

Lt. Col. Ralph "E.T." Taylor, Jr. | 2016 ADC's Military Leadership Award

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Partnering for Common Benefit

Military installations and their host communities can benefit from working together to solve shared problems and improve quality of life both on and off base. But using such partnerships not only to address routine issues but to respond to crises can be a force multiplier on both sides of the fence. Lt. Col. Ralph "E.T." Taylor, Jr., 628th Mission Support Group deputy commander, has been launching projects with this in mind since December 2014 by leading the Air Force Community Partnership Program (P4) at Joint Base Charleston in South Carolina. ADC asked him to describe what the partnerships have achieved thus far.

ADC: What has it been like working with the local community?

LT. COL. TAYLOR: Charleston has been very supportive of the military since it began hosting the Air Force base in 1941, and over the years, we've made a lot of efforts to communicate and learn about each other. Our Public Affairs Office has an honorary commander program, for example, through which a local civic leader is teamed with a commander and attends orientation sessions, commander's calls, promotion ceremonies, and other events on base. One honorary commander even made a point of seeing off all troop deployment departures and welcoming returning troops. Members of various units are always attending community events to see what's going on outside the wire. This type of interaction is extremely important because collaboration is most effective when each partner knows what the other brings to the fight. This environment made it easy to organize the seven workshops we held involving more than 350 military, civilian and Secretary of the Air Force Installations, Environment and Logistics leaders to discuss suitable P4 initiatives. Of the 10 we identified, we've made great progress in launching five with a sixth waiting in the wings.

ADC: Can you give us an overview?

LT. COL. TAYLOR: They're pretty wideranging. They include medical and motorcycle safety training, education and sports. Our on-base clinic conducts joint medical training with Trident Medical Center, which enhances our staff's emergency management and other health care skills and improves Trident's understanding of patients with military backgrounds. Trident Technical College is providing professional motorcycle safety

instruction to civilian and military riders using our motorcycle safety track. The college offers military discounts and maintains the base's motorcycle fleet. We're also partnered with the Berkeley County Library to bring their state-of-the-art bookmobile on base to serve personnel several days a month when the base library is closed. This year, for the first time, we've invited a local disabled youth little league to use the ball fields on base and hope to host them annually. As chair of the base traffic council, I also focus on minimizing the negative effects our military mission can have on roads surrounding the base. That led to us re-route the many trucks making deliveries at a particular gate away from the routes commuters use to ease rush hour congestion. In addition, we worked with local schools to design a roundabout to improve traffic flow and make it safer for parents to drop off and pick up students. Once we get over the funding challenge of this project, it will make a huge positive impact.

ADC: Among all of the P4 projects you've launched thus far, are there any that particularly stand out?

LT. COL. TAYLOR: Although not an P4 project, our partnership with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) stands out as a success story to me. The local CAP squadron was previously located off-base and due to a leasing issue, they needed a new location. As their sponsor, I worked with the Real Estate Working Group to secure them a location on base. They now have a permanent presence on Joint Base Charleston and hold their weekly cadet and officer meetings, conduct training, and participate as a true partner. CAP, which had been part of the reserve fleet, was made part of the Air Force's total force in August 2015. They have a plane which can be used to launch time-sensitive flights for their missions and also missions in support of the base and/or state. They logged more than 65 flying hours escorting state and federal emergency management officials to view the damage caused by the historic 2015 floods the state suffered. They took more than 1,000 photos during those flights to help identify the hardest-hit areas and expedite the distribution of relief supplies.

ADC: You mentioned identifying a total of 10 P4 projects the base could launch. Are there any waiting in the wings?

LT. COL. TAYLOR: We are putting the final touches on transferring all of the base's 9-1-1 calls to Charleston's 9-1-1 call center. Once complete, we will be linked with Charleston County's state-of-the-art 911 system and save over \$500,000 in infrastructure upgrades over the next five years. Another potential initiative reflects the commitment of our joint base commander, Col. Robert Lyman, to meeting the needs of the team, which includes not only active-duty military personnel but spouses, veterans, and retirees. We're looking into developing a skills database, similar to one that Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, is

creating, that will allow other agencies access to find and hire skilled personnel.

ADC: Are you enjoying spearheading Joint Base Charleston's P4 initiatives, and how important do you believe they are to achieving the base's mission objectives?

LT. COL. TAYLOR: In my role as the deputy mission support group commander, I'm already involved in most of the installation support functions, so I think it's natural for me to lead partnership efforts. With installation support, you are always looking for smarter ways of doing things and partnerships often times can offer those types of solutions. It's a great way to get to know and work with the local communities and these types of cooperative relationships are absolutely vital. Local, state and federal agencies have limited resources to draw on but, from a base perspective, if you synergize with your civilian counterparts, know what's outside the wire and make the best use of it, it's amazing what you can accomplish. The great thing about successful partnerships is that, if you forge strong ones during the good times, when the bad times hit – a hurricane, a shooting or some other emergency – your response will be that much stronger. Our ability to share and trade resources and expertise is also important from a financial standpoint. Federal, state, and local governments all face budget constraints. Already, from our current completed agreements, we stand to save the government over \$900,000, and we are not done yet!

Lt. Col. Ralph "E.T." Taylor, Jr., has been recognized with ADC's 2016 Military Leadership Award.
