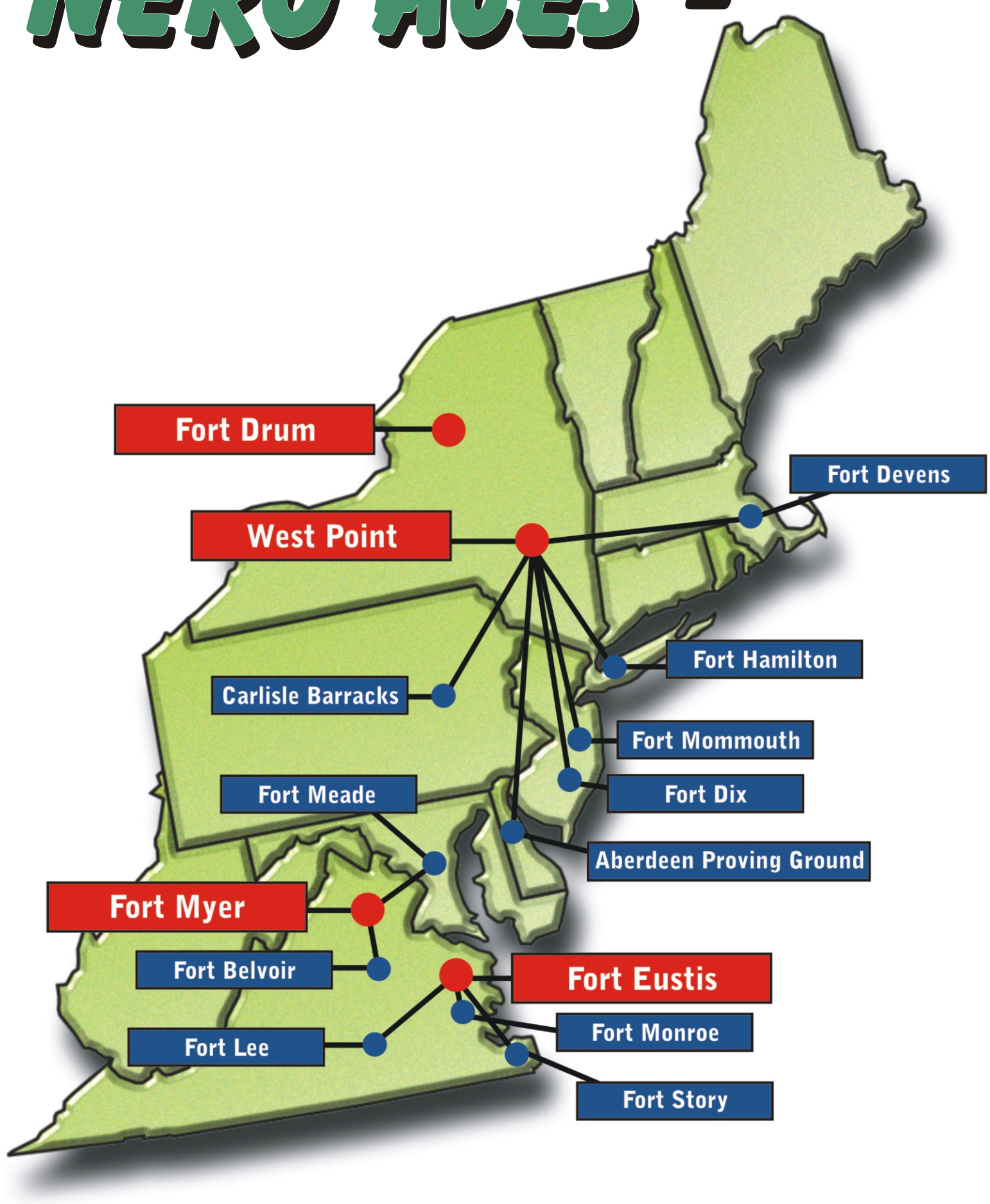
NERO ACES bridge

Volume 1, Issue 1 November 2005

CHECK OUT THE NEW NERO ACES WEBSITE

WWW.NEREDUCATION.ARMY.MIL

# NERO ACES -




## SERVING SOLDIERS ACROSS THE NORTHEAST

# View from the Chief's Desk

It's now November, the second month of the fiscal year - a year of exciting changes that will move Army Education Centers into the 21st century. Some of these changes are specific to the Northeast Region while others are soon to be implemented worldwide by the Army Continuing Education System (ACES). This publication, The NERO ACES Bridge, will provide readers with important information and regular updates relevant to this Army Education transformation.

Many of our changes are transparent to the customer, but provide better communication and workflow between education centers so that we are better able to serve you, our customer. You may have noticed that there are more or fewer faces at your local education center due to the regional restructuring into ACES Service Centers. Each ACES Service Center consists of a hub that handles the majority of administrative and management oversight for one or more satellite centers. This structure requires more personnel at the hub centers and allows the satellites to focus primarily on customer service and quality education counseling.

Our new interactive website will be introduced at Northeast Region education centers this month. This website will allow Soldiers and others in the military community the convenience of initiating from home or work a variety of education-related services. These services include: requesting Tuition Assistance online, scheduling appointments for testing or counseling services, enrolling in a Basic Skills class, and emailing a question to a counselor. In addition to these interactive services, the website will also provide detailed information on the wide variety of educational programs and services that are available. From this website, you may even download and print informational brochures, for your own use or to be dispersed to a group of soldiers.

Another new and innovative tool at your local education centers is collaborative software that will ultimately facilitate a virtual desktop video and audio counseling program. This software provides the flexibility and the means by which to contact other education centers, even at a moment?s notice. Experts within the region are easily accessible, so that your questions can be answered quickly and correctly. Waiting times will even be reduced as a result of this leading-edge software program.

We are striving to set a new standard of efficient and effective service to our Soldiers and our military communities. In this continued effort, we welcome and encourage your feedback. We will soon be introducing a Sign-In System that will give us valuable statistical information about our customers; this system will also send to your email address a customer service survey link. The information we gain from the Sign-In Program itself and your comments will assist us in streamlining our services to provide you even better service in the future.

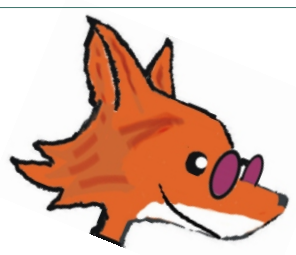
More changes in education centers worldwide are scheduled to take place in April 2006. Sometime in the near future, the current eArmyU portal will become the GoArmyEd portal. Beginning in April, the portal will enable Soldiers to manage their own education by utilizing any computer with internet access, entering course information, and printing out their own Tuition Assistance forms. As we move closer to this event, look for updates in this publication!

*Carla K. Ortiz*
**ACES Team Chief**

**New Multi-Use Learning Facility Opened at Fort Hamilton, NY**

Fort Hamilton's Education Center is proud to announce the completion of their new Multi-Use Learning Facility (MLF). We now have 16 brand new, state-of-the-art computers for Servicemembers and their families to use for school, projects, or even just to check their email. The new MLF at Fort Hamilton includes a conference table for soldiers to use for meetings, collaborative projects, study groups, and the like. Study materials are available to soldiers who are preparing to take a test or would like to brush up on basic reading and math skills. There is also a small library of books that span a wide variety of topics, including military books and many others that may be of interest to Servicemembers.

**ARMY ACES**
**SERVICE CENTERS**
**Relevant & Ready**



**Ask NERO**

*Within this section of the NERO ACES newsletter, soldiers have the opportunity to have their education-related questions answered by NERO, the region's very own Army Education guru. If you know of a good question, tell your local education counselor or submit a note to an educaton counselor at www.nereducation.army.mil.*

Q. Do I have to enroll in eArmyU in order to take classes while in the Army?
A. No. You may have the option of enrolling in eArmyU, but you are not ever required to do so. You may receive tuition assistance for a traditional or distance learning course without ever enrolling in eArmyU. Learn more about the Army Tuition Assistance by going to the IMA-NERO ACES website: www.nereducation.army.mil. If you want to know more about the eArmyU program, go to www.eArmyU.com.

Q. I don't have time to take a BSEP class; what are my other options for basic skills improvement?
A. Every Army Education Center has Lifetime Library, which is a software-based basic skills review program that is individualized and that you may fit to your own schedule. One-on-one tutoring may also be available at some sites. Go to the IMA-NERO ACES website (www.nereducation.army.mil) to learn more about other options for basic skills improvement that may be available at your local Army ACES Service Center.

Q. I just got my grades and I have an "Incomplete" for one class. Will I have to reimburse the cost for this course?
A. If you are assigned a grade of Incomplete for a course, you are allowed up to 120 days to have this grade resolved and changed to a passing grade. No collections are made against the course costs until after the grace period has ended. An unresolved grade of Incomplete does turn into a failing grade after 120 days, at which time you must reimburse the amount paid by tuition assistance for the course.

Q. I am an Army officer using tuition assistance. When does my active-duty service obligation begin?
A. As a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army, you are obligated to remain on active duty for at least two years after utilizing tuition assistance for a course. Even if you use tuition assistance for a series of subsequent courses, the two-year obligation begins the final day of the last course that you take.

Q. How can I get tuition assistance for a course without having to make several trips to my local Army Education Center?
A. With the introduction of the IMA-NERO ACES website, you now have the option of requesting tuition assistance online! Simply go to your ACES Service Center homepage by clicking on the interactive map at www.nereducation.army.mil. Go to Tuition Assistance at the top of the page, and choose Request TA.

Q. I am a platoon sergeant, and I would like to share some basic educational information with my troops. Where can I get some materials for this purpose?
A. Go to the IMA-NERO ACES website (www.nereducation.army.mil) and choose "Brochures" at the left of the screen. From here, you may print brochures and handouts on a number of education-related topics. Check back often, because new topics will continue to be added!


**The NERO ACES Bridge**

**Carla K. Ortiz**
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SERVICES AVAILABLE ONLINE - REQUEST TA- ENROLL IN BSEP -

## Online Learning: Online Success!
### Written by: Jennifer Clay

Specialist James Coleman is a dedicated soldier who has an irregular work schedule; he is married, has frequent field problems and deployments, and is pursuing a degree in information technology. Sergeant Janice Tillman works fulltime in the military health clinic and is a single mother of three children; she is also working toward a nursing degree. Lieutenant Simpson is married and has a child who has special needs that require several hours of occupational therapy each week; Lieutenant Simpson could never fit traditional classes into his busy schedule, but nonetheless, he is currently pursuing his Masters degree in Human Relations; his wife is earning a degree in Education.

Attending college has never been more convenient than now, with the increasing availability of online courses at literally hundreds of reputable colleges and universities. In the past, a working adult with multiple responsibilities would have to attend night or weekend classes in order to pursue a post-secondary degree or certificate. The flexibility of online classes allows students to attend class on their own time. Depending on the school, online classes vary in format and delivery, but typically the course room lectures, discussions, and other materials are available online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Students can complete assignments and contribute to online message boards when it is most convenient to them- even in the middle of the night!

Distance education opens the door to a world of opportunities. Literally over 90% of four-year, post-secondary public schools now offer online classes of some type. The best news is that like traditional courses, accredited online classes are covered by Army tuition assistance. Before you rush to sign up, though, remember that students who are most successful in online classes are comfortable with computers, organized, and self-disciplined. For a variety of reasons, some students consider online classes to be more difficult than traditional courses.

Still, many adults seem to feel that the benefits and conveniences of distance education far outweigh the challenges of online learning. According to The Peak Group, an education technology research and consulting firm, over one million students will enroll in at least one distance education course this year. In fact, online education is a market that is currently growing at a rate of 38% increase per year, says another education research firm called Eduventures. No longer are students limited by geography; in fact, many online students log onto their classes from overseas and downrange locations.

If you are interested in learning more about distance education courses, log onto the IMA-NERO ACES website at www.nereducation.army.mil and explore College Programs along the left menu. On this website, you may also learn about the specifics of the Army Tuition Assistance Program as well as a wide variety of financial aid options. With the convenience of online courses, there is no reason to delay your educational goals. Take the

## College Profiles: Central Michigan University

**Written by: Sharon Hall, CMU Registrar at Fort Hamilton**

Central Michigan University has more than 30 years experience in offering quality, affordable degree programs to adult learners. More than 60,000 people have earned their Masters degree at one of CMU's 60 off-campus locations in the U.S., Canada, Mexico or through our online options.

At the Fort Hamilton Army Base in Brooklyn, New York, we offer the Masters of Science in Administration degree with concentrations in: Human Resource Administration, Health Service Administration, and Information Resource Management. We also have a new degree: the Masters of Arts in Education with an Instructional concentration.

Other highlights of CMU Programs:

- Open to military and civilian students
- Military tuition rate: $250.00 per credit hour (valid military or DOD required)
- Degree completion in 2 years or less
- Weekend classes (Friday evenings & Saturday)
- No GRE or GMAT
- Classroom instruction offered at many installations
- Excellent off-campus library services

**New classes begin January 2006**.

For more information contact us at (718) 748-8386/ Military line (718) 630-4981 or visit us on the web at cmuoffcampus.com.

## Taking Classes Has Never Been Easier!

**Written by: Mr. Les Barbour, ACES Guidance Counselor**

Imagine yourself in a remote part of the world, far away from any Army Education Center, and you need to request tuition assistance (TA) for a post-secondary course. Soon the Army will provide you an online system that will allow you to do just that. For qualifying soldiers, an online TA request function is now available at the new Northeast Region ACES website: www.nereducation.army.mil. Online TA requests streamline the TA process, which means that attending classes is now more convenient than ever before.

In order to request tuition assistance online, active-duty servicemembers must have a Servicemembers Opportunity College Army Degree (SOCAD) agreement and a degree plan at an accredited college, university, or institution. Servicemembers who are using TA for the first time will need to meet with a counselor, but subsequent TA requests may all be made online.

Even at the highest level, tuition assistance automation is a goal of the Army Continuing Education System (ACES). Beginning this October, a new tuition assistance program called CTAMS (Centralized Tuition Assistance Management System) will go into effect Army wide. In April 2006, CTAMS will allow a Soldier to request tuition assistance from any computer, anywhere in the world.

CTAM will allow tuition assistance to be paid for both participating and non-participating colleges. Participating colleges will work on a TA up-front basis, while the non-participation colleges will be paid on a reimbursement basis. All tuition assistance must be requested before a class starts, whether the soldier is working with a participating or non-participating college.

The changing procedures for TA requests will affect all partners of Army Education: you, your commander, ACES and your college. Ultimately, all entities will benefit from the streamlined processes that allow Servicemembers to make the most of their time while pursuing their educational goals!

## NATIONAL COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM, (CLEP) TESTING CENTER OPENED AT FORT EUSTIS ARMY EDUCATION CENTER

The first National CLEP Testing Center on an Army Post opened at the Fort Eustis Army Education Center on 7 October 2005. The Fort Eustis Education Center initiated a Memorandum of Understanding with St. Leo University to open this on base National Testing Center. All 35 CLEP Exams will be administered as Electronic Computer Based Testing, (eCBT).

Advantages are that results will be received immediately after taking an examination and the military member can now take all CLEP Exams on post. These examinations are free to all military personnel. Retired military personnel, family members and qualified civilian personnel may take these examinations at a cost of $55 per test, and a $20 registration fee per test.

To schedule a CLEP Test phone St. Leo University, Fort Eustis @ 887-0655, 887-1166 or 878-2083, Ext 238. Testing hours are Tuesday mornings 0800-1200 and Thursday afternoon 1300-1700.

**DANTES SUBJECT STANDARDIZED TEST (DSST)**

**NOTE: There are no changes in the administration of DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, (DSST) at the Fort Eustis Education Center. These exams are still paper based exams. Please phone the Education Center for dates and times, pickup a testing schedule at our front desk, or check our web site at www.Eustis-Education.org.**

## NERO "Launches" Virtual Education Counseling

November 15th marked a milestone in Army Continuing Education with the first web-based virtual counseling session in the Northeast Region. Using a collaboration tool provided by the Army Training Support Center, Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Thomas, a soldier at Fort Monroe, was counseled by Ms Barbara Threatt, a guidance counselor at Fort Eustis. The tool allows the counselor and customer to talk and see each other making the counseling session more personable. Chief Thomas indicated that he liked the fact that he could see and hear the counselor on the other end. He felt this tool was much better than using email or telephone. Ms Barbara Threatt has been a counselor for 17 years and believes the tool will become a valuable asset to ACES. This event coincided with the celebration of American Education Week; this year's theme was "A Stronger Army Begins with Educated Soldiers."

**Virtual Counseling in Action....Connecting Centers Across NERO**

# American Education Week Activities: 14-19 November 2005

## "A STRONGER ARMY BEGINS WITH EDUCATED SOLDIERS"

"A Stronger Army Begins with Educated Soldiers" was the 2005 Army theme for American Education Week. Army Education Centers all over the northeast region celebrated American Education Week in a variety of ways. Military, civilians, retirees, and all others with valid military identification cards were invited to participate in all activities.

Some of the Army Education Centers, such as Fort Monroe and Fort Dix, held information briefings that allowed students to learn more about financial aid, tuition assistance, AARTS transcripts, specific schools and programs, SOCAD degree plans, among many other topics.

Education Fairs were held at a number of other Army Education Centers, such as Fort Eustis, Fort Lee, Fort Detrick, Fort Drum, and Fort Belvoir. Similarly, West Point, Carlisle Barracks, and Fort Story had Open House activities. Some education centers served refreshments, awarded door prizes, and even offered hands-on practice with leading-edge online technology.

Aberdeen Proving Ground and Fort Monmouth sponsored community-wide book drives in which books for children and adults of all ages were collected to be donated and shared with various non-profit organizations in the area.

All American Education Week events provided the opportunity for interested Servicemembers and civilians to become better acquainted with the wide variety of opportunities and options that can help make the dream of a quality education become a reality. If you missed this year's AEW activities, be sure to make plans to attend an event in your area next year!

Education Fair - Fort Eustis VA

Education Fair - Fort Drum NY

American Education Week
November 13–19, 2005
www.nea.org/aew

## Army Education Icon to Retire

This month, the Army Continuing Education System (ACES) team is losing one of its most valuable players. Bob Lord, an ACES veteran and federal employee of over 38 years, is retiring from federal service. Over the years, Bob has been an immeasurable asset to ACES, serving in a variety of positions and most recently building a practical education empire at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

Early in his ACES career, Bob Lord began to establish himself as a man who would lead positive changes wherever he would go. Bob's dedication to providing Servicemembers with quality education programs and services is evident in his many and various accomplishments that have greatly improved Army Education. A genius at building and improving services, Bob has always found ways of better serving the military community. For instance, at one point while managing the delivery of adult education in an area that covered over 8000 square miles in Germany, Bob established two new centers in remote sites, which resulted in a 500 percent increase in education-center participation. Utilizing his impressive skills with computers, Bob has developed and automated essential programs that are still used by ACES personnel worldwide. For example, Bob developed the first command-wide automated educational reporting system ever used in the Army. For all of his many accomplishments and contributions, Bob Lord has received multitudinous awards and recognitions throughout the years, including being named as the 2000 Tilton Davis, Jr. Military Educator of the Year.

What stands out most about Bob Lord is his sincere desire and commitment to the goal of facilitating Servicemembers and their families in attaining a quality education. Army Education Centers, Servicemembers, and their families all over the world have either directly or indirectly benefited from Bob's ingenuity and forward thinking. If there is a way to make a service or program more efficient and/or effective, Bob will be the one to find it. His every decision is made in the best interest of the Servicemembers and their families.

A voracious reader and accomplished singer, Bob is well loved and appreciated by his employees, peers, and members of the worldwide military community. He brings to ACES a plethora of skills and ideas that will make him impossible to replace. We wish him a joyous and rewarding retirement.