

ANGEL'S WINGS^{ONLINE}

920TH RESCUE WING

OCTOBER 2017



RESCUE KUDOS FROM THE TOP

General Stephen W. Wilson, middle, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, thanks Senior Master Sgt. Christopher Lais, right, 308th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, and other 920th Rescue Wing Airmen for their relief efforts after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma during a visit to the wing Sept. 20 at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. The Honorable Matthew P. Donovan, the Under Secretary of the Air Force, visited with Airmen alongside Wilson. (U.S. Air Force photo/Matthew Jurgens)

news&features



AFRC LEADERS THANK WING MEMBERS

Air Force Reserve Command leadership spent the day visiting with 920th Rescue Wing Citizen Airmen Oct. 2 to personally thank them for their hard work.



RESCUE WARRIORS RESPOND TO IRMA

The 920th Rescue Wing evacuates wing assets in the face of Hurricane Irma before bedding down critical personnel and preparing for rescue operations after the storm.



WING WELCOMES NEW ENLISTED LEADER

Chief Master Sgt. Douglas Isaacks, who carries more than 18 years of pararescue experience, officially took over as command chief in August.



DEFENDERS CONDUCT FIELD TRAINING

Roughly 60 defenders from the 920th Security Forces Squadron spent a week in the wooded terrain of the Malabar Annex, Aug. 21-25 conducting a pre-deployment field training exercise.

notes of interest

WING COMMANDER'S CALL

Col. Kurt Matthews hosts a commander's call Oct. 14 at the Patrick Air Force Base Theater. All Airmen are required to attend and must be seated by 2:15 p.m.

SGLI SYSTEM GLITCH

When the Service Members' Group Life Insurance transferred to the new SGLI Online Enrollment System in August, many members had their beneficiary information dropped. Click on the above link to milConnect to ensure your beneficiary information is correct and up-to-date. Save and print any changes you make in the system.

TRICARE CHANGES COMING

TRICARE Select will replace TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra on Jan. 1, 2018. TRICARE Select combines the features of TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra in a single plan. Under the Select plan, customers may obtain care from any TRICARE authorized provider without a referral or authorization. Members who are TRICARE beneficiaries as of Dec. 31, 2017, will be automatically enrolled in the TRICARE health plan. Members can choose to enroll in or change their TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select coverage during an annual open enrollment period from November to December 2018 for coverage beginning on Jan. 1, 2019. Beneficiary out-of-pocket costs will be updated. Click on the above link for up-to-date cost information.

NOMINATING SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYERS

Reservists may nominate their employers for the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award now through Dec. 31. The Freedom Award is the highest honor the Department of Defense gives to employers for supporting National Guard and Reserve employees. The employers chosen exemplify what it means to go above and beyond federal requirements in support of military employees. Click "Nominate Employer" on the FreedomAward.mil homepage to get started.

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Reserve amputee wins battle to serve

By Tech. Sgt. Lindsey Maurice
920th Rescue Wing Public Affairs

For most, an amputation would be the greatest challenge they have ever faced in life, but for one Citizen Airman, the real struggle came when he fought to keep serving.

Separation from the service he loved so much was never an option for Senior Airman Kevin Greene, a healthcare management technician with the 920th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, and after a two-and-a-half-year fight, including three rejection letters and an in-person medical evaluation board, he is once again wearing his Air Force blues and loving every minute of it.

“I remember the night of the accident vividly,” he said. “I was coming home from work and was stopped at a red light when I looked to my right and see the lady in the vehicle next to me point to her window. As I look to see what she’s pointing at, ‘Boom!’”

“Next thing I know, I’m waking up in the hospital,” he recalled. “I hear people in the background crying hysterically, family praying and then the doctor walks in. He said I got into a pretty severe motorcycle accident. He said my brain was fine; there was no spinal damage; however, my left foot was just too severely broken to save and they had to amputate it.” Greene ended up going through several more surgeries, after his initial amputation on Dec. 17, 2014, as the same leg became infected multiple times. His last surgery in February 2015, left him with three quarters of his left leg.

During his roughly two-month stay at the hospital, Kevin recalled always being surrounded by family, friends and co-workers.

“I definitely felt loved in the hospital,” said the Brooklyn, New York, native. “My immediate family was always there of course, but my Air Force Reserve family surprised me. I knew people in the unit cared, but there was no mistaking it on the drill weekends when I’d have like 40 people coming to visit me. The staff didn’t even know what to do with that many visitors. The love and camaraderie I felt within my unit is the driving factor in my wanting to continue to serve.”

Greene said the support and mentorship he received from the squadron’s health services superintendent, Chief Master



Sgt. Dorlen Martin, was especially meaningful.

“I remember Chief Martin visiting me often and just putting me at ease,” he said. “I felt like her energy and positivity was at the root of my support system as she motivated others to rally around me.”

Martin said she will never forget that first hospital visit.

“It takes a lot to make me cry,” she said. “He’s just such a joker. He’s always making light of everything.”

“When he told me they took his leg, I thought he was joking. I said ‘Kevin that’s not funny.’ When he pulled back the covers I had to walk out of the room.”

Martin said she couldn’t let Greene see her cry because he would have focused on her, when he should be focusing on himself.

For the complete story, [click here.](#)

Above and left: Senior Airman Kevin Greene, a healthcare management technician with the 920th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, enjoys his first week back to work at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, Aug. 8, 2017 after more than two years of being inactive. Greene, who lost a portion of his left leg in a motorcycle accident on Dec. 17, 2014, is the first and only Air Force Reserve amputee to serve at Patrick AFB. (U.S. Air Force photos/Staff Sgt. Jared Trimarchi)



Rescue family says farewell to two incredible Airmen



**Master Sgt. Peter John Pavenski,
301st Rescue Squadron
May 10, 1972 – Sept. 18, 2017**

A Lynn, Massachusetts, native, Pete joined the U.S. Air Force shortly after graduating from high school in 1990 and worked as a C-5 crew chief at Travis Air Force Base, California, and Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts. He later cross trained into the rescue community as an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter aerial gunner. Pete worked full time as an air reserve technician with the 301st Rescue Squadron, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, since February 2014, and was as a traditional reservist with the unit before that, starting in 2007. He deployed with the unit multiple times to Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa.

He had his private pilot’s license and a passion for playing guitar.

Pete (or PJ as his family lovingly called him) was a loving and devoted husband, son and brother. He is survived by his loving wife, Stacey, of Palm Bay, Florida, originally from Charleroi, Pennsylvania, also a U.S. Air Force veteran. The couple met while on tour of duty at Moron, Spain, in 2002. They made their home together in Florida shortly after returning from Spain.

Pete is also survived by mother, Mary (Alek) Shephardson of Epping, New Hampshire, father, Peter S. Pavenski and step-mother Kathy Pavenski, both of South Hamilton, Massachusetts. He also leaves behind several siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins.



**Tech. Sgt. Christopher R. Craeton,
304th Rescue Squadron
May 20, 1970 – Sept. 21, 2017**

A Topeka, Kansas, native, Chris attended Kansas University and Midwestern State University where he graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree. He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1993 as a radiology technician. While in the Air Force, he co-managed a radiology clinic at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, for two years and was the ultrasound course supervisor at Travis Air Force Base, California. Chris left active duty and pursued a career as a sonographer in maternal fetal medicine and specialized in high risk pregnancies and detailed fetal heart exams. However, Chris missed the camaraderie of military life and joined the 304th Rescue Squadron as an aircrew flight equipment journeyman and was with the unit until his passing.

Chris enjoyed outings with his wife and kids, reading, writing, and home brewing. He was well versed in the violin and played in the Topeka youth symphony. He also had a black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

During his time away from the service, he met his wife, Kirsten, and they were married in 2005 in Maui, Hawaii. He is survived by his wife, Kirsten; and three children, Andrew, Jackson and Jillian, of Happy Valley, Oregon.

A memorial service will be held on Oct. 20, at 9 a.m. at the Willamette National Cemetery, 11800 SE Mt. Scott Blvd. Portland, Oregon, 97086-6937, followed by a church service at 11 a.m. at 1260 NE 132nd Ave, Portland, Oregon, 97230. A reception will take place at 12:30 p.m. at McMenamins Edgefield (Attic Room) 2126 S.W. Halsey St., Troutdale, Oregon, 97060.

Rescue team saves hundreds from Hurricane Harvey



Aircraft maintainers from the 920th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron prepare an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter for a Hurricane Harvey rescue mission Aug. 29, 2017 at Easterwood Airport, College Station, Texas. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Lindsey Maurice)

By Tech. Sgt. Lindsey Maurice
920th Rescue Wing Public Affairs

One of the biggest natural disasters in U.S. history, Hurricane Harvey, a Category 4 storm, devastated Texas in a matter of hours on Aug. 25, 2017. With flood waters surging and families and pets trapped in homes, buildings, and vehicles, the 920th Rescue Wing was called into action.

"We carry a lot of unique skill sets and experience that made our crews a critical part of the rescue effort," said Col. Michael LoForti, 920th Operations Group commander. "Some of our folks participated with Hurricane Katrina relief in 2005, where we rescued 1043 people. That experience, along with our night rescue capability provided a niche that most local and state officials did not possess."

Roughly 90 Airmen, two HC-130Ns King aerial refueling aircraft and three HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters deployed to Texas Aug. 28, and began flying missions out of the Easterwood Airport, College Station, Texas, the following day.

"Launching operations within two hours from arriving to a deployment is just incredible," said LoForti. "Within 45 minutes after launching, the 301st Rescue Squadron was hoisting survivors to safety."

Within four days, the helicopter and Guardian Angel teams rescued 200 people, 21 dogs and 5 cats, while the 39th RQS crews transported 35 hurricane victims from Beaumont to Dallas, conducted 20 helicopter air-to-air refuelings that enabled helicopter and GA crews to remain on scene longer, and served as the airborne mission commander coordinating 16 rescue assets from six different agencies and providing sole direct communication for vital 911 calls.

"The work our team put forth is remarkable," said LoForti. "What they accomplished doesn't just happen. That happens because of the people who believe in what they do and work hard to stay current and qualified to perform the mission. You also need a support structure at home station to get us out the door. I'm so proud of everyone."

Lt. Col. Michael Walsh, 301st RQS commander, noted that while the entire rescue effort was one for the books, watching the night crews overcome so many obstacles with much success was especially impressive. The 301st RQS was the only helicopter unit based out of College Station flying 24-hour operations.

From heights up to 180

feet above, "imagine low visibility, rain, 15-20-knot gusts, power lines everywhere and working the hoist, wearing night vision goggles for 10 hours straight," said Walsh. "Despite the odds against them, they still made tons of rescues. This speaks to the high level of skill and experience we have on our team."

The 308th RQS pararescuemen also found their recent swift-water training was invaluable as they fought surging flood water during many of their rescues. While most of their searches ended in success, some circumstances proved grave.

On one of the night crew's shifts, they spent roughly two hours searching for two amateur boat rescuers who overturned when they hit a bridge in the surging flood waters.

"The police officer told us that on a normal day you look down from the bridge and it's a good 45 feet to the top of the water," recalled Joe Montero, 301st RQS special mission aviator, "at that point it was so high it was slapping the side of the bridge. There were four boaters in all. One made it onto the bridge, one got caught in a tree and unfortunately we were never able to locate the other two."

With a diminishing gas tank and others in need of rescue, the crew was thanked for their effort and cleared to help other hurricane victims.

Montero, like many members of the Harvey team is a full timer; however, a portion of the team was made up of traditional reservists, whose civilian employers let them take off of work on short notice with orders that reflected up to 30 days.

Chief Joseph LaSata, Rockledge Fire Department and Police Department public safety director, said he was proud of the work that one of his firefighters, Senior Airman Davy Brinkmann, 301st RQS SMA, did during Hurricane Harvey.

"We're extremely proud of Davy both for his efforts to keep our city safe as a fireman, but also when he's called upon to serve our country in situations such as Harvey," LaSata said. "It did us all proud to see him rescuing people from rooftops and just reaffirms what kind of quality employees we have here in the city."

With a final day on alert status at College Station, the group headed home Sept. 3 only to find Hurricane Irma, a category 5 storm, headed their way.

"To roll from Harvey to Hurricane Evacuation to Irma operations is even more amazing," said LoForti. "I'm honored to be a part of the 920th Rescue team."



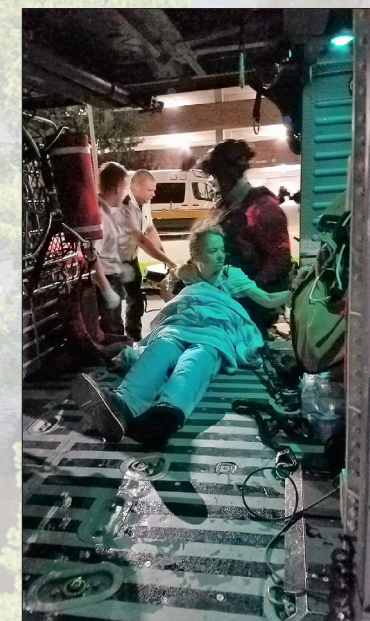
Master Sgt. Mark Victor, 39th Rescue Squadron instructor loadmaster, talks to aircrew members onboard an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter from the 106th Rescue Wing, while they receive in-flight fuel during a sortie in support of Hurricane Harvey relief efforts over Texas, Aug. 30, 2017. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Keith James)



A maintenance crew from the 720th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, fixes an HC-130N King aerial refueler Aug. 30, 2017 on the Easterwood Airport flightline, College Station, Texas, before the aircraft conducts a mission in support of Hurricane Harvey rescue efforts. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Lindsey Maurice)



Senior Airman Davy Brinkmann, 301st Rescue Squadron special missions aviation specialist, helps Hurricane Harvey evacuees settle into an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter Aug. 30, 2017 before taking them to an evacuation point near in Texas. (Courtesy photo)



Above left: Chief Master Sgt. Michael Ziegler, right, 308th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, helps a Hurricane Harvey victim out of an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter Aug. 30, 2017 near Port Arthur, Texas. Above right: Staff Sgt. Gregg Forshaw, 308th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, carries a child to the safety of a helicopter Aug. 30, 2017, while flying Hurricane Harvey relief missions with his rescue team in and around Port Arthur, Texas. (Courtesy photos)

