

SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 2, Issue 6

"127th Wing – Your Hometown Air Force"

November 2019



CORNERSTONE OF MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES

Selfridge 2020 Open House announced

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick
127th Wing Public Affairs

Leadership of the 127th Wing announced the dates for the Selfridge 2020 Open House and Air Show during a recent event at the Selfridge Military Air Museum. The next open house and air show will be June 6-7, 2020.

"The Selfridge 2020 Open House and Air Show is free and open to the public, creating an opportunity to bring in hundreds of thousands

of guests to see what we do here," open house and air show director Lt. Col. Brian Donnellon, said.

This family event will not only showcase aerial acts, but it will also highlight static aircraft displays and a kids' zone. There will also be food and drink vendors, a veterans' area and much more.

"Open houses and air shows give us an opportunity to share what your, 'Hometown Air Force,' does here," said Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, 127th Wing and Selfridge Air National Guard Base commander.

"We can showcase Selfridge as a cornerstone of Michigan communities and enhance local partnerships in the process."

In conjunction with the announcement, the community event included a ceremony to honor the top three winners of the official open house and air show coin design contest. Thirty design submissions were assessed by a judging committee comprised of 12 civic, community and military leaders from surrounding communities.

Third and second place designers were Charles Zucal and Mackenzie Johnson respectively. First-place winner, Xandraya Rodriguez, will have her design minted on the official Selfridge Base Community Council commemorative challenge coin.

For updates and to learn more about the Selfridge 2020 Open House and Air Show, like and follow the 127th Wing on Facebook, Twitter, or download the 127th Wing mobile app via your smart phone.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TERRY ATWELL

(Back row) 127th Wing Commander Brig. Gen. Rolf Mammen, Macomb Community President Dr. Jim Sawyer and Selfridge Base Community Council President Mark Zuccaro pose for a picture with (Front row) first-place air show coin design winner, Xandraya Rodriguez, third place winner, Charles Zucal, and second place winner, Mackenzie Johnson. Thirty design submissions were assessed by a judging committee comprised of 12 civic, community and military leaders from surrounding communities and Selfridge ANGB, of which only three designs were chosen for third, second and first-place. The winning design will serve as the official coin of the Selfridge 2020 Open House and Air Show.

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SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Presidents

Mark Zuccaro (Current)
Drema Isaac (Future)

The Selfridge Base Community Council's mission is to continue improving outstanding relationships between both the civilian and military-service communities centered at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

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Vice Wing Commander

Col. Stan Krasovic

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On the cover: Firefighters from the 127th Civil Engineering Squadron out of Selfridge Air National Guard Base participate in a simulated external power unit fire on board a KC-135 Stratotanker during a first responder drill, on Oct. 6, 2019. The Selfridge Fire Department routinely conducts real life scenarios to stay current with training requirements. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. David Kujawa)



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FOCUS ON GUARDSMEN

127WG opens unique Airmen resource center

By Russ Dyer

Contributing writer

With a ceremonial scissors snip, Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, Selfridge Air National Guard Base and 127th Wing Commander, cut a red ribbon on Nov. 2, 2019, that formally opened the newly designated, "Airman Wellness Center."

Formerly known as the "Base Chapel," the Airman Wellness Center's (AWC) function is to house a variety of wellness services for Wing personnel and their families, helping to keep the force ready in all facets of life.

Prior to the ribbon-cutting, Mammen touted the one-of-a-kind resource now available to Selfridge Airmen.

"Selfridge is the only National Guard location in the country with an available building that can be converted to this use," Mammen said. "We are so lucky to have it."

Mammen continued by saying that modification plans for the structure are now in phase one with two more to follow. Once completed, he said this vision is that the facility be informally known as "the Airmen's living room."

The 127th Wing's Airmen and Family Readiness Group, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and Director of Mental Health offices, are all currently operational on a full-time basis at the AWC. Eventually, legal help, personal counseling, family support, civilian job placement and religious counseling will all be available under the same roof.

Plans are also underway to complete an area where off-duty personnel can rest,



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. SAMARA TAYLOR

Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, 127th Wing commander, cuts the ribbon during the 127th Airmen Wellness Center (AWC) grand opening ceremony Nov. 2 at Selfridge Air National Guard Base. The AWC will house services such as briefings, training, mental health and counseling support, recreational events and family support events, among others.

recharge and socialize with fellow servicemembers in an informal atmosphere. More athletically-inclined visitors may opt for ping-pong games or corn hole matches.

Among the spectators gathered at the ribbon-cutting ceremony were approximately 50 young men and women who are awaiting further orders to report to basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. Known as the "Student Flight," the enlistees report for duty on monthly drill weekends and provided resources to acquaint them with military life.

Paulus Obey, the "go-to" man at the Wellness Center and, essentially the building manager, has been closely involved in the transition since day one. Officially, the 127th Wing Airman and Family Readiness Program

Manager, Obey is a retired Air Force master sergeant who has been at Selfridge since 2001. When the AWC was an operational chapel, Obey led a Protestant worship service for several years. In his free time, he is a pastor of a local church.

The largest open space in the AWC is where religious services were held for more than 50 years beginning in 1959, when the building was completed and began its chapel life. Plans are now being considered to use this area as a lecture hall or for showing training videos. But to this writer, this will always be the site where I was married several decades ago. Time moves on.

Mr. Russ Dyer is a retired Marine and former commanding officer of the Marine Air Reserve Training Detachment.

WORKPLACE OF CHOICE

Airmen find challenge in MIANG

By Tech. Sgt. Daniel Heaton

127th Wing Public Affairs

Airman 1st Class Jacqueline Pardee was looking for new challenges and new opportunities. Then, the Traverse City native took a look at the Michigan Air National Guard.

"I wanted to do something different. And I wanted to go back to school eventually," she said.

Today, she is an air crew survival equipment specialist, working for the 191st Operations Support Squadron at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, about 300 miles away, in the opposite corner of the state, from her hometown.

"I went to basic training and then to tech school for about three months. Now, I am working here at the base full-time for a while," as she gets her initial hands-on

training, she said.

Pardee and her fellow Airmen in the 191st OSS work to ensure that life rafts, radio beacons and other survival items needed by the pilots and boom operators in the 171st Air Refueling Squadron are ready to go. She also provides survival skills training to the air crews.

"It is a lot of variety," she said. "You're working in your own shop, but we're also working with the pilots, with the aircraft out on the flight line. I like having different things to do."

Senior Airman Kenneth Keith who also works as an air crew survival equipment specialist, echoed Pardee's comments.

"There's always something different to do in this shop," he said.

The 191st OSS supports KC-135 Stratotanker operations from a home station of Selfridge Air National Guard Base.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DAN HEATON

Airman 1st Class Jacqueline Pardee and Senior Airman Kenneth Keith review survival equipment used by KC-135 Stratotanker air crews while on duty at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Nov. 2. The Airmen are members of the 191st Operational Support Squadron, 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard.

READINESS

Home on the range

Latvian Joint Terminal Attack Controllers sharpen skills, relationships in Michigan

By 1st Lt. Andrew Layton
Michigan National Guard

“Joint Fires is complicated. You have to be flexible because there are no two controls that are similar – every time you’re stepping onto the range you know it’s going to be different.”

Capt. Rihards Zalitis, a Joint Terminal Attack Controller in the Latvian National Armed Forces, squints in the Autumn sun. He looks upward to where moments ago, an A-10 Thunderbolt II streaked barely 100 feet overhead, its 30-millimeter Gatling gun blasting targets with an eerie “BRRRT.”

“It gives you an excitement – for both sides – the pilot as well; your adrenaline levels rise because you know what you’re doing is your job that you’ve trained to do.”

Zalitis is in his element. More than 4,000 miles from his home, he knows the terrain of Grayling Aerial Gunnery Range – a 45,000-acre training facility run by the Michigan Air National Guard – by heart. This fall, his team of JTACs are back in Northern Michigan to rehearse the lethal symphony of close air support with A-10s and pilots from the Michigan ANG’s 107th Fighter Squadron.

Based at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, the 107th flies training sorties to Grayling almost daily, honing precision skills they employ on frequent combat deployments.

“There’s a cadence you’ve got to go through when you check in

with a JTAC on the radio,” says Capt. Daniel Kovarik, pilot of the A-10 coordinating with Zalitis. “You’re always going to have that little bit of adrenaline, but that’s also what opens up a risk of human error – the whole point of our training is to reduce that risk so it doesn’t happen when you’re in a combat situation.”

Kovarik describes the choreography of Joint Fires with an acuity earned over more than 120 combat sorties in the Middle East.

“First, we go over safety, rules of flight, and anything that’s going to be dangerous to the aircraft,” he says. “Then we go to aircraft check-in; he gives me a situation update, targets, [and other data] – and then we start prosecuting the attack.”

Kovarik knows the sequence from both vantage points: from 2000 to 2006, he served on active duty as a JTAC in the U.S. Air Force. After transferring to the Michigan Air National Guard, he was one of the initial instructors who worked with Latvian personnel as the Baltic nation began shaping its own JTAC program in the late 2000s. He was accepted to undergraduate pilot training in 2011.

“It’s a great perspective to have been there at the beginning, and then to see them come all the way up to where they are today, totally proficient,” says Kovarik. “They have their own instructors now and through the relationship we’ve built together, they’ve become a self-sustaining program.”



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. SCOTT THOMPSON

Joint Terminal Attack Controllers from the Latvian National Armed Forces conduct close air support training with A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft assigned to the 107th Fighter Squadron, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, at Grayling Aerial Gunnery Range in Waters, Mich., October 29, 2019. Michigan and Latvia have been linked under the U.S. National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program since 1993. The collaboration between JTACs in the Latvian National Armed Forces and the Michigan Air National Guard has been one of the most productive examples of bilateral defense cooperation in the entire SPP.

Latvian JTAC instructors now lead close air support qualification courses in Riga, which meet the annual Joint Fires core competency requirements and have been attended by fellow JTACs from Lithuania, Canada, Estonia, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, the U.K., and other European nations.

Though much has been achieved in twelve years of Michigan-Latvia JTAC cooperation – enabled by the U.S. National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program, which links the National Guard forces of a U.S. state with the National Armed Forces of a partner nation to build interoperability and cross-cultural relationships – participants on both sides say it is crucial to continue striving for increased readiness and proficiency together.

Zalitis explains that at Latvia’s primary training range, aircraft typically fly in from other countries, while in Michigan, the Selfridge A-10s are based only 30 minutes away. This, combined with the fact that Michigan is

home to the largest U.S. military airspace complex east of the Mississippi River, opens flexibly and time to craft more realistic combat scenarios with a quicker generation of sorties.

Kovarik agrees that training stateside with NATO allies is crucial preparation for the dynamic he faced – and will soon face again – in combat.

“It’s paramount because when you go to Afghanistan as an A-10 pilot, you will work with Latvian JTACs, you will work with Poles, the Romanians – you could be working with any of our NATO allies,” he says. “So it’s more realistic, and we keep the same process with every JTAC we talk to, whether they are American, Latvian, Polish, or any other nationality.”

Ironically, working together in this high-stakes, ultra-technical sphere of Joint Fires has proven that some of the best antidotes to the risk of human error are very human qualities like teamwork, empathy, and mutual respect.

“Working with the Latvians for more than 10 years now, I know

they have the same families back home and want the same freedoms we want – that’s why it’s a great state partnership that we’ve been able to forge,” says Kovarik. “Hopefully we never have to utilize what we train for, but if we do, we know we’re ready.”

Zalitis says those relationships are part of what has helped him find such a high degree of fulfillment in his work.

Overhead, the A-10s still circle, preparing for their next pass. They disappear into the broken cloud cover and then emerge again. The sun flashes against the lead ship’s canopy.

“For me, it is all about the exchange of experience because a JTAC is definitely the focal point of coordination – he has to have situational awareness about everything on the battlefield,” says Zalitis, a grin cracking his face.

“I started my service in the air force, but after three years I still felt myself young, and I wanted to run on the fields and do ‘cool’ stuff, so I became a JTAC.”

“This is what I was looking for. This is dynamic service.”

SEEN AROUND SELFRIDGE

YOUR HOMETOWN AIR FORCE AT WORK



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DAN HEATON

Tech. Sgt. David Shirley, weaponry maintenance technician, 127th Maintenance Squadron, assembled BDU-33 munitions at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Nov. 2, 2019. The BDU-33s are used as a training munition by the A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft operated at Selfridge. The small bomb is mostly inert, but carries a small charge that emits smoke when deployed, to help spot where it landed.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. DAVID KUJAWA

A 127th Maintenance Group Airman de-ices the wing of a KC-135 Stratotanker on the flightline at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Nov. 7. Snow removal from the flightline and deicing of aircraft are very important for maintaining the unit's aircraft and mission readiness.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN RYAN ZESKI

Senior Airman DiAngelo Dillon, 127th Force Support Squadron food service specialist, serves members of Team Selfridge at the dining facility at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Nov. 2, 2019. The 127th Wing typically enjoys a Thanksgiving-style meal during November drill.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MUNNAF JOARDER

Lt. Col. Bartley Ward, a pilot with the 107th Fighter Squadron, based here, takes off on a training mission on Nov. 7. During the mission, Ward surpassed his 3,000th flight hour in the A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft, surpassing the average career accumulation of between 1,500 and 2,000 flight hours. In October 2018, Ward was named one of the top-performing A-10 pilots in the Air Force after winning the Robert "Muck" Brown Trophy during Hawgsmoke 2018.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMEN RYAN ZESKI

Members of Team Selfridge participate in the third annual, "Running of the Hawgs," event at Selfridge Air National Guard Base Oct. 6. The race included civilians and servicemembers and consisted of either a 5K run or a mile-long walk on a measured course, on base.



Tech. Sgt. Adrian Wilson dumps load of gravel during a construction project at Selfridge Air National Guard Base Oct. 6. Wilson is a member of the 127th Civil Engineer Squadron. Air Force civil engineers possess a variety of construction skills, providing flexibility to the command to accomplish many different types of construction projects.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DAN HEATON

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