel another class, Attitude and Trust, in September.

"The participation from the USAG Benelux participants was excellent, as always!" said Hinson. "We love training with folks from Benelux as they always come ready to learn and have fun while doing so!"

USAG Benelux seeks connection, community for its members



As part of Winterfest, the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux winter holiday celebration, groups, military units and Families may register and decorate these tall, blank holiday cards, including these at the garrison's Brussels Site. (Photo by Bryan Gatchell)

Story by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

BRUSSELS – During a time when COVID-19 health concerns have taken priority over travelling and socializing, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux aimed to keep its community members connected to one another, during the holiday season and beyond.

Personnel with Army Community Services across the garrison organized the Make-a-Connection Campaign to link volunteers with geographically isolated service members, and the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation organized the multifaceted Winterfest to provide members of the garrison Family that sense of community typical of most holiday seasons.

The winter holidays often serve as the motivation to show warmth and care for one another's neighbors, and the ACS sought out those Families and individuals who want to show generosity of spirit. To facilitate

these connections, ACS asked for community members to contact them, to let them know what they could provide, and then ACS reached out to unit leadership for those service members who may be geographically separated from their Families this holiday season and could use that helping hand.

Clint Strutt, the ACS division chief, explained that as long as it was in accordance with host nation guidance, community members can do a lot for service members, whether that meant an online watch party of a holiday classic or simply a walk together outdoors.

"We don't want physical distance or social distance, as we've been calling it, to turn into social isolation," said Strutt. "If you're feeling like you're a little bit isolated, reach out and let us find a way to connect you to someone who has offered to be on the other end of that connection.

"It's not a sign of weakness but a sign of
(Continued on next page)

Brooke Campbell, Family Advocacy Program manager, and Keri Cressotti, New Parent Support Program manager, help community members with painting rocks during the springtime portion of the Make-a-Connection campaign. (U.S. Army photo by Stéphanie Delcroix, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



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strength to ask for help or to ask for a connection," he continued. "Be brave, be a little bit vulnerable if you can."

Also as part of the ACS effort to keep the garrison community connected through the holiday season was Operation Christmas Cookie, where community members were encouraged to bake cookies, drop them off to their local ACS location, who will then distribute them to single and geographically single Soldiers and community members.

Strutt himself was one to take up the challenge during a recent town hall, saying he would be contributing some no-bake cookies and fudge this year.

"There's something that's invigorating and feels really good about the giving aspect as well," he said. "If I'm in the kitchen and I'm making cookies and I'm thinking about what I'm doing for somebody and I have that intention in my mind when I'm doing it, that makes me feel good as well, regardless of what happens with those cookies once I'm done making them."

Strutt further said that those baking cookies were also encouraged to write holiday notes and messages for the service

members they share their cookies with.

Community gatherings have been in years past an important component of the holiday season. In 2020, of course, COVID-19 prevention has taken precedence, leaving the garrison and DFMWR with the challenge of making the holiday special without mass live gatherings.

Winterfest began at the end of November, beginning when tall, blank boards appeared in prominent locations at the Brunssum and Brussels sites and Chièvres Air Base. DFMWR asked community members to register these oversized cards and decorate them. Those cards were on display Dec. 11 through 21.

Stacy Perez, the director of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, believes retaining holiday traditions important, even when community members may not be able to hold them in the traditional fashion.

"It's so very important this year that we continue our traditions, that we continue to make connections with one another," she said. "Even though we're not gathered around a hot chocolate, we can still come together virtually and share with each other and celebrate."

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In this selfie by Col. James Yastrzemy, left, USAG Benelux commander, Yastrzemy stands with Col. Kathy Spangler, SHAPE Healthcare Facility commander, as Yastrzemy shows off a rock he painted an Apache on as part of the Make-a-Connection campaign at SHAPE March 20, 2021.

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One typical American holiday tradition is the visit to Santa Claus. In non-pandemic times, parents would take their children to visit Santa Claus at the local mall. A visit to Santa in 2020, however, carried with it a health risk, so instead, children wrote letters to Santa, dropped them off at on-post collection boxes until Dec. 14, and Santa Claus read a few of them during a live online event.

The holiday festivities that typically included speeches, musical performances, Santa's arrival and a tree lighting transitioned to an online-only event, and, following a tradition from the 19th century, Col. James Yastrzemy, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux commander, read the poem "A Visit from St.

Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore, popularly known by the its first line "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

The Make-a-Connection campaign did not stop with the winter holidays either.

ACS also organized a community crafting activity as part of the program called Operation Springtime Rocks, wherein community members paint rocks and hide them throughout the community for others to find.

"I'm hoping that there's something for everyone, that there's a challenge or a contest or just a social engagement – something that everyone can participate in," Perez said of the many events on offer. "I hope this lifts everyone's spirits and just really brings us together as a community."

Army Community Service runs several pro-

grams, and you can learn more about them at <https://home.army.mil/benelux/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-human-resources/army-community-service>.

To learn about the many programs the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation offer the community, visit the following:

- The Tri-Border community: <https://brunssum.armymwr.com>
- The Brussels community: <https://brussels.armymwr.com>
- The Chièvres Air Base / SHAPE community: <https://chievres.armymwr.com>.

Awarding excellence

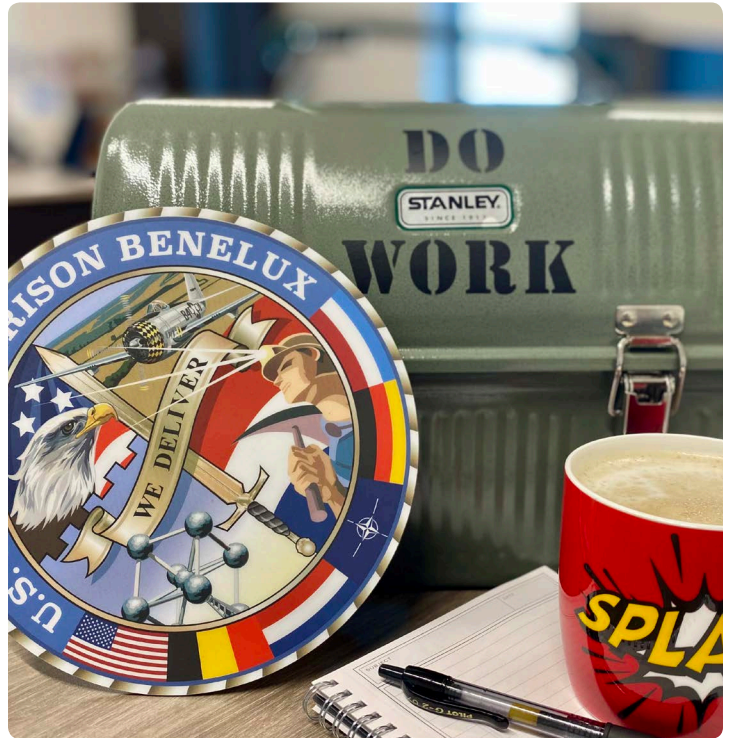
As a recurring segment of the garrison's online town hall event "Coffee with the Commander" and employee town halls, several employees' contributions to the community were highlighted with the lunch pail award.

The lunch pail symbolizes the "Do Work" ethic of the garrison workforce. Our people do work daily on behalf of themselves and our community, never seeking spotlight or reward. They simply roll up their

sleeves and get their hands dirty with great pride in putting in an honest day's work.

Patrick Smet, below, was the first team member to receive such a distinction.

Each awardee is the steward of the lunch pail until it is awarded anew. At that time, the awardee leaves behind a memorable token for the next awardee of the lunch pail to take with him or her and keep safe.



LUNCH PAIL



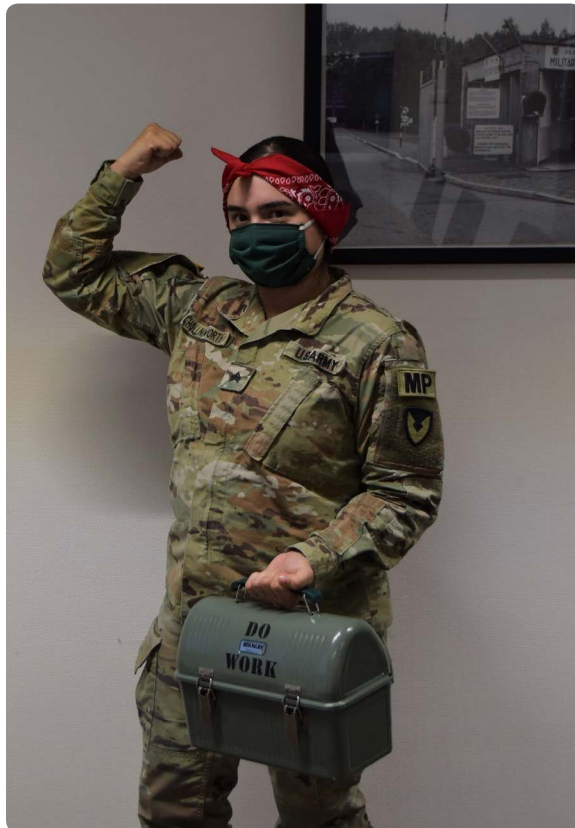
Name: Patrick Smet

Position: Installation Access Control Technician HNE

Accomplishments: Patrick Smet was the first face of the USAG Benelux to welcome the commander while doing his installation pass. He proactively seized the opportunity to provide him with a historical briefing about Belgium, Chièvres and Chièvres Air Base. Col. James Ross Yastrzemsky was impressed by Patrick's positive spirit.

Item left in the lunch pail: A mug which has the form of a Cholette with the logo of the 7th Wing. This object represents the Chièvres folklore and the 7th Hunting Wing of the Belgian Air Force stationed in Chièvres in the 50s / 60s.

DO WORK !



Women's history month: Rosie the Riveter

As part of March as Women's History Month, several members of the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux - Brunssum team had fun by paying homage to Rosie the Riveter, the World War II icon symbolizing the work ethic of the female workforce. Here it is also emblematic of the garrison slogan: "We Do Work, and We Deliver." (Photos by Jessica Abbas, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

Interns from Belgian university bolster USAG Benelux workforce

Amina Grini, an intern from the University of Mons, works at her desk at the Religious Support Office Feb. 21. USAG Benelux has offered internships to students from the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Mons, which gives them an immersive linguistic and cultural experience with English native speakers, all without leaving the country. (U.S. Army photo by Stéphanie Delcroix, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Public Affairs)



[EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a collaboration between several of the interns who took part in the internship program mentioned in the article.]

Courtesy story

CHIÈVRES, Belgium – Beginning in February 2021, local Belgian college students have been helping U.S. Army Garrison Benelux at Chièvres Air Base accomplish its mission by participating in the garrison's internship program.

USAG Benelux has offered internships to students from the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Mons, which gives them an immersive linguistic and cultural experience with English native speakers, all without leaving the country.

Not all students have the opportunity to go on a foreign exchange program, especially as COVID-19 prevention measures have pre-

vented international travel. This internship allows the university students to have immersive English-language experience while acquiring new skills in the field.

UMons sends every year more and more students to live this experience.

"(A) benefit to the USAG Benelux as an internship placement is simply the exceedingly rare opportunity (for the students) to surround (themselves) with native speakers of one of the languages (they) have studied and all the cultural exposure that can bring," said Dr. Jean Robertson, professor at the UMons.

This year, there are nine interns, who worked at several offices: the Religious Support Office, the Public Affairs Office, the Housing Office, the Department of Emergency Services, the office of the garrison chief of staff, and the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation. For nearly eight weeks, they have experienced the work life at

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Students from the University of Mons review garrison documents at Chièvres Air Base. (U.S. Army photo by Christophe Morel, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

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Chièvres Air Base.

The interns agree that this experience has strengthened their abilities in English. But the internship has also other benefits for them.

"As a work experience, I can learn things in the field, things we cannot learn at the university and I get to know a new environment – the U.S. Army," said Stéphanie Delcroix, intern with PAO. "I personally would like to keep working for the U.S. Army and I am going to volunteer right at the end of my internship."

"It goes without saying that I learn a lot about the culture of the people whom I work with," said Amina Grini, RSO intern.

Marie-Lise Baneton, chief of public affairs for the garrison, and Jean Robertson, professor at the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Mons, launched the program in 2010. Every year, the garrison welcomes a few interns and allows them to practice their English and to discover the unique work environment of Chièvres Air Base.

The former interns of the USAG Benelux have also enjoyed the experience. It has enabled them to learn new things that were useful for them.

"It was a great experience on the whole on the human and cultural level," said Chloé Van Nieuwenhove, MWR intern in 2018.

"The internship was especially beneficial

in understanding how relationships in a workplace work through the lens of American society," said Joachim Butryn, another MWR intern.

"Having lived in the United States, I wanted to be in contact with the American culture once more," said Antoine Vilain, intern with PAO in 2020. "Also, the Army is absolutely unknown to us, and I wanted to discover the military

world and the base. How local populations help in the armed cooperation here is something we cannot learn and that we can understand only if we have experienced it.

"From the professional point of view, I was soon given many responsibilities and I have never been considered as the intern there for doing coffee or for printing sheets as we might imagine," continued Vilain. "I learned all the services the PAO provide as well as all the unexpected events that can happen, mainly with the COVID crisis starting."

Vilain's different tasks gained him professional experience with communication, graphic design and writing that he's carried into his current career. He recommended the program on the merits of the professional experience it could provide.

"This program is really interesting from an immersive point of view as well as from a professional point of view," he said. "I would recommend it to all the students looking for an internship, and if I could do it again, I would immediately go for it!"

This experience is not only beneficial for the UMONS and the interns, but is also important for USAG Benelux. The garrison has the opportunity to show prospective employees what their workforce has to offer were they to work for the U.S. Army. Due to the internship, the interns have another vision of the Army

(Continued on Page 14)

Members of the Triborder Community at the Hub at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux - Brunssu, Netherlands, watch a livestream on the big screen of the 9/11 "We Remember" ceremony taking place at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium, Sept. 11, 2020. Afterward, community members took part in a 3- / 5-kilometer run/walk. (U.S. Army photo by Naomi van Loon, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



LUNCH PAIL



Name: Mario Mauceri

Position: Gate guard at Chièvres Air Base

Accomplishments: Mauceri is one of the guys in place since the beginning of the Guard Services Contract. He has been recognised several times by different commanders for his positive attitude. When you are tired and grumpy, Mauceri makes you smile!

Item left in the lunch pail: Australian currency. He kept it in his pocket to invest in his future as a child, but his family left Australia before he could spend it.



DO WORK !



LUNCH PAIL



Name: Ashley and Kyle Dean

Position: chief of Administrative Services Division and operations specialist respectively

Accomplishments: This couple has shown positive energy, both as individuals and as a team, and they have gone above and beyond their normal duties, according to the garrison commander. They have helped Soldiers and newcomers feel at home in their community.

Item left in the lunch pail: Lego airplane (made by their children) to represent work-life balance.



DO WORK !



LUNCH PAIL



Name: Cornelis (Nils) Hobbel

Position: Directorate of Emergency Services Contracting Officer's Representative

Accomplishments: Due to his IT background, Hobbel has a non-conventional approach to the contracting world and has developed unique tracking program for the Belgian Guard Service. Hobbel is dedicated to his job, and does it with a smile.



DO WORK !

(Continued from Page 11)

and break the usual stereotypes.

It is also a way for the American Soldiers to get to know the host nation culture: the traditions, the places to visit, and more. These benefits have been reported by the sponsors.

"There was the need of the garrison to support, seek out and cultivate young talents," said Lt. Col. William Frost, garrison chief of staff. "Then, it was an opportunity to further enhance my own experience of working in Belgium. I could have further contacts and insight in the host nations folks."

Monica Young, who works with DFMWR, was also enthusiastic about the program.

"It has been a great experience," she said. "The internship program has helped the marketing department with translation, with graphic design, commercial sponsorship appointments. And a couple interns even starred in a video!"

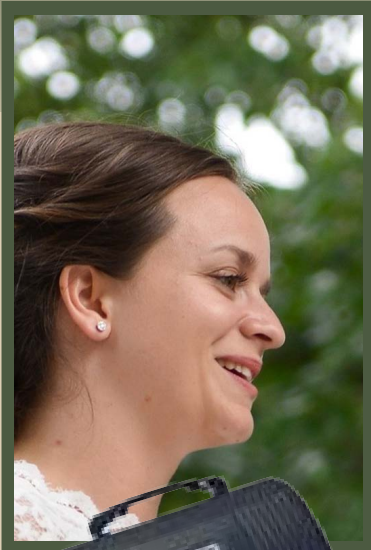
Young has been welcoming new interns

every year since 2016. She said that mutual learning is key.

"I was motivated by the experience of having a French-speaking intern assist with an English-speaking marketing department," she said. "As with all the interns I have had in marketing, we all learned from each other."

"Firstly, it's a rich human experience in terms of cultural exchange, because, even if we have many local host nation manpower on base, we don't have whole-day interactions with them," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Simon Chang, garrison chaplain. "So when we have (the interns), we learn more about Belgian culture and way of thinking. Also, we met interns from different backgrounds (Italian, Maltese, and now Algerian and Congolese) and we learn a lot from each other's cultures."

The sponsors were enthusiastic about the experience, and they expect to take other interns next year



LUNCH PAIL



Name: Naomi Van Loon

Position: Public Affairs Specialist
USAG Benelux - Brunssum

Accomplishments: Naomi van Loon joined the Benelux public affairs team in April 2020. She reported to our Brunssum office on her first day, picked up her computer and other equipment, completed in-processing and immediately went to (tele)work. Although she had never worked for the U.S. Government before, Naomi fit in right away.

Item left in the lunch pail: A candle reminding you that "Home is where you make it"

DO WORK !

US Coast Guard spouse volunteers at Maastricht hospital, saves lives



Vanessa Banks-Gonzales, an experienced acute care nurse practitioner and spouse of U.S. Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Daniel Gonzales III, volunteers at Maastricht University Hospital's COVID-19 intensive care unit. The Gonzales Family moved to Maastricht when Lt. Commander Gonzales III received orders to serve with the Coast Guard at the NATO base in Brunssum, the Netherlands. (Courtesy photo)

Story by Naomi van Loon,
U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Public Affairs

MAASTRICHT, Netherlands – When Vanessa Banks-Gonzales, an experienced acute care nurse practitioner and spouse of Lt. Cmdr. Daniel Gonzales III, heard about Maastricht University Hospital's need for volunteers with medical experience, she answered the call.

For several weeks in 2020, Banks-Gonzales worked alongside Dutch colleagues at the Maastricht COVID-19 intensive care unit, where she took care of severely ill patients: people who depend on extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) – artificial lungs – for respiratory support.

Operating an ECMO requires an advanced degree, for which Banks-Gonzales had the right credentials. She obtained her bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree as an acute care nurse practitioner after receiving two Jack Kent Cooke scholarships.

"After the COVID crisis started in the Netherlands, we had a great shortage of ICU personnel," said Dr. Jan-Willem Sels, the intensive care specialist Banks-Gonzales works with at the hospital. "When Mrs. Banks came to us with her credentials, we didn't hesitate for one moment."

The Gonzales Family moved to Maastricht when Gonzales received orders to serve with the Coastguard at the NATO base in Brunssum.

Daughter Jillian joined, and son Caleb lives in New York City.

Before the crisis, Banks-Gonzales regularly returned to the U.S. to work at the Med-Star Washington Hospital Center, where she holds a particular employment status.

"I am very lucky with my job in Washington," she said. "It allows me to maintain my personal identity and independence. I have an incredible boss and support system in America, and I'm very grateful that I get to practice, stay relevant. Some spouses don't have that opportunity."

As the crisis hit, her immediate desire was to go back to America and support her colleagues and people affected. When it became clear that a return journey would be impossible, Banks-Gonzales felt guilty.

"I was staying at home when I could help," she said. "I didn't want my work family

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to suffer, to go through that alone. We always go in together."

With no option than to stay in the Netherlands, she turned her attention to local initiatives and organizations. Finally, it was an English news report by RTV Maastricht that caught her attention: Maastricht University Hospital was looking for help from volunteers with any medical experience. On a Thursday, she met with the hospital staff, on the Monday after that, she started.

"When Vanessa came and offered her help, we gladly accepted," said Sels. "What we're experiencing now with the coronavirus is unlike anything we've ever encountered. We're used to very sick people, but the sheer volume of patients in the ICU, especially in the first weeks, was overwhelming. A sizeable number of these patients die in the ICU, so it made a big impression on all of us."

Banks-Gonzales kept up with the literature and had heard about the protocols from her colleagues in America, so she came prepared.

"It was what I expected," she said. "People were very sick, almost everybody in the ICU was on a ventilator. There were no visitors allowed, and nurses at the bedside were working diligently to get the patients better. It was really scary, because people were really sick."

Her work evolved quickly. Initially, she was asked to help the nurses care for ECMO patients. Then, she also started working with the medical team as a provider, developing plans of care and monitoring patients throughout the day.

Working at the COVID-19 unit does come at a cost – a personal sacrifice that remains mostly unseen.

"I'm going to be exposed to a virus that's potentially very dangerous. My priority as a mother and a wife is to protect my family," Banks-Gonzales said. "We have set up a

separate sleeping space, with a private bathroom, to prevent the spreading of germs. I now sleep separately from my husband of 24 years."

She thinks twice before going out in public, to make sure other people don't fall sick.

"Whenever possible, my husband and daughter go out for errands," she said. "And the Coast Guard Family has been very supportive, they get our mail on the base."

The sacrifices of nurses don't end when they leave the hospital; they carry into their everyday life.

"It's an enormous testament to what a nurse is and what nurses do: we run headfirst into situations no matter how scary they are, whether it's corona, language barriers, or practice differences," said Banks-Gonzales.

Banks-Gonzales is no stranger to sacrifice; she grew up as a military child and was, herself, on active duty in the Coast Guard for five years.

"I think that's what we as a military Family are accustomed to, making sacrifices for the greater good," she said. "It's not foreign to us."

The actions of Banks-Gonzales elicited admiration from her colleagues.

"She is willing to make personal sacrifices for the greater good, which is admirable," said Dr. Sels. "Of course, we, too, do our best, but we get paid for it. Mrs. Banks does it because she feels she has to help. That's intrinsic motivation, that's something inspiring and admirable."

On her side, Banks-Gonzales is grateful for the sacrifices made by people in the community.

"Thank you for following the measures and continuing to follow the measures until the government says it's safe," she said. "It really sends a positive message to us healthcare professionals that the work we're doing is appreciated and supported."

'Thank you for following the measures and continuing to follow the measures until the government says it's safe. ... It really sends a positive message to us healthcare professionals that the work we're doing is appreciated and supported.'

AFNorth Battalion spouse earns AG Corps recognition



Courtesy photo of Eric Gardner, husband of Lt. Col. Gretchen Gardner, commander of Allied Forces North (AFNorth) Battalion at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe at Casteau, Belgium. Gardner became the 2020 AG Corps spouse of the year.

Story by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

BRUSSELS – The husband of the commander of Allied Forces North (AFNorth) Battalion at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers of Europe at Casteau, Belgium re-

cently became the Adjutant General's Corps Spouse of the Year.

Eric Gardner, who is married to Lt. Col. Gretchen Gardner, AFNorth commander, distinguished himself through his volunteerism, commitment to his home communities, and his philanthropic efforts, according to his award endorsement packet.

He volunteers in the schools his children have attended, he works in the AFNorth Battalion Soldier and Family Readiness Group, he volunteers with the Girl Scouts, writes a blog about being a military spouse from the male perspective, and he is also the author of the XIII Legion, a supernatural fiction series. His latest writing project, Origins of Honor, is a collaboration with 15 other authors to support a veteran charity.

Gardner is also a veteran who transitioned out of service to be a stay-at-home father to his two daughters.

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LUNCH PAIL



Name: Kathleen Kossler

Position: CYS Nurse Health Consultant

Accomplishments: Ensured the health and safety of CYS patrons during COVID-19 pandemic. Kossler has been at SHAPE since March 2019.

Item left in the lunch pail: Thermometer as a reminder to always check on your people.

DO WORK !

(Continued from previous page)

"I think I'm fairly normal as a military spouse, in that I wear many hats," he said.

He and his future wife were both part of the Reserve Officer Training Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Indiana, Pennsylvania. Both of their Families lived in northern Virginia, so they carpooled home together and began dating during Eric's senior year.

Lt. Col. Gardner, who submitted the initial letter of endorsement, outlined some of her husband's achievements for the Adjutant General's Corps Regimental Association, the military nonprofit organization that serves as the AG Corps' professional association.

"I'm so proud of him!" she said.

The Gardner Family moves often, Lt. Col. Gardner counting 11 permanent changes of station during her more than 20 years of active-duty service. Their previous duty station was Fort Meade, Maryland, which they were at for only 10 months. Their Family has

been at SHAPE now for one of two scheduled years.

"It can be hard to make a really meaningful impact when you are stationed at places for such a short period of time," Lt. Col. Gardner said.

She believes, however, that her and her husband have become adept at "getting a household set up and jumping right into whatever unit, challenge or adventure the Army throws us into."

Nevertheless, he has found meeting so many people and experiencing so much travel an enormous advantage of Army life.

"Each of our assignments has allowed us to meet so many Soldiers and Families who have a common ideology: They all feel as though they are part of something larger than themselves," he said. "It's fascinating to hear all the life stories and see how everyone embraces the concept of this collective military Family that stretches across the globe."



LUNCH PAIL



Name: Sgt. Christopher Arcia

Position: Desk sergeant and noncommissioned officer in charge of desk sergeants on Chièvres Air Base

Accomplishments: Arcia is a desk sergeant who monitors the community. "It takes meticulous attention to detail to do it right," said Col. James Yastrzemsky, USAG Benelux commander.

In addition to his job, Arcia is taking college courses to earn a degree in criminal justice.

Item left in the lunch pail: A note from his father when he left for the Army telling him not to feel along and to never stop trying hard.

DO WORK !



Members of the postal service team at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux - Brunssum move a load of packages Nov. 20, 2020. Although postal operations did not need volunteers specifically at the community mail room in Brunssum, the Netherlands, volunteers lent their services to the garrison's postal operations and were on standby to help at Brunssum. (U.S. Army photo by Naomi van Loon, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

Volunteers keep mail running through holidays

Story by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

BRUSSELS – Volunteers offered their help to the community mail rooms at the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux to meet the demands of an increase of mail during both a pandemic and a holiday season.

The winter holiday season is typically a busy time for the community mail rooms, but online shopping received a boost on post from community members, who in 2020 stayed home more due to COVID-19 and prevention measures.

"People are doing their online shopping because they can't go to stores and then on top of the Christmas season, you're normally sending out packages," said Ashley Dean, the chief of Administrative Services Division for the Directorate of Human Resources. "It was just amplified. It's been going like that probably since COVID started (for the garrison in March). It's been very busy like that from the start."

Five volunteers stepped forward at CMR 450 at SHAPE in Mons, Belgium. Volunteers made themselves available at other garrison

community mail rooms but were not called upon. It was at SHAPE where the need was greatest. Several employees had permanently changed stations, so the CMR was missing staff members during one of the busiest times of year.

"It made it harder to keep the mail moving," said Wesley Cook, postmaster for CMR 450. "We'd probably still be processing holiday mail if they hadn't come."

"Our volunteers are amazing people," said Dean. "We 100 percent appreciate all of their help and support. It takes a person willing to a lot of hard, manual labor for no monetary value."

Sgt. 1st Class Tony B. Williams, a trombonist from SHAPE International Band, was one of the volunteers at the CMR 450.

"I know they needed help," he said.

Williams said he and his Family are beneficiaries of the on-post postal service, shopping a lot online themselves. He said one of his motivations for volunteering there was to be able to act as a liaison of sorts, to give a better understanding to those whom he meets about the workings of the CMR.

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"In terms of when a package goes from manufacturer to the consumers' hands, there's a lot of in-between that has to happen," he said.

"When we think of mail, I think we're underestimating all the work that goes into it," said Dean. "We go to our boxes, we get our mail, we pick up our packages and we walk out. We don't see what goes on behind the doors."

The volunteers typically worked four-hour shifts, during which time they would unload large purple bags of mail from the delivery truck, cut open the bags, sort the pieces of mail, mark what mailbox the pieces belong to, hand packages to customers, and load packages onto trucks taking them away.

The process is laborious, said Dean, who, though not registered as a volunteer, put in time there to help operations run smoothly. But she deemed the effort worthwhile.

"Postal is more important than people realize," she said. "That's how we communicate with outside of post. That's how people reach home."

Volunteering at the garrison's postal locations does not end at the holiday season. Community members 18 years and older need to pass a basic security background check. Once they have been cleared by the military police, their names can go on a call roster.

"They can volunteer throughout the year," said Cook. "It doesn't have to be the holiday season."

Williams recommended the experience and recommended volunteering.

"There's nothing like volunteering," he said. "I truly believe in perspective, and I believe if more people saw what other people have to go through, we would be more loving in this world."



LUNCH PAIL



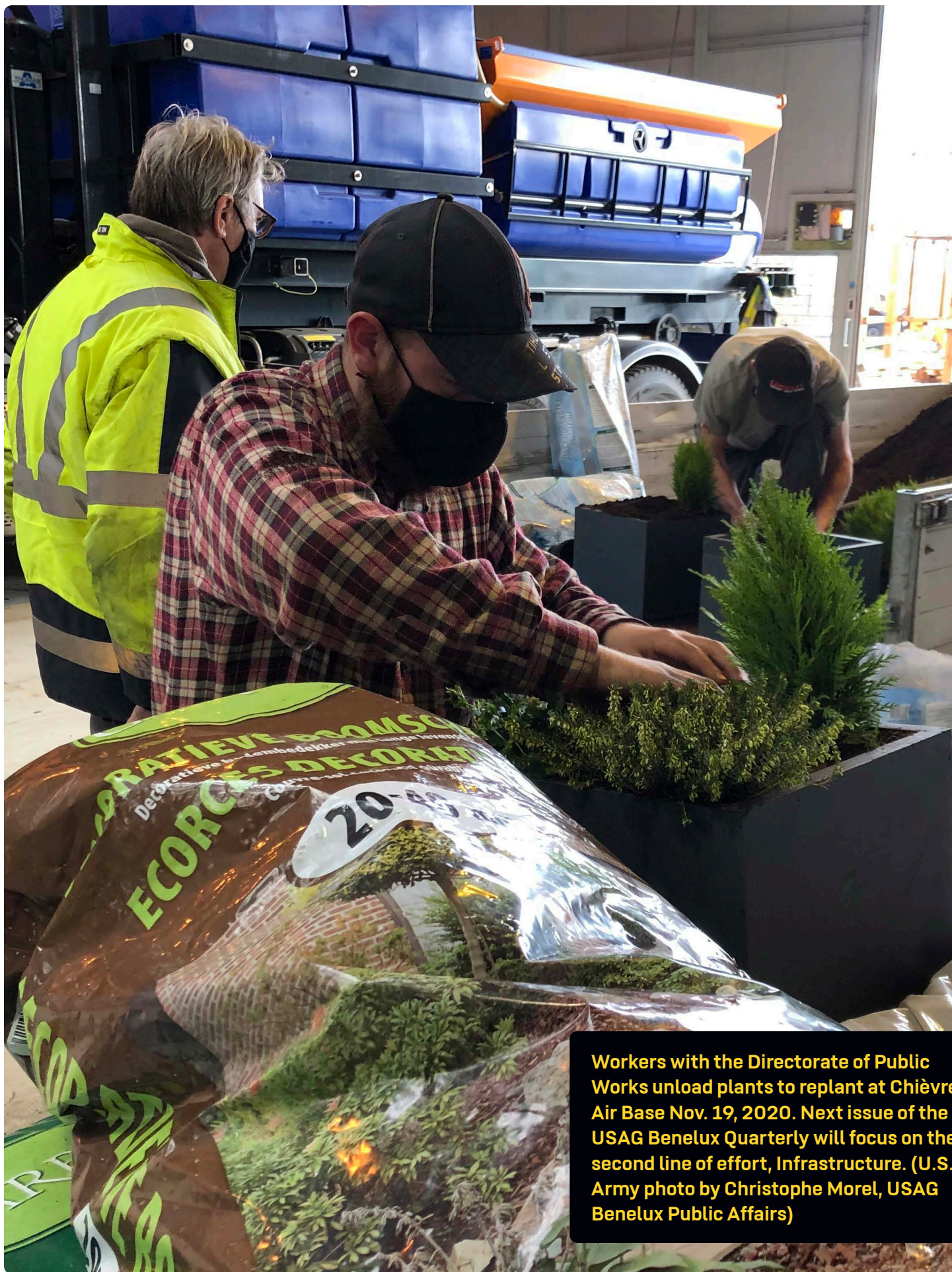
Name: Joshua Alo

Position: Brussels Postmaster and Military Mail Transportation Manager for SHAPE/Chièvres and Brussels Tri-communities

Accomplishments: Postal support for Benelux communities during 2020 and the 2020 holiday COVID season

Item left in the lunch pail: A miniature Air Craft Carrier. This symbolizes base of support (family or community).

DO WORK !



Workers with the Directorate of Public Works unload plants to replant at Chièvres Air Base Nov. 19, 2020. Next issue of the USAG Benelux Quarterly will focus on the second line of effort, Infrastructure. (U.S. Army photo by Christophe Morel, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



Runners approach a break station during the 9/11 "We Remember" run and walk event , Sept. 11, 2020 at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium. The run / walk also took place at the garrison's locations in Zaventem, Belgium and Brunssum, the Netherlands. (U.S. Army photo by Bryan Gatchell, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)