

Norris retires

Col. James Norris, 437th Airlift Wing vice commander, is retiring after 30 years of service. The retirement ceremony will be Feb. 18, 10 a.m. at the Charleston Club.

There will be a dinner honoring Norris and his wife, Opal, Feb. 17 at the Charleston club. Social hour begins at 6 p.m. and dinner will be served at 7 p.m. Dress is very casual (i.e. blue jeans).

Cost is \$13.50 for club members and \$16.50 for non-members. To make reservations, call: 437th Operations group - 2nd Lt. David Du Bois at 963-3385; 437th Logistics Group - 2nd Lt. Gordon Pearson at 963-2543; 437th Support Group - Rosemarie Perry at 963-3800; 437th Medical Group - Maj. Rosemary Richardson at 963-6173; Special Staff - Maj. Don Starr at 963-2852; and the 315th Airlift Wing - Cheryl Merritt at 963-3338.

Appraisal

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customer feedback."

The new system, which is currently out-of-cycle, will rate employees for 90 days from Jan. 1 to March 31 and will get back on track starting April 1 to March 31, 2001. Supervisors and commanders have already received guidance on the new program and will receive additional guidance in February.

"We had a special three month implementation period for the new appraisals and once that cycle is complete, we'll be back on track with the annual April to March period," said Bill Williams, base civilian personnel officer. "We've not had much feedback, positive or negative, on the new system since it has only been recently implemented. But the really big change has been the pass or fail standard."

There are three major changes in the program.

■ First, the new program is a two-level rating system: acceptable and unacceptable performance. Civilian employees are rated on whether they meet or fail to meet performance element requirements.

■ Second, impact on mission accomplishment statements are required for grades 14 and 15 for use in GS-15 screening boards. According to Air Force personnel officials, writing these statements is generally less work than what was required to justify exceeding performance elements. The impact statements are optional for other grades.

■ Third, the new system includes a mandatory feedback form. The law requires feedback once during the rating cycle and Air Force officials say the form facilitates the discussion between supervisor and employee.

Sister wing

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MacDill's KC-135s will refuel our C-17s, practicing the strict criteria required to score maximum points," Manske said. "The agreement between our commanders facilitates the scheduling of these missions."

The sister wing program provides an open forum of communication at every level, not just the fliers or maintainers.

"If you work in the transportation squadron, I encourage you to find out who your counterpart is at Charleston," Diehl told his wing. "Chances are he or she may be facing similar challenges you are and may have suggestions for upcoming programs. The same goes for virtually any squadron on base."

Visits between the bases

are planned to foster closer cooperation between the wings. According to Manske, cooperation will range from operations and support to family programs and community partnerships.

"Ideally, the way we employ this concept is by taking our airmen and lieutenants to MacDill from all four of our groups in the wing and have them meet with their counterparts at MacDill for an exchange of ideas and ways of doing business," said Manske. "The exchanges will take place under the umbrella of sanctioned C-17 training time which accomplishes the dual goal of aircrew training and sister wing exchange."

"The partnership is based on Charleston AFB's close proximity to MacDill AFB and the fact they are a pure air refueling wing and we are a pure airlift wing" said Manske.

The Air Mobility Command commander originally conceived the sister wing program for flying squadrons to promote an exchange of information within the command.

It was later expanded and elevated to the wing level and was officially initiated in January 1993.

The idea was to develop social and professional exchanges that would enhance understanding of the sister unit's mission, empowering the units to be more creative and innovative in their activities. Each wing was required to submit quarterly reporting outlining their involvement with the other wing.

In July 1994, the Sister Unit Program was officially renamed the Mobility Unit Exchange Program, and new guidance was is-

sued for unit pairing, goals and policies.

The program was to be conducted under a normal peacetime environment, noting that contingencies and deployments may affect the ability of a wing or squadron to participate.

An increasingly heavy demand on AMC units led to less increased emphasis and visibility for the program. New guidance, issued in January 1996, removed the formal reporting requirement and was substituted with "suggested" activities.

(Information compiled by Senior Master Sgt. Bob E. Tobias, 437 AW Public Affairs, and Senior Airman Sonny Cohrs, 6 ARW Public Affairs)

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In addition, the award justification has been simplified to nine lines as opposed to the current written narrative for performance elements. For grades 14 and 15, what is written on the mission impact statements can be used as the award justification, serving a dual purpose.

"The beauty of the new appraisal system is its simplicity. It really mirrors the Officer Performance Reports where it is easier to fill out and you are not required to provide a written justification for each element," said Tony Owens, work force relations in the civilian personnel office. "The focus is now on performance and results instead of just evaluating standards. There is increased emphasis on how that civilian fits into the overall organization's mission."

The base negotiated implementation with the local union, American Federation of Government Employees Local 1869, and has only to work out the administration of the awards program itself.

"Everyone is on-board with implementing the new system here and we were glad to be able to implement the program on schedule," Owens added.

"The new Air Force civilian appraisal program is responsive, simple, understandable, fair and credible," Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan said. "It allows our civilians the benefit of regular feedback and is more time-efficient for commanders and supervisors."

Charleston has approximately 800 appropriated fund civilians that are affected by the new appraisal system. Training for all military and civilian supervisors will be held on February 22-24. For more information, call 963-4476.

(Information obtained from AFNS)

Mission planning



Tech. Sgt. Cary Humphries, 1 CTCS

C-17 loadmasters Master Sgt. Robert Orr (right), 437th Operations Group, and Senior Airman Rodney Nuckoles, 14th Airlift Squadron, check mission data during a local airdrop mission.