

# MEDICAL NEWS

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## 81st MDG EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT RETIRES

By Steve Pivnick  
81st Training Wing Public Affairs

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — There's an old saying, "No one is irreplaceable."

Well, the 81st Medical Group command section - and the entire medical group - is soon going to learn that may not necessarily be true.

Kay Hymel, executive assistant to the 81st MDG commander, will be honored today at a retirement ceremony in Keesler Medical Center's Don Wylie Auditorium as she marks the end of 29 years and one month of federal service. Retired Lt. Gen. Clark Griffith, former Air Education and Training Command vice commander, will officiate.

Recalling her service, Hymel said, "My first Civil Service job was at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C., at the headquarters judge advocate office as a legal secretary. When my husband was transferred to Keesler in 1987, I worked from June 26-Aug. 29 at the 403rd Wing and then was hired at the medical center. I started at Keesler Medical Center on Aug. 30, 1987, and was the secretary to the administrator until October 1992 when I was hired to be the hospital commander's secretary."

Since then she has worked for 11 commanders.

"My duties change with each new commander, but the constants are the calendar, travel, VIP visits, telephone, correspondence and Promotion Recommendation Forms," she said.

Looking back, the most memorable event during her tenure was the devastation and recovery from Hurricane Katrina.

"It is amazing how my medical center family pulled it all together and here we are with an amazing facility," said Hymel.

Born in New Orleans, Hymel has an affinity for Mardi Gras and has had a long-time affiliation with the medical center's "Krewe of Medics."

"I attended my first Krewe of Medics ball in 1988," she said. "I joined the group immediately afterwards. I grew up in New Orleans and loved Mardi Gras. I felt, and still feel, that is a wonderful idea to give those assigned here a little taste of Mardi Gras and its traditions."

Speaking of her background, she noted, "I was raised in St. Bernard Parish in a small town called Arabi. My parents, Eva and Bertrand, raised seven children. I was No. 3.

"I married V.J. Hymel, who was also from St. Bernard Parish, in 1973. We have two wonderful children, Heather and Michael, my son-in-law Randy and four wonderful grandchildren, Cullen, Brennan, Jacob and Brody."

Hymel has definite post-retirement plans.

"I have a long to-do list of that I will share with my husband," she said. "Our family will go to



(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Justin W. Galvin/Released)  
**Commander, Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) and Navy Medicine West Rear Adm. Bruce L. Gillingham shakes hands and congratulates Navy Counselor 1st Class (SW) Ashley B. Ramos, assigned to NMCS D Command Career Counselors office, during a frocking ceremony held at NMCS D. One hundred twenty-six Sailors from 15 rates were advanced to the next pay grade during the ceremony.**

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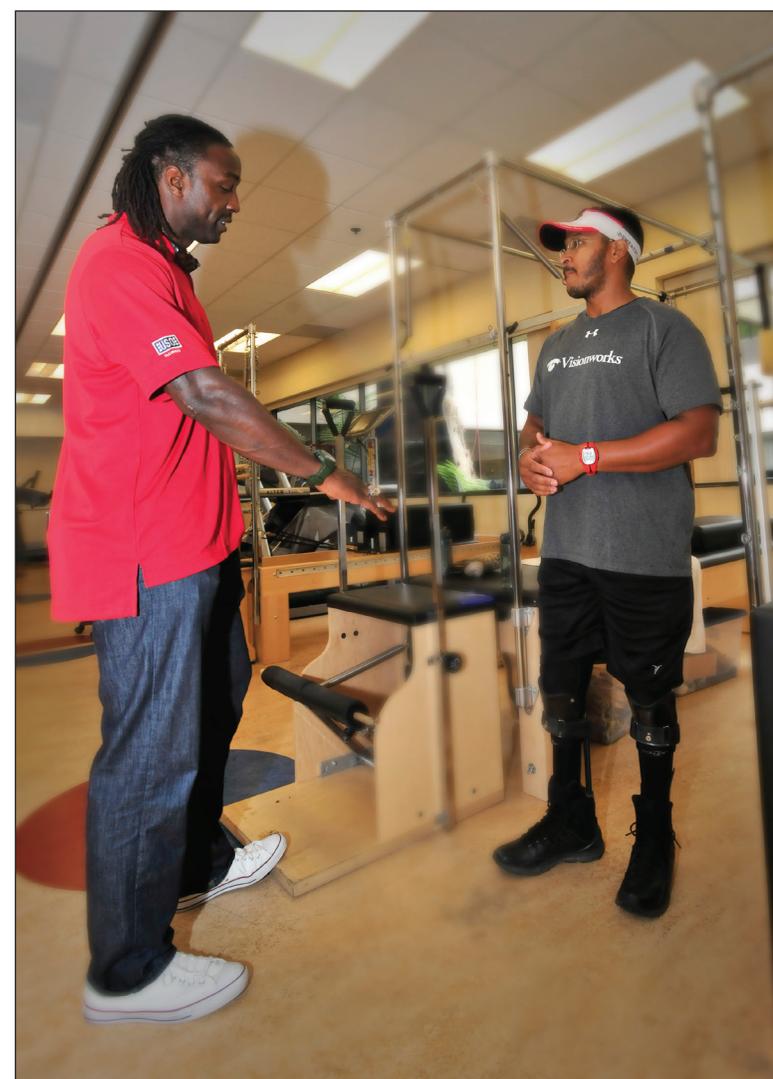
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(U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Sean P. Lenahan/HIPAA Complete)

## Raising morale

*Charles "Peanut" Tillman, a cornerback for the Chicago Bears of the National Football League (right), shakes hands with retired Marine Corps Sgt. Toran Gaal (left), at Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Comprehensive Combat and Complex Casualty Care department. Tillman met with patients and their families at NMCS to raise morale.*



*Charles "Peanut" Tillman, a cornerback for the Chicago Bears of the National Football League (left) speaks with retired Marine Corps Sgt. Daniel Casara (right), at Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Comprehensive Combat and Complex Casualty Care department.*

## Military Medical News

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# Two Keesler members selected for IPAP program

By Steve Pivnick  
81st Medical Group Public Affairs

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — Two Keesler noncommissioned officers have been selected for the Interservice Physician Assistant Program.

Master Sgt. William McMillan, 81st Inpatient Operations Squadron, and Staff Sgt.

Gregory Buford, 338th Training Squadron, learned they had been chosen in April. Both are first-time applicants.

McMillan begins the initial, intense 16-month portion at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio in December and Buford in April 2015. This is followed by 13 months of phase II training at one of six Air Force medical facilities: Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.; Travis AFB, Calif.; Eglin AFB, Fla.; Offutt AFB, Neb.; Langley AFB, Va.; or Keesler. During this period, they will hone their skills as they provide patient care under the supervision of medical staffs at the respective medical treatment facilities.

Upon graduation, both will receive master of science degrees in physician assistant studies from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha and will be commissioned as Air Force first lieutenants.

Both IPAP-selects were personally informed of their selection by their squadron commanders.

“My commander came into the class I was teaching to tell me,” said Buford, a cyber transport instructor. “It didn’t



(U.S. Air Force photo by Steve Pivnick)

**Staff Sgt. Gregory Buford, 338th Training Squadron, left, and Master Sgt. William McMillan, 81st Inpatient Operations Squadron, stand outside the Medical Center Family Birthing Center, June 3, Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.**

initial reaction was ‘No way!’ I did not revisit attempting to apply for the PA program again until both my flight commander and wife pushed me to continue in 2009. There are many different math and science requirements to meet the required 60 hours of college credits. Having come into the military with no college experience, I had to really put

made his dream a reality.

“When things got difficult, balancing my leadership and school responsibilities, she kept me on track and pushed me to my goal,” McMillan said. “There was never any doubt in her mind I couldn’t make it into this program. I fed off her positive attitude and confidence and it pushed me to challenge myself.”

Buford observed the two main women in his life have influenced his pursuit.

“My mom played a major role,” he noted. “She was in the military for 24 years in medical logistics. She and my wife combined to make a significant impact on me to achieve this.”

He added, “I would also like to express my gratitude for my supportive chain of command, especially my squadron commander, Lt. Col. Michelle Carns, for her mentorship. Also, lacking a medical background, I must thank two exceptional military PAs, Maj. Jeremy Kersey and Capt. Michael Vietti (current and former Keesler Medical Center Physician Assistant Clinical Training Program directors) for taking me under their wing and allowing me to shadow them for countless hours.”

McMillan, who is from Snyder, Texas, spent his first seven years in the Air Force at nearby Dyess AFB. He finally volunteered for an assignment to England for an opportunity to “see the world.” He is married and mentioned that the IPAP school offers a strong family support system because for 16 months the spouses are almost “single” due to the intensity of the training.

Buford, who calls himself a “military brat,” is married with two children.

“Both of my children were born prematurely and that really gave me an appreciation for the medical field,” he pointed out.



(U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist MC2 (SW//AW) Sean P. Lenahan/Released)

(From left) Commander, Navy Medicine West and Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Rear Adm. Bruce L. Gillingham, Lt. Evan R. Butlin, of NMCS Department of Medical Services, and Deputy Chief, Education and Training Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Rear Adm. Kenneth J. Iverson pose for a photo after Butlin was presented with the command ‘Good Catch Award’ for attention to detail, follow-up and situational awareness. The award recognizes individuals at NMCS that go beyond the call of duty in the service of others and patients.



## ‘Good Catch Award’

Commander, Navy Medicine West and Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Rear Adm. Bruce L. Gillingham awards Lt. Evan R. Butlin, of NMCS Department of Medical Services, with the command ‘Good Catch Award’ for attention to detail, follow-up and situational awareness. The award recognizes individuals at NMCS that go beyond the call of duty in the service of others and patients.

# Women join in hospital patient escort program

By Steve Pivnick

81st Medical Group Public Affairs

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — Keesler Medical Center can take credit for another “first.” Women have now joined the ranks of the medical center’s volunteer patient escorts. Close friends Victoria Todd and Penny Hershberger began escorting patients to appointments, frequently via wheelchairs, at the end of May, becoming the first women to do so since the service began in 1980.

Explaining her desire to become a volunteer escort, Todd said, “My husband lives the blessing. People helping people receive more than they give. I wanted to share this experience with him though he has a 33-year start on me.”

Dean Todd, who retired as a lieutenant colonel and chief of the former student affairs division, has volunteered with the Keesler Medical Center for 33 years.

“Upon his active-duty retirement in 1980, he became one of the original nine men who started the medical escort service,” Victoria said. “They were responsible for moving patients, using wheelchairs and gurneys, to and

from wards and clinics.”

The medical escort service started with a small room and a phone on the fourth floor. The volunteer escorts provided a five-day schedule and Dean’s highest single-day patient movement was 61 assists.

“Thirty-three years later, he remains active in the program,” said Victoria. “If you’re in the hospital on Thursdays, he is one of three volunteers working at the outpatient clinic entrance information desk. Their responsibilities have not changed much with the exception of answering questions. Due to a more visible location, they direct, guide and inform patients and visitors while in the medical center.”

She continued, “Dean has wanted for years to see the escort program develop positions for women to serve in the same venue.”

Victoria became an escort volunteer because of “watching my husband leave our home at 6 a.m. over the years with the enthusiasm of a child that wants to go to school for the first time and come home tired with the most amazing smile. He would tell me that there was an unbelievable satisfaction and joy in helping others. He was receiving more by giving.

“I wanted in on this kind of blessing and after three days of volunteering and 35 assists of my own, I discovered he was right. When he would leave in the mornings, I would always tell him to ‘play nice and be in before dark.’ When I was leaving to volunteer for my first Tuesday morning, my Dean said, ‘Do you have lunch money? And, by the way, play nice and be in before dark.’

“What makes this journey even more exciting is that I am doing it with another best friend, Joan ‘Penny’ Hershberger. We have known each other for over 20 years. We attend the Larcher Chapel and all three of us sing in the choir and have traveled to Europe in this friendship. We all serve on the board of the Gulf Coast Community Concert, host dinner parties together and now we are Keesler Medical Center’s ‘Team Escort.’

Victoria added, “Our motto should be ‘You Call, We Wheel!’ The hope is to not only have the wheelchair service, but we want to be active in transporting people to and from the hospital parking lots.

During her first day, Victoria tallied three wheelchair details and escorted 12 people to clinics.

“Some did not require a wheelchair,” she pointed out. “However, walking them there reassured them they were in the correct clinic and that they would be on time.”

In addition to being a medical center volunteer, she also has volunteered with the Gulf Coast Community Concert Association as a 10-year board member and at Larcher Chapel for 38 years and is a volunteer instructor and teacher for sewing, master gardening, painting, wood working and decorative cement.

Penny commented, “I was a part of a military family for over 26 years before my late husband, Col. David Hershberger, retired and we settled in Ocean Springs. He was the commander of Keesler’s communications squadron and I was a school counselor at Magnolia Park Elementary School in Ocean Springs. I retired in 2005, the summer of Katrina.”

She noted, “I had previously been a volunteer for the thrift shop and in



(U.S. Air Force photo by Steve Pivnick)

**Keesler Medical Center volunteer patient escorts Penny Hershberger, left, and Victoria Todd assist Charlotte Taylor May 27 as they begin working in the formerly all-male service that began in 1980.**

the schools as well as for the Coast Community Concert Association. I also sing in a choir, volunteer to host coffee hour one month a year and serve as a lay reader at Larcher Chapel, as is Victoria.

“I became interested in volunteering at the hospital through Dean and Victoria, and after only one day, I think I have found my place,” Hershberger continued. “Giving back and helping people seems a natural fit for me. But I also enjoy talking and listening to those who have shared the same military lifestyle that I have lived. My children are grown with families of their own, but they were thrilled to hear what I’m up to now. Let the adventure begin!”

Penny also had three “pushes” her first day, May 27.

Becoming a medical center volunteer included an initial interview with volunteer director Usa Jones, a legal briefing covering hospital policy and procedures, an online syllabus course with a mandatory five-block test and the 81st Medical Group orientation class.



(U.S. Air Force photo by Steve Pivnick)

**Kay Hymel, executive assistant to the 81st Medical Group commander, assists current commander Col. (Dr.) Tom Harrell as he reviews folders in his office June 4. “Miss Kay” will be honored during a June 12 retirement ceremony in Keesler Medical Center’s Don Wylie Auditorium as she completes almost 30 years of federal service. Retired Lt. Gen. Clark Griffith, former Air Education and Training Command vice commander, will officiate.**

## • RETIRES

Continued from page 1

Orange Beach, Ala., for a few days after my retirement. And I have been taking some pottery classes and plan to do lots more.”

Summing up her lengthy association with the medical center she commented, “Keesler Medical Center has

been part of my life since 1987. I have been lucky enough to work with many wonderful people. My job has been amazing and I will take many wonderful memories into retirement. We are the best hospital in the Air Force and Keesler is the best base!”



Sailors, friends and family members pose for pictures after a frocking ceremony held at Naval Medical Center San Diego.



Chief petty officers assigned to Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) stand along the 2nd deck railing of building 2 during a frocking ceremony held at NMCS Flag Circle.



(U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW) Todd J. Hack/Released)

Sailors assigned to Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) stand in ranks at parade rest during a frocking ceremony held at NMCS Flag Circle. One hundred twenty-six Sailors from 15 rates were advanced to the next pay grade during the ceremony.



Above: Commander, Navy Medicine West and Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Bruce L. Gillingham, NMCS Deputy Commander, Capt. Lisa P. Mulligan and NMCS Command Master Chief (SW/EXW/FMF) Hosea Smith Jr. congratulate newly frocked first class petty officers during a frocking ceremony held at NMCS Flag Circle.

Left: Sailors assigned to Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) stand along the 3rd deck railing of building 2 during a frocking ceremony held at NMCS Flag Circle.



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Left: U.S. Marine Corps Aviation Mechanic Sgt. Kevin Fekaris uses a resistance band at Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Building 26 Gym, while fitness instructor Eddie Pryor (left), guides other wounded warriors during a circuit training class.



(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Sean P. Lenahan/Released)

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# Joint training mission provides cost-effective, life-saving training

By Maj. Marnee A.C. Losurdo  
403rd Wing Public Affairs

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — The Air Force Reserve's 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron and Air Force's 81st Medical Group participated in the joint medical training exercise Operation Magnolia Medical Enroute Care Wednesday at Keesler Air Force Base and the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center.

The Keesler units partnered with the Mississippi Air National Guard's 172nd Airlift Wing and its 183rd Air Evacuation Squadron, based in Jackson, and the 186th Air Refueling Wing, based in Meridian. Training was also scheduled with the Mississippi Army Guard utilizing their HH-60 and other rotary aircraft, which are frequently used to extract medical patients in a combat area; however, the helicopter flight had to be cancelled due to severe weather.

Maj. Kaitlyn Woods, a 53rd WRS aerial reconnaissance weather officer, said the exercise was cost effective because the Hurricane Hunters were able to combine their weather training mission, which benefits the pilots, navigator, ARWO and loadmaster, with the aeromedical training at the same time.

"This Total Force training exercise demonstrates how aircrews and medical personnel work together in the field to save lives," said Col. Frank L. Amodeo, 403rd Wing commander, who added that the aeromedical evacuation system provides a more than 98 percent survival rate. "While aircrew and medical personnel have vastly different jobs; these personnel are able to simultaneously conduct valuable training on the same flight, epitomizing the 'cost-conscious-culture' initiative."

The objective of the exercise was to complete four separate training missions with one flight, providing cost-effective and joint training for medical personnel and aircrew. The event simulated a combat medical extraction and aeromedical evacuation from a combatant commander's area of responsibility to a military medical facility all while the 53rd WRS Hurricane Hunters conducted a simulated storm data gathering mission for the National Hurricane Center.

The 81st MDG Critical Care Air Transport and Tactical Critical Care Evacuation teams need Aeromedical Evacuation teams and aircraft in order to train. The 183rd AES worked with CCATT and TCSET in the back of Reserve and Guard aircraft on a simulated patient who was in critical condition. The training on various medical scenarios was invaluable in honing skills that may save the lives or limbs of real patients in a real scenario, said Amodeo.

"As AE we have to fly on multiple airframes," said Tech. Sgt. Megan



(U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Stephen Coleman)

**Maj. Shawn French, 81st Medical Operations Squadron, and Capt. Karen Stimeling, 81st Inpatient Operations Squadron, carry a simulated patient from a WC-130J during a total force medical airlift training exercise July 9, 2014, at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Miss. Operation Magnolia Medical En Route Care simulated a medical extraction during an imminent hurricane, and highlighted the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron Hurricane Hunters, 81st Medical Group's Critical Care Air Transport and Tactical critical care evacuation team, as well as other local Mississippi Air National Guard units.**

Clifton, 183rd AES medical technician. "In one day you could be flying on three different airframes, so it's good for us to be able to maintain our currency on all aircraft. We were able to set up a C-17 today, like we normally do for our training, and we were able to get on a C-130 ... and move all of our equipment and personnel to a C-130, which is very realistic; and, we were able to get ground training on a KC-135."

AE crews are often required to move patients from one aircraft to another in order to get patients to a medical facility for patient care, she said. Same day training on all three aircraft is very rare, but the collaborative efforts in Southern Mississippi made it possible.

An AE crew consists of a medical director, flight nurse, and three aeromedical evacuation technicians. They routinely move critically ill or injured troops after they've been stabilized or received damage-control surgery. AE

personnel frequently work with Critical Care Air Transport and Tactical Critical Care Evacuation Teams. CCATTs consist of a doctor, intensive care nurse and respiratory therapist. This specialized medical team operates a portable intensive care unit. TCSETs consist of an emergency medicine or critical care physician, a nurse anesthetist, and emergency or critical care nurse who provide emergency critical care in most rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

The joint training was very beneficial, said Lt. Col. Stan Martin, 183rd AES flight nurse.

"When we do get deployed, we all work together as one big team, the active duty, the Reserve, and the Guard, so it's very rewarding to be able to do these kinds of missions," he said.

"The beauty of it is, in the event we go to Afghanistan or God forbid another natural disaster here on the Coast again like a Katrina, we'd all work together," said Col. Paul Nelson, chief of 81st

Aerospace Medicine, who assisted in organizing the exercise. "We'd work together for our medical side and our line side, everybody coming together to do realistic training so if we are called upon, we could do the mission."

Not only was the training beneficial for several military organizations but was also convenient due to the proximity of all the air assets involved. The Guard and Reserve conduct 88 percent of the AE mission, primarily using C-130s, C-17s and KC-135s, all of which participated in this exercise.

"This exercise not only demonstrated the multi-missioned capabilities of the WC-130J aircraft, but also highlighted the uniqueness of the South Mississippi area by providing every possible element of training for medical enroute care in one state," said Amodeo. "The amount of resources and medical expertise demonstrated here cannot be duplicated in very many parts of the world."

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## Miscellaneous



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EOE/AA

# Lab technician student thriving at Keesler

By Steve Pivnick  
81st Medical Group Public Affairs

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, MISS — Airman 1st Class David Sia is meeting challenges head-on and winning.

Sia, a Phase II medical laboratory technician student at Keesler Medical Center, came to the United States from the West African nation of Burkina Faso in 2012 at the age of 25.

"I decided to move to the U.S. because in my country colleges were having trouble with the government and they were always sending the police after us," Sia said. "They even had the army reprimand us, and they used real weapons on us. So I couldn't stay there. Plus, I always dreamed of coming to the USA and, here I am."

Born in Senegal, Africa, he and his family returned to Burkina Faso when he was 10.

"My father was studying medicine in Senegal," he explained. "He is now a generalist and has returned to school to become a professor."

Recounting his experiences after immigrating to America, Sia said, "I spoke no English (Burkina Faso is a French-speaking nation). I initially lived in the Bronx selling perfume on the street in Harlem for five months. I moved to Baltimore, lived with a friend of my father and began studying at the Community College of Baltimore County. I also worked three jobs: at a gas station, Walmart and washing dishes in a restaurant."

Understandably, he didn't get much sleep.

"It was really, really hard having all those jobs and going to school," he commented. "I decided to do something to better myself and learn a job. The Air Force seemed the most secure place for me to accomplish this.

"Since I was a permanent U.S. resi-

dent, I decided to enlist in the Air Force. I planned to come in under the Delayed Entry Program, but when my recruiter called me to tell me there was an opening, and I really needed to enlist then, I did so."

His current Air Force commitment is six years of active duty plus two more in the Reserve.

He began basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, April 2, 2013.

"I learned most of my English as I went through basic training," Sia recalled. "I was always being yelled at. I was the kind of trainee who, when told to turn left, went right."

After successfully completing basic training May 30, 2013, Sia attended 16 weeks of Phase I medical laboratory apprentice training at the Fort Sam Houston Medical Education and Training Campus in San Antonio. He began the 36-week Phase II program at Keesler in October.

"I've really learned a lot quickly since coming into the Air Force, all of it good," he observed. "It's kind of magical. I sometimes am proud of myself speaking a new language and being understood by others."

He does find the course tests a challenge.

"They are very difficult and some of the material isn't clear to me, plus the language aspect causes me to take a lot of time to formulate my answers, he said"

Commenting on Sia's accomplishments to date, course supervisor Staff Sgt. Loren King said, "I've been very impressed."

Sia, who became a U.S. citizen in a May 23 ceremony in New Orleans, is scheduled to graduate Phase II July 22. He will join his fiancée, who graduated from the same course June 4, at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

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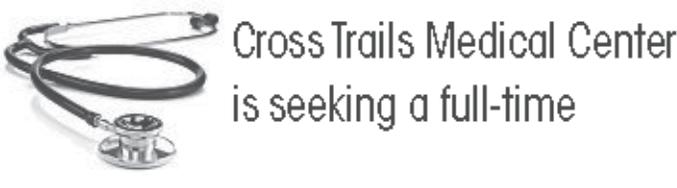
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## Physicians

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•Physician with a Masters of public health degree and/or advanced training is preferred.

**Cabell-Huntington Health Department**

Tim Hazelett, Administrator

703 Seventh Ave., Huntington, WV 25701

Office: 304-523-6483 ext. 245

Mobile: 304-634-5955 [tim.d.hazelett@wv.gov](mailto:tim.d.hazelett@wv.gov)

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## LGBT Pride Month



*Hospitalman Apprentice John Juarez (left) of Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Child Guidance and Mental Health department discusses states that have legalized gay marriage with Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (FMF/ SW) Claudette Arenas (right), NMCS Preventive Medicine department, during the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month (LGBT Pride Month) in the NMCS courtyard.*



*Former Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Command Master Chief Kathleen A. Hansen (retired) gives an emotional speech in support of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month (LGBT Pride Month) in the NMCS courtyard. During her speech Hansen spoke about what life was like for her and her partner during their enlistments, and the relief that she now has for the homosexual community in the U.S. Armed Forces.*

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Memphis, Tennessee has a population of 690,000 (1.3 million in area) and is located on the Mississippi River. This family-oriented community has excellent public and private schools, major public and private universities (University of Memphis, Rhodes, and Christian Brothers), the Memphis Zoo, museums, parks, minor league baseball and hockey, professional basketball (Grizzlies) and many other indoor and outdoor activities.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and CV to:

**Dr. David L. Maness, Professor and Chair**

**UT Department of Family Medicine, 1301 Primacy Parkway, Memphis, TN 38119**

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