

Harford Chamber Hosts 41st Military Appreciation Luncheon

Harford County Chamber of Commerce celebrates the contributions of military, veterans, and Aberdeen Proving Ground to local community at Military Appreciation Luncheon event



Photograph courtesy of MidAtlantic Photographic LLC. Pictured from left to right: Angela Rose, President and CEO of the Harford County Chamber; Debi Williams, Incoming Chair of the Harford County Chamber and Vice President Commercial Banking for Howard Bank; Major General Randy Taylor, APG Senior Commander; and Mike MacPherson, President and CEO of Freedom Federal Credit Union.

Bel Air, MD - The Harford County Chamber of Commerce's 41st annual Military Appreciation Luncheon, sponsored by Freedom Federal Credit Union, was held at Richlin Catering and Events Center on May 17, 2018 to honor and celebrate the soldiers and families of Aberdeen Proving Ground and the partnership between the County and the installation.

The event featured guest speaker Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham, U.S. Army assistant chief of staff for installation management, remarks from APG Senior Commander Maj. Gen. Randy Taylor, various recognitions, a scholarship presentation and multiple awards.

The luncheon opened with a breathtaking rendition of the United States National Anthem sung by SSG Larita Fullwood, followed by a touching invocation delivered by Chaplin Michael King. The Chamber's Military Affairs

Committee co-chair, Sue Manning, Business Development Executive for Freedom Federal Credit Union, and committee member Karen Holt, Federal Installation Administrator for the Harford County Office of Economic Development were the emcees for the afternoon. The program incorporated recognition of APG interns, active military and veterans, including former Navy Seaman First Class William Kruse, a long-time luncheon attendee who served in World War II, and five Gold Star Mothers.

As the premier sponsor for the 41st annual Military Appreciation Luncheon, Freedom Federal Credit Union's President and CEO, Mike MacPherson had the opportunity to address the audience and welcome Maj. General Taylor to the podium. "It is Freedom Federal Credit Union's honor to provide support and recognition to our country's military heroes, including all our brave veterans and Gold Star Mothers, right here in our shared community", MacPherson stated regarding Freedom's participation in the event. Freedom Federal Credit Union has been the premier sponsor of this event for 4 years. Mr. MacPherson, noted that Freedom's philosophy of "people helping people" also drives their financial education initiatives for military families on APG and inspires them to sponsor and volunteer at other affiliated events, such as Retiree Appreciation Day, the Gas Mask Dash, Bike to Work Day, and the Organizational Day Picnic.

Guest speaker, Lt. Gen. Bingham acknowledged the strong partnerships between APG and the community, noting the support from the 400 people in attendance exemplifies the great support outside of the gates of APG. As part of her presentation, Lt. Gen. Bingham played a video called "Trending Threats: Driving the Next Evolution for Our Military Installations" focused on the reconsiderations of Army installations with the simple fact that [we] "must update concepts and the way we think about installations." Today's battle field looks much different than years past. "The Army is taking steps to ensure vulnerabilities are met head on and installations can withstand attacks from multiple domains."

The army's finest, representing Aberdeen Proving Ground commands, compete annually for the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and soldier of the quarter and year competitions. The competition recognizes soldiers who demonstrate commitment to the Army values, embody the Warrior Ethos, and represent the force of the future. Staff Sgt. Justin Johnson was named APG NCO of the Year and Spc. Kayla Rihel was named Soldier of the Year. Staff Sgt. Mark Chuisano was named NCO of the Quarter and Spc. Kevin Diamond the Soldier of the Quarter. Staff Sgt. Shaineeeka Downing, Sgt. Aisea Vave and Pfc. Austin Lewis were also recognized for their outstanding contributions to the APG community. The 2018 APG Family of the Year was awarded to the Conway Family – retired Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Conway, his wife, Melinda, and their son Jordan.

The 2018 recipient of the Veteran Scholarship was Joseph McFillin. Mr. McFillin served in the United States Marine Corps from 2014-2018, and was placed into the MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) of 1142 – Engineer Equipment Specialty Technician. Mr. McFillin's education goals are what he refers to as "a road map to his career path." He plans to attend Harford Community College to obtain his Associates of Engineering, before then attending University of Maryland Baltimore County for their BS/MA accelerated program for Mechanical Engineering. After he obtains his masters, McFillin plans to rejoin the workforce as a mechanical engineer and continue to take classes to one day obtain a PHD in engineering. This generous scholarship was made possible by the sponsorship of Aberdeen Proving Ground Federal Credit Union.

Each year, the Harford Chamber awards a volunteer who has demonstrated a significant level of commitment to the community. To the military and to the Chamber. This award is called the General John G. Appel Award, named after General Appel who was a strong advocate for Aberdeen Proving Ground, for our military and for Harford County. He served two terms on the Harford County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors, including serving as Chair. The 2018 Appel Award went to Barney Michel, President of the APG Discover Center for his devotion to the betterment of the northeastern Maryland region, including serving as a program manager for Army organizations at APG, then working for SAIC and JRAD as a contractor, countless volunteer hours to furthering education and workforce development growth, focused on creating a workforce that will support Army missions at APG now and in the years to come. Mr. Michel served as president of the Army Alliance, an advisor to Harford County Public Schools on STEM education, and as a board member of the Susquehanna Workforce Network, as

well as serving as president of the Board of the APG Centennial Celebration Association and the APG Discovery Center.

The 41st Military Appreciation Luncheon was made possible by the many sponsors of the event including Freedom Federal Credit Union, APG Federal Credit Union, Richardson's Flowers & Gifts, Women in Defense, Chesapeake Bank of Maryland, Battelle, Katz Abosch, Army Alliance, Comcast, Elegant Restoration, Harford Community College, Jarrettsville Federal Savings & Loan, Jones Junction Auto Group, MacKenzie Commercial Real Estate Service, LLC, Melynk & Wiseman, LLC, G General Harry Greene Chapter – AUSA Aberdeen, Navy Federal Credit Union, The Kelly Group, Town of Bel Air, University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health, Harford County Office of Community and Economic Development, Bravura, City of Havre de Grace, Lockheed Martin, Booz Allen Hamilton, APG Discovery Center, SURVICE Engineering Company, Sigmatech, Inc., and Safe Harbors Business Travel. The Harford County Chamber of Commerce is grateful for the overwhelming support from the Harford County business community.

About the Harford County Chamber of Commerce:

Since 1976, the Harford County Chamber of Commerce has worked continually as the recognized voice of business in Harford County to be the premier business advocate in the county, helping members connect and thrive to create a vibrant economy across all sectors, through member services and programs.

About Freedom Federal Credit Union:

Freedom Federal Credit Union is a community-chartered credit union, insured by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) with five branches in Harford County. Freedom provides consumer financial services to those who live, work, worship, attend school, volunteer, or have family in Harford County. Freedom also offers a full-line of banking services for all businesses, associations, and other organizations in the Harford County area. For more information, contact 800-440-4120 or visit freedomfcu.org.

###