

Heartland WARRIOR

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A man with short grey hair, wearing a purple and white striped button-down shirt and dark pants, is focused on working on a young tree in a nursery. He is using a pair of pruning shears to trim a branch. The tree has several red and orange ribbons tied around its trunk. In the background, there are other trees and a wooden lattice structure under a clear blue sky.

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This Air Force Reserve online magazine is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services, family, and friends of Grissom Air Reserve Base.

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

On the cover...

Cory Walters, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron environmental flight chief, shops for trees at a local nursery in Miami County, Ind., April 5. The selected trees will be planted at Grissom Air Reserve Base helping to promote the base's commitment to effective urban forest management.

Grissom's Airmen recognized during annual award banquet!

By Senior Airman Chris Massey
Public Affairs staff

Each year, time is set aside to recognize Grissom Airmen who embody the Air Force's core values to the fullest extent through their actions and commitment to duty.

The 434th Air Refueling Wing annual award winners for 2017 received their awards during a ceremony and banquet held at Grissom's base dining facility March 4.

The guest speaker for the evening was Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Pennington, Curtis E. LeMay Center for Doctrine Development and Education commander's mobilization assistant, who spoke of resiliency, service and teamwork.

"Sometimes life is not about individual wins, but team wins," said Pennington. "Learn to have a great role on the team, every role is important."

The 434th ARW Annual Award winners for 2017 were:

Civilian Non-Supervisor of the Year: Shawn McCabe, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron

Civilian Supervisor of the Year:

Mike Sampson, 434th Force Support Squadron

Recruiter of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Vincent Frasca, 434th Recruiting Squadron

Airman of the Year: Senior Airman Anthony Strzalka, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron

Non-commissioned Officer of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Kyle Bergin, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Senior Non-commissioned Officer of the Year: Senior Master Sgt. Adam Loos, 434th LRS

Company Grade officer of the Year: Capt. Jacob Hollingsworth, 434th Security Forces Squadron

Field Grade Officer of the Year: Maj. Joel Nickelson, 74th Air Refueling Squadron

"Nights like this are so important," said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. "For our Airmen, NCOs and civilians to be recognized for their outstanding dedication in front of their peers and leaders is tremendous.

"This is what Team Grissom is about, lifting each other up and celebrating successes," Shaw added.



U.S. Air Force graphic

Grissom firefighter trains with Marines

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

The Air Force Reserve prides itself on bringing together a vast network of Airmen with diverse experiences, and one Grissom firefighter went above and beyond to contribute a unique perspective.

Master Sgt. Christopher Bauchle, 434th Civil Engineering Squadron assistant fire chief, recently completed the Marine Staff NCO advanced course at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

“I wanted to see what the Marine Corps does better, worse or just differently from the Air Force,” said Bauchle. “This school was my first choice and I was fortunate enough to be one of four Air Force reservists to get it this year.”

Bauchle improved his chances by thoroughly researching the school beforehand and tailoring his application to the qualities which the school valued most.

“I knew the school was very big on physical training, so I talked about that in my application,” said Bauchle. “I also spoke about the Marine Corps’ planning process, and how I want to integrate ideas from that into our own processes.”

Bauchle expressed having some anxiety about having to play catch-up in the Marine course.

“When I went into it, I was imagining that I was going to be behind on the learning-curve simply

because I wasn’t familiar with Marine culture,” he said. “As it turns out, the way they operate isn’t terribly different from the Air Force.”

The course instructors made sure to keep instructions broad and understandable by members of all services and career fields, said Bauchle.

“When you take a step back and look at the big picture, the problems and challenges we face in the Air Force are usually the exact same issues they’re tackling in the Marine Corps,” he said. “All the things we don’t like to do, they don’t like to do either.”

Despite the commonalities, there were some distinct differences Bauchle noticed during his time with the Marine instructors, he said.

“There is so much pride in the Marine Corps; pride in their history, their heritage, the hardships they’ve shared and the fact that they’re usually the first ones in the fight,” said Bauchle. “People are proud to serve in the Air Force but in the Marine Corps, they’ve built this entire culture around it.

“If we could only learn one thing from the Marines, I’d like to see us be as proud of our own accomplishments as they are of theirs,” he added.

The experience also gave Bauchle a newfound appreciation for some of the opportunities the Air Force provides, he said.

“While I was there, there was a lot of talk among the Marine lead-



U.S. Air Force courtesy photo

Master Sgt. Christopher Bauchle, left, 434th Civil Engineering Squadron assistant fire chief, poses with an unnamed Marine and Airmen following graduation from the Marine Staff NCO advanced course at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina recently.

ers about how to encourage their troops to pursue personal education goals while also advancing their military careers,” said Bauchle. “We already have a system in place for that through the Community College of the Air Force.”

There are almost endless opportunities for education and career development with the Air Force, and Bauchle intends to continue taking advantage of them.

“I’ve already begun looking into other courses I could take, including some with NATO in Europe,” said Bauchle. “My next one will probably be an Air Force course though, because after training with Marines, I’d like to see what our own branch has to offer.”

Chief Master Sgt. Wesley Marion, 434th Air Refueling Wing command chief, encouraged Airmen to become involved with career development courses.

“There’s a ton of dif-

ferent courses out there, so I recommend Airmen find ones that interest them and that will be useful to them in some way,” said Marion. “For example, if you know you’re going to be deploying with a sister service in the coming year, you may consider finding a course with them to familiarize yourself.”

Marion explained that while these courses are not required, they are an invaluable asset in an Airman’s career.

“None of these courses are mandatory for promotion, but they can open up new opportunities for people,” Marion said. “Being accepted to and completing these courses reflects well on an Airman.

“Grissom is a fantastic base, but there are a lot of experiences you’ll never have if you don’t leave every once in a while,” he continued. “The experience you bring back with you is what makes us stronger as a unit.”

NMS students embrace 434th ARW mission

By Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota
Public Affairs staff

More than 40 eighth grade students and their staff from Kokomo Indiana's Northwestern Middle School went hands-on, indulging in Grissom's mission and culture during a tour of the base March 21.

The group started their tour at the 434th Operations Support Squadron before being shown around a KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft by crew chiefs, pilots and boom operators.

While at the 434th OSS Aircrew Flight Equipment section, students learned about lifesaving equipment aboard the KC-135s and the care and maintenance required to keep equipment functional.

"The kids really enjoyed trying the food, sitting in the rafts

and blowing up the life vests," said Rachele Temme, a teacher at Northwestern Middle School. "We really enjoyed how the [Airmen] that were employed by the base interacted with us; you could tell they like their jobs."

Following Temme's sentiment, Senior Master Sgt. Mike Pershing, 434th OSS AEF Superintendent, agreed that his Airmen enjoyed speaking about what they do for a variety of reasons.

"The Airmen here love their job, but they know that one day the future of this base depends on our ability to fill the ranks that fall under us," said Pershing. "These tours give them an opportunity to educate visitors on what we do and how what we do affects the mission, potentially saving lives if needed."

"The experience visitors receive allows them to make a

decision about the Air Force based on personal knowledge rather than from what they see on a TV screen or hear from other people," he added.

After their AFE tour, students split into three groups to see a KC-135 refueling tanker from a perspective unlike the view most see from outside the gate.

"It was a really good trip and great experience for students," said Temme. "They all seemed to enjoy having the various activities to be involved with while we were there."

Grissom offers tours to qualified groups on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month as part of a community outreach program.

Those interested in scheduling a tour should contact Public Affairs at (765) 688 – 3348.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

Northwestern Middle School students pose for a photo in front of a KC-135 Stratotanker at Grissom March 21.

MTI recruiters visit Grissom, recruit Airmen

By Senior Airman
Cali Elliott
Public Affairs staff

Recruiters from the 433rd Training Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, visited Grissom Jan. 6-7 to educate Airmen on opportunities and help lay the foundation of the Air Force's future.

Tech. Sgt. Robert Elliott and Tech. Sgt. Jack Lozano, 433rd TRS military training instructors, visited the base to educate and recruit traditional reservists in an effort to retain qualified Airmen interested in joining the MTI corps.

"We are looking for the best of the best," said Elliott. "We are looking for stellar NCO's that want to project their career. They

need to be willing to learn and think outside of the box."

Airmen qualified and accepted will be on an active-guard-reserve three-year tour or a 6 month traditional reservist TDY after completing a five-month technical school.

"Positions within the 433rd TRS include staff sergeant through master sergeant," said Elliott.

TR positions, being a special duty assignment, can return to their regular job after three years.

"We want traditional reservists to go back into their careers and take what they've learned (as an MTI) to their AFSC's," said Elliott.

"Being an MTI is a privilege," said Lozano.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Cali Elliott

Tech. Sgt. Robert Elliott, left, and Tech. Sgt. Jack Lozano, both 433rd Training Squadron military training instructors, pose for a photo at Grissom Jan. 6.

"It helps broaden your horizons as a non-commissioned officer and as a leader who can mentor others. It opens so many doors because as a reservist, you are volunteering your time, you want to be there and that does not go

unnoticed," Lozano added. "The amount of time and effort you put into the job will pay you back."

For more information regarding the MTI program, email the 433rd TRS at 433trs.recruiting@us.af.mil.

Grissom ARB named Tree City by Arbor Day Foundation

By Douglas Hays
Public Affairs staff

The old adage that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago is paying back in scenic dividends for this north central Indiana base.

Grissom was named as a 2017 Tree City USA location by the Arbor Day Foundation in honor of its commitment to effective urban forest management.

This is the 17th year Grissom has been selected for the recognition.

"Those of us who have been around for a while have seen what an incredible transition been made," said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander.

Twenty years ago the streets weren't as tree lined as they are now.

Grissom achieved the recognition by meeting the program's four requirements: a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

"Tree City USA communities see

the impact an urban forest has in a community first hand," said Dan Lambe, president of the Arbor Day Foundation.

Trees provide benefits to a community when properly planted and maintained. They help to improve the visual appeal of a neighborhood, increase property values, reduce home cooling costs, remove air pollutants, and provide wildlife habitat.

"As you drive down this beautiful base you can see the vision our civil engineers had in making this place special," Shaw said. "Each year it becomes more and more picturesque."

The state of trees and the appearance didn't just happen by chance.

"We used to concentrate on planting trees because we didn't have many, but now that we have enough trees, we focus on quality over quantity," said Cory Walters, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron environmental flight chief.

"Now, the focus is on using proper pruning techniques, protecting the trees from lawn mowers, mulching around trees, watering them, staking them, and if one does

get damaged, using the most widely accepted techniques so it can be saved down the line."

Even the mulch Grissom uses to maintain the trees and landscape is environmentally friendly, Walters said, adding that protecting the environment is not just the right thing to do, but it's critical to the mission.

"Without maintaining the environment, you can't do your training, especially when it comes to ground training," he said. "When you work, live and train in the environment, you have to protect it; if you don't keep it clean, what's going to keep you safe in it?"

But it's not just the commitment to the environment that Walters said he is so proud about.

"It's also an honor for the hard work we put in to keeping up the base," he said. "It's like a pat on the back that says everyone here takes pride in the installation and their work environment."

Grissom is the only military installation in the state recognized as Tree City USA!

Green Belt class brings innovation to Grissom

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

Grissom is making innovative strides in process improvement with the introduction of Green Belt training.

The 434th Air Refueling Wing held its first Green Belt class recently. The five-day course, taught by Maj. Melissa Ova, 434th ARW process manager, centers around teaching multiple ways to approach improving and streamlining the way people live and work.

“Process improvement can be applied to almost any activity,” said Ova. “In today’s situation of having to do more with less, process improvement is more important than ever before and Green Belt training is building Grissom’s foundation for improvement.”

Borrowed from East Asian martial arts, the green belt refers to entry-level practitioners of process improvement, she said. They are taught by

experienced black belts who are certified to teach process improvement.

“Until recently, Grissom didn’t have a certified instructor,” said Ova. “Now that we do, classes can be held right here on base.”

The goal of process improvement training is to make Grissom more efficient and effective, but anyone can also apply these principles to improving their lives outside of work, said Ova.

“The philosophy behind process improvement is squeezing the most value possible out of your time and effort,” she said. “A teaching tool we use a lot is talking about ways to organize your home to optimize your daily routine.”

“This actually gets a lot of people really excited to go home and try it right away,” Ova added.

The class covers multiple approaches to process improvement, including the widely-used “Six Sigma” methodology employed by many major companies.

“We also explore lean business processes and the theory of constraints,” said Ova. “We usually spend the first two days learning these theories and then we start going over the tools to implement them.”

One attendee of Grissom’s first Green Belt class was Juanita Withrow, 434th ARW drug demand reduction specialist.

“I saw the class being advertised and it caught my interest because I’m always looking for ways to better manage our drug testing program,” said Withrow. “I went to my commander to propose that I attend the class, and he told me he absolutely wanted me in there.”

Withrow expressed a number of ideas the class had given her for making her program more efficient, as well as ways she had already applied the theories.

“An area that’s really easy to improve but often gets overlooked is how much people are walking during their jobs,” she said. “One study showed that

a maintenance crew was walking a combined 30 miles a day to get the different tools they needed. Simply rearranging the shop cut that down to 10 miles a day.

“All that walking may be good for your waistline, but it reduces efficiency,” Withrow added.

Col. Larry Shaw, 434th ARW commander, voiced his approval of the training program and encouraged more Grissom personnel to become involved in future classes.

“The Green Belt program is exciting,” Shaw said. “We have such a diverse group of Airmen at Grissom and they all bring different experience levels and ideas to the table, so when we can take advantage of that experience to operate at peak levels I get excited. Let’s do this! I get excited about it!”

Upcoming class dates and will be sent out via email. For additional information, contact Ova at 688-2290.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

Maj. Melissa Ova, a certified Green Belt Instructor, poses for a group photo with her first Green Belt class at Grissom Feb. 1.

Grissom hosts annual Community Council dinner

By Capt. Abby Nelson
Public Affairs staff

The Grissom Community Council's general membership dinner was Feb. 15 at the Grissom dining facility.

The Grissom Community Council, is a non-profit organization that supports the men and women stationed at Grissom through donations to the family readiness group, and individual events like the annual awards banquet, and the military ball.

During the evening's festivities, GCC President Frank Faulkner recognized current and past Grissom wing commanders for their continued support as advocates for the council and Grissom as a whole.

"We're fortunate that we have wing commanders who support the GCC and remain active after they leave command," said Faulkner.

Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, gave council members and guests a brief presentation about who the 434th



U.S. Air Force photo by Capt. Abby Nelson

From the left Ret. Col. Tim Cox, Ret. Col. Tim Cahoon, Ret. Brig. Gen. Dean Despinoy, Col. Larry Shaw, current 434 Air Refueling Wing commander, Ret. Col. Doug Schwartz, and Ret. Col. Gary Beebe pose for a photo at Grissom Feb. 15.

ARW is, and what they do for the community. He personally thanked several GCC members for their continued support of Grissom and those stationed here.

"We couldn't do what we do here at Grissom without the continued support of the community and organizations like the Grissom Community Council," said Shaw.

"They help us take care our Airmen and their families, we truly appreciate everything they do."

The dinner was also an opportunity for GCC members and 434th ARW members to come together and connect, in a social setting.

Newly elected members to the GCC are Joan Lake, James Yates and Brian Reed.

R4R program provides leisure for Airmen and families

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

Whether you're a new Airman or a long-time local, Recharge for Resiliency has activities for everyone.

Grissom is seeking Airmen to get involved in Recharge for Resiliency, a recreational program designed to bolster morale and allow Airmen to socialize outside of the workplace environment.

"The goal is to get our people outdoors, as a group, doing activities like skiing, fishing or skydiving," said Tom Bellamy, 434th Force Support Squadron outdoor recreation special-

ist. "There are a lot of adrenaline-type activities, but we'll also do things that are more relaxing like a canoe trip."

Despite being a relatively new program, R4R has already found success at Grissom.

"When we started this back in 2013, we were trying to do about one trip a month," said Bellamy. "Now it's gotten so popular that we've doubled that to two trips per month.

"We get people from just about every shop on base, and many of them come back again and again," he added.

One such repeat attendee is Tech Sgt. William Gonzalez, 434th Civil Engineer Squad-

ron ordnance munitions mechanic.

"I've lost count of all the events I've done with R4R, but it's easily over 50," said Gonzalez. "I went to my first one back in 2013, and I've taken my whole family to dozens of them ever since."

R4R is a way to find fun activities for both himself and his children to do that are cheaper than they would otherwise be, and often completely free, he said. It's even more beneficial to new Airmen.

"It's perfect for them because it is both a way to get out and be active without spending much, and it helps them meet the people they'll be working with and make

new connections," said Gonzalez. "I genuinely believe that supervisors need to push the program more."

Having experienced R4R programs at other bases, Gonzalez was adamant that Grissom's program is the best he's ever seen.

"With a lot of bases out there, it's not a big deal or they don't really advertise it," he said. "Bellamy does an outstanding job with his program here, and it's amazing how much there is for people to do."

Bellamy strongly encouraged interested Airmen to visit the fitness center for more information, or call (765) 688-2000.

Zorn receives Gen. Lew Allen Jr., Trophy award

By Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

Returning from a deployment often brings feelings of excitement for Airmen when they see their friends and families. But for one Airman, he won something more.

Senior Master Sgt. Christopher Zorn, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, production superintendent, recently received the General Lew Allen, Jr., Trophy.

“Senior Master Sgt. Zorn is the key leader in the daily sortie production for the Wing’s primary flying mission as the production superintendent for the AMXS,” said Lt. Col. Dwight Meese, 434th Maintenance Group commander.

A humble recipient of the award, Zorn returned from a deployed to discover he had been not only nominated, but the recipient of the award.

“I’m thankful that I got this award and I was recognized,” he said. “But my work is from the work of others – crew chiefs, specialist and all the maintainers.

The annual award is named

after the 10th chief of staff of the Air Force, whose legacy was attention to detail and technical expertise and credits the accomplishments of base-level officers senior NCOs in their performance of aircraft, munitions or missile maintenance directly involved in aircraft sortie generation.

“When I was deployed to Turkey I was responsible for overseeing all the maintenance, ground operations, ground movement of the aircraft and scheduling inspection,” Zorn said.

Zorn said the best part about his job is when he’s faced with making on-the-spot decisions.

“I like a challenge,” he said. “I like being able to think ahead. “[In Turkey] we 14 airplanes but only 13 were flying because one was broken so I had to figure out the movement, movement and make everything work. Some days this job can get monotonous, but favorite part about this job is the spontaneous part; making a decision right now and making the right decision. If we don’t make the right decision, then a chain of events could start that puts you behind.”

According to Zorn, when he was deployed to Turkey, mission effectiveness rate was extremely high.

“We had a 99.2 percent mission effectiveness rating which meant we made 99.2 percent of our air refueling,” he added.

Zorn, who served on active duty from 1985 to 1989 as a crew chief before transitioning to the Air Force Reserve, has been an Air Reserve technician in the aircraft maintenance world since 1989. Although Zorn said he is grateful for the award, he doesn’t think he deserve it.

“I come in every morning and I go through the flying schedule, then I go through last night’s discrepancies and I set up the lineup,” Zorn said. “I brief the expeditors on what needs to get done for the day and they go out and they brief the mechanics and they go out and carry out the job. They’re the ones that do all the work. They’re the ones that make this happen day in and day out; not supervision. We just guide them and they do all the work. They’re the reason why we are the top air refueling wing in the Air Force.”



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen

Senior Master Sgt. Christopher Zorn, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, inspects a row of screws during an inspection of a 434th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker at Grissom Dec. 18.

Grissom welcomes new Honor Guard manager

By Staff Sgt. Jami Lancette
Public Affairs staff

With stoic expressions they move in unison. Their eyes are rock-solid, staring unwaveringly ahead, careful as they hold the American flag in the position of honor.

With precision, they pull the cloth taught until the red stripes are hidden beneath the blue and the white stars. Careful not to bend their wrist, their biceps slowly becomes parallel with the ground as their elbows and uncupped hands form a straight line, saluting the Colors.

For over 70 years, the Air Force Honor Guard has served as a representation of all Air Force service members – both past and present – to the American public and world.

Through the execution of historical Air Force ceremonies and coordinated moves rooted in a tradition of discipline and integrity, being a member of the U.S. Air Force Honor Guard requires exceeding the Air Force standards.

For one Grissom Airman, the honor of representing Grissom compelled her to take the role of Honor Guard program manager.

“I really like the idea of bringing people together for something that’s supportive for the wing,” said Staff Sgt. Janette Arnold, Honor Guard program manager.

Arnold, who had been with Grissom’s honor guard for three years, felt compelled to do something greater.

“I liked the integrity that Grissom’s Honor Guard brought and I felt like I could bring a lot to it as a leader,” said Arnold. “Throughout my years I have developed a lot of training and experience, and I feel prepared for the position,” she added.

As the new program manager, she envisions the positive impact that she plans to make going forward.

“I want to revamp the face of



Staff Sgt. Janette Arnold

the organization and take it to a whole new level,” said Arnold. “I want to use everything I’ve learned and put it toward what I feel is more productive as well as helping other people grow.”

Seeing the bigger picture, Arnold enjoys not only the challenge but also the selflessness.

“The respect that you develop from the job every time is a

reminder that you’re doing something greater than yourself, said Arnold. “It challenges you, and it’s something that’s definitely challenged me.

“It’s unquestionably something that’s made me see things differently,” said Arnold.

For questions regarding Grissom’s honor guard contact Arnold at 765-688-3937.

SMSgt Billing receives AFRC Lance P. Sijan award

By Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

When the award was first presented in 1981, it was named in honor of the first U.S. Air Force Academy graduate to receive the Medal of Honor – Capt. Lance P. Sijan.

Sijan was shot down over Vietnam Nov. 9, 1967, and evaded capture for 45 days despite enduring serious injuries. He later died as a POW in Vietnam and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism. Today, the Lance P. Sijan award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership abilities across all Air Force Specialty Codes.

Senior Master Sgt. James Billing, 434th Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, recently received the Lance P. Sijan award for all of Air Force Reserve Command for his leadership excellence from June 2016 to June 2017.

“Senior Master Sgt. Billing’s position as the Assistant Superintendent for the 434th Maintenance Squadron requires a high



U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen

Senior Master Sgt. James Billing, 434th Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, coordinates maintenance during an isochronal inspection at Grissom Dec. 15.

degree of maintenance discipline, teamwork, leadership and skill all of which he possess in spades,” said Maj. Nicole Fink, 434th Maintenance Squadron commander. His sound decision making and stellar work ethic made him the ideal nominee for



Senior Master Sgt. James Billing, 434th Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, performs a visual inspection on an auxiliary power unit inside a KC-135R Stratotanker at Grissom Dec. 15.

the Lance P. Sijan award.”

Billing was notified he received the Sijan award during a deployment to Turkey.

“It’s an honor to be nominated for it and to win for all of Air Force Reserve Command,” Billing said. “It just shows the great people that we have and are working with. Any leadership award comes down to the people that work for you – that do the job for you. They’re the ones that make my job easier. And our maintenance guys are outstanding; they do a great job and our planes are known to outdo active-duty and the Reserve for how well they fly and how they look. That all comes down to our maintenance guys.”

During the period which the award covers, Billing filled the role of multiple positions.

“When I was deployed to Turkey, I was the lead production superintendent there, covering all flightline maintenance,” Billing said. “We were able to set up Incirlik from bare bones; there was nothing there to support tankers; and we were able to fly missions within 24 hours. Then, here [at Grissom] I filled in for Chief Cassidy as the superintendent while he was deployed and maintained the day-to-day operations. In Chief Cassidy’s absence, I oversaw 10 maintenance back shops, coordinated with the flightline to make sure all planes flew and maintenance was done.”

Although Billing said he is unsure why he was nominated for the award, others disagree.

“Senior Master Sgt. Billing is a consummate professional who is very deserving of this award,” said Lt. Col. Dwight Meese, 434th Maintenance Group commander. “Senior Master Sgt. Billing important in his management of the MXS Periodic Inspection (PE) process, ensuring inspections are completed in a safe and timely manner so that the aircraft can be put back in the flying rotation with minimal downtime.”