



JAXSTRONG

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- REACHING OUT TO SOUTH FLORIDA COMMUNITIES
  - REGULATORY ACTS TO PROTECT COWBONE MARSH
  - EVENTS COMMEMORATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH
- ...AND MORE



# JAXSTRONG

OUR WORK • OUR PEOPLE • OUR DISTRICT *jacksonville*

MARCH 2013 | Volume 5 Issue 2



# COMMANDER'S CORNER

## MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

**MENTORING: YOU GET MORE THAN YOU GIVE**  
*"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." – Benjamin Franklin*

Last month's issue of JaxStrong included features about Tim Brown and Viktoria Bogina, two of our bright, young engineers. Both are involved in giving back to their communities by mentoring young students for degrees and careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields of study. As a district, we too mentor every year, through our Engineering Career Day, featured in this month's issue.

According to Huffington Post, a new survey released by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) says degrees in STEM earn the highest starting salaries when compared to their peers in the liberal arts and, increasingly, business majors.

Specifically, engineers saw a healthy year-over-year increase of 3.9 percent to their average starting salaries from 2011 to 2012. Aerospace engineering majors saw the largest increase -- 8.3 percent for \$64,000 per year. NACE surveyed salaries of 2012 college graduates in more than 90 fields, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau and Job Search Intelligence, a compensation measurement company.

Good news. Interest in engineering has increased in recent years, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in the combined fields of engineering and engineering technologies rose eight percent between 2000 and 2005, and then rose an additional 12 percent between 2005 and 2010.

Alberto Gonzalez knows the value of mentoring. He was instrumental in Jacksonville District's partnering with Englewood High School for three years to introduce students, especially minority students, to potential STEM careers. He said STEM originated in Los Angeles in 1989 to identify and honor the contributions of outstanding Hispanic Americans in these fields. Since 2001, Viva Technology, its national education program, has expanded programming to minority populations in underserved communities. Alberto went to the school board and met with some of the directors and they were eager to partner with the Corps to bring a day of STEM activities to Englewood.

What he organized was much like our Engineering Career Day, but instead of students coming to us, we brought the event to their school. He believes the challenge and reward is to ignite the kids in the inner city schools who aren't normally exposed to STEM and many times do not have role models who have been to college. They organized the students into teams of 10 with a captain and a Corps representative on each team, and then began to solve engineering problems.

Just sharing your story with a young person is sometimes all the push they need to focus on a STEM career. Even if we only grab the interest of a few students, we are successful. It's about planting a seed early enough in the process to show them STEM is a viable option for them. He has proposed a formal partnership between the school and the Corps that is currently awaiting approval.

I encourage all of you to follow the examples set by Viktoria, Tim and Alberto. I especially encourage you to mentor young people in STEM. Getting involved and preparing students in your communities for a challenging future with new opportunities, whether in STEM or not, is one of the most rewarding things you will ever do. You truly get more out of it than you put into it.

A quote from a wise man of the past began this column. I'm concluding it with a quote from a contemporary artist:

*"In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn." – Phil Collins*

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Alan M. Dodd  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
District Commander

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*JaxStrong is a monthly electronic publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District providing information about the people, activities and projects of the district. JaxStrong is distributed in accordance with Army Regulation 360-1. Questions about, or submissions to, JaxStrong should be directed to the Corporate Communications Office. The editor can be contacted by telephone at 904-232-1667 or by email to JaxStrongEditor@usace.army.mil. Content in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.*

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## ON THE COVER

*Peter House, of the Thunder Buddies from Bishop Kenny High School prepares the bridge he made with teammates Stephen Baltz, Michael Barr and Zach McNulty to be tested by the weight of sand. The Thunder Buddies were overall winners for Engineering Career Day 2013. STORY ON PAGE 3. (PHOTO BY TY ERICKSON)*



# Engineering Career Day engages students and promotes STEM careers

BY JEAN PAVLOV



Judges observe the strength testing of the surprise projects, which were given to the students the day of the event. They were asked to construct a bunker for a toy soldier that would withstand 100 pounds without collapsing. Members of Fletcher High School Team 1 (left to right), Thom Prescott, Fabio Fasanelli and Chris Duong watch as Victor Wilhelm, originator of the challenge, places weights on their bunker to test its maximum strength. (PHOTO BY TY ERICKSON)

More than 120 high school students, parents and teachers from nine northeast Florida schools attended the 10th annual Engineering Career Day event and project competition Friday, Feb. 22. The day-long event was co-sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District and the Society of American Engineers (SAME) Jacksonville Post.

"Welcome...It's truly an honor to see so many people attend this event today to learn about engineering and the tremendous contribution engineers make to our society and nation," said Col. Alan Dodd, district commander.

"This day also helps us to support the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Coalition program for teachers and students. STEM represents all sectors of the technological workforce – from knowledge workers, to educators, to scientists, engineers and technicians," said Dodd.

STEM is a national and regional effort to better prepare the workforce of tomorrow by encouraging today's students to engage in studies, events and careers involving science, technology, engineering and math.

The Engineering Career Day event invites student teams to compete in building and entering a take home project, completing a surprise project assigned the day of the event and a trivia challenge. Team 2 from Bishop Kenny, Thunder Buddies, was the overall winner of the competition.

The 2013 take home project was from the United States Military Academy, the 12th Annual West Point Bridge Design Contest. The purpose of the Internet-based competition is to provide middle and high school students with an engaging introduction to engineering. Students were required to build a bridge using a 16-ounce box of spaghetti and five hot glue sticks, which would then be judged based upon the weight the bridge would hold before collapsing.

According to the judges, the winning team's arch bridge had an "extremely impressive" 47.6 to 1 strength-to-weight ratio. The bridge, which weighed 2.64 ounces, held 7.86 pounds before catastrophic

failure. It also took first place in the aesthetics judging. Members of the Thunder Buddies were Peter House, Stephen Baltz, Michael Barr and Zach McNulty. They unanimously attributed their success to their physics teacher, Vicki Schmitt.

Yulee High School's all-girl Team 2, The Plastics, included Savannah Shelton, Rebecca Wright and Chelsea Decowski. Their bridge was unique, as they had meticulously put together every single piece of spaghetti to look like tiny little boards on a bridge, all precisely and neatly cut.

"Our bridge withheld 22.7 pounds of sand," said Shelton. "That's the most any of the groups has held so far!" The Plastics' celebration was short-lived, as Providence High shot past them with a 23.36-pound win, placing second in the category and bumping The Plastics to third place.

Lauren Borocharner, chief of the Engineering Division and a former bridge engineer, said this year's take home project was close to her heart. She was most impressed with the overwhelming response of the local schools.

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 5)



Savannah Shelton (left) and Rebecca Wright of Yulee High School's all-girl team, The Plastics, check over their bridge after placing third in the Take Home Project part of the Engineering Career Day competition. (PHOTO BY TY ERICKSON)

# The relationship between the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

BY ERICA ROBBINS

*Second in a series of four stories about the history of the Antilles Office*



Old San Juan, the oldest settlement in Puerto Rico, is located on a small, narrow island that is united to the mainland of Puerto Rico by the three bridges. (USACE PHOTO).

On Facebook, the relationship status between the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin islands would probably read: "It's Complicated."

The first of this series of four stories about the history of Jacksonville District's Antilles Office described the location of the archipelago of islands that includes Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This installment will look at how Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are related to the United States.

Puerto Rico was claimed for Spain by Christopher Columbus in 1493. By 1898, after 400 years of colonial rule, the indigenous Taíno population was nearly exterminated and African slaves were introduced. Puerto Rico was ceded to the U.S. by the Treaty of Paris at the end of the Spanish-American War. Puerto Rico is not a state, but rather a U.S. territory with commonwealth status. Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District's Antilles Office, San Juan, Puerto Rico. (PHOTO BY CAPT. J.C. CORDON)

The U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) were formerly the Danish West Indies. They were sold to the United States by Denmark in the Treaty of the Danish West Indies of 1916. Now an organized, unincorporated United States territory, the islands are considered an insular area, which is a U.S. territory that is not related to any of the 50 U.S. states or the District of Columbia. They are called "insular" because they were once administered by the War Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs, now the Office of Insular Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

Both Puerto Rico and the USVI are unincorporated territories of the United States, and as such, U.S. citizens are free to travel there without a passport, just as they may travel freely between states and other territories without a passport.

Products manufactured in Puerto Rico are considered to be "Made in the USA." In both the USVI and Puerto Rico, most federal taxes are not levied and no federal income tax is collected from island residents, except for federal employees.

Puerto Ricans and residents of the USVI are U.S. citizens and they may vote in Democratic and Republican Party presidential primary elections. Under the U.S. Constitution, as residents of unincorporated territories rather than states, they do not vote in general elections for the U.S. president and vice president unless they reside in one of the fifty states. Though they cannot vote for president, the current chief of state is President Barack Obama, but the head of government is the governor.

Currently, more than 10,000 active duty military personnel from Puerto Rico serve in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and since 1917, more than 200,000 have served in every conflict since World War I.

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands each elect a delegate to Congress from their at-large congressional district. However, the elected delegate, while able to vote in committee, cannot participate in floor votes.

The relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico has been a matter of fierce internal debate in Puerto Rico for many years. Of the two major groups, one favors the continuance of commonwealth status,

**THE RELATIONSHIP** (continued from PAGE 4)

while the other favors statehood, centering on the right to vote and the potential for increased funding from Washington, D.C. A third, smaller group supports independence for Puerto Rico. When the issue was put to a public vote in 1967, 1993 and 1998, Puerto Ricans chose not to alter the existing relationship with the United States.

In 2012, there was a shift in popular opinion, and nearly 54 percent of Puerto Ricans voted for a change in the U.S. commonwealth's relationship with the United States. They approved a non-binding referendum that would make the island the 51st state and would give them "rights, benefits and responsibilities equal to those enjoyed by all other citizens of the states of the union." Though President Obama promised to uphold their vote in the case of a clear majority, the measure requires final approval from Congress. However, the District of Columbia, or Washington, D.C. has long sought statehood but has yet to win it.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Antilles Office administers construction projects throughout the island of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. Other key missions include flood control, navigation, support to the military and others, disaster response and recovery, environmental restoration, real estate and regulatory missions for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Antilles Area Office is located in San Juan, and has three resident offices: the North Puerto Rico Resident Office and Support for Others Resident Office, co-located in San Juan on the northern part of the island, and the South Puerto Rico Resident Office in Ponce, on the southern end of the island. The workforce of 53 employees includes engineers, construction inspectors, planners and economists, biologists and environmental scientists, attorneys, geologists and real estate, safety and administrative personnel.

Defense of Puerto Rico is the responsibility of the U.S. The United States Northern Command provides military support for the civil government in the U.S., and protects the territories (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and national interests of the United States within the contiguous United States, Alaska, Canada and Mexico, as well as the air, land and sea approaches to these areas. Mona Passage, between the islands of Mona and Puerto Rico, is a key shipping lane to the Panama Canal, making Puerto Rico a strategic location for the U.S. ♦

*Coming in next month's issue: The history of the Antilles Office*

**DID YOU KNOW...**

- In Puerto Rico, Spanish and English are the official languages, and both are taught in schools. Most Puerto Ricans speak English.
- The world's largest single-dish radio telescope, 1,000 feet in diameter and spanning 20 acres, is located in Arecibo. It is the only radio telescope that can accurately predict when and where an asteroid might collide with Earth.
- El Yunque is the only tropical rainforest in the U.S. national forest system.
- More than 70 percent of the rum sold in the U.S. comes from Puerto Rico.
- Puerto Rico is Spanish for "rich port," and San Juan is considered to be one of the biggest and best natural harbors in the Caribbean. Puerto Rico is known to residents as Isla del Encanto, or "Island of Enchantment."
- More than 3.9 million people inhabit the island of Puerto Rico, making it one of the most densely populated islands in the world.

**ENGINEERING CAREER** (continued from PAGE 3)



The Thunder Buddies from Bishop Kenny High School celebrate after they are named overall winners of the Engineering Career Day competition. (Left to right) Teacher Vicki Schmitt with team members Peter House, Stephen Baltz, Michael Barr and Zach McNulty accepting the James L. Garland trophy from Col. Alan Dodd, district commander. (PHOTO BY CHRISTINA SWANSON)

"We had more schools wanting to participate than we could accept," she said. "So definitely it's getting more and more popular each year."

Eric Bush, chief of the Planning and Policy Division, was the guest speaker for the event. He spoke about the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Victor Wilhelm developed this year's surprise project. He distributed to the students zip-lock packages of materials to build a bunker for a toy soldier, which would have to be designed to hold up to 100 pounds without collapsing on the soldier.

"As President Barack Obama said, 'Today, more than ever before, science holds the key to our survival as a planet and our security and prosperity as a nation. It's time we once again put science at the top of our agenda and work to restore America's place as the world leader in science and technology,'" said Dodd. ♦

**OVERALL WINNERS**

- 1ST PLACE:** Bishop Kenny (TEAM 2)
- 2ND PLACE:** Providence High (TEAM 1)
- 3RD PLACE:** Christ's Church Academy (TEAM 1)

**TAKEHOME PROJECT**

- 1ST PLACE:** Bishop Kenny (TEAM 2)
- 2ND PLACE:** Providence High (TEAM 1)
- 3RD PLACE:** Yulee High (TEAM 2)

**SURPRISE PROJECT**

- 1ST PLACE:** Christ's Church Academy (TEAM 1)
- 2ND PLACE:** Bishop Kenny (TEAM 2)
- 3RD PLACE:** Fernandina Beach High School (TEAM 2)

# Cowbone Marsh to be protected through Regulatory Division action

BY NANCY J. STICHT



After inspecting the channel at Cowbone Marsh, Regulatory Division issued a cease and desist order, requiring the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to stop sidecasting dredged material into the channel. (PHOTO BY BY BRIAN CORNWELL)

Located within central Glades County, Fla., eight miles upstream of the mouth of Fisheating Creek at the western shore of Lake Okeechobee, lies Cowbone Marsh, an approximately 5,500-acre freshwater marsh system. Fisheating Creek, the only remaining free-flowing waterway feeding into the lake, flows through Cowbone Marsh. Most of the surrounding land is either publicly owned or under conservation easements that restrict development, making it one of the most valuable aquatic and wildlife resource areas in the country.

Lykes Brothers, a company that owned most of the land in Glades County, acquired the land around Fisheating Creek in the early 1900s.



A view of the path cut through overgrown vegetation on Fisheating Creek by mechanical earth-moving machinery. Because the dredged material was sidecast into the waterway, it was determined to be a violation of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which prohibits dredge and fill activities in navigable waterways. (PHOTO FROM FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WEBSITE)

For years, the company allowed public access to Fisheating Creek and the surrounding land, which included a campground. In the 1980s, Lykes Brothers closed public access to its land along the creek and obstructed access to the creek by boats.

By 1989, a non-profit organization, Save Our Creeks, and others challenged the Lykes Brothers ability to restrict public access. At the heart of the matter was whether or not Fisheating Creek was considered a navigable waterway, in which case it was considered a water of the state of Florida. A landmark 1998 state court decision ruled the stream navigable and Lykes Brothers agreed to a settlement.

As part of the settlement, the state purchased approximately 18,000 acres along the stream, which became the Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area. The state also bought a conservation easement on more than 41,000 acres of Lykes Brothers land and agreed to maintain a navigation channel in Fisheating Creek from Lake Okeechobee to the U. S. Route 27 bridge at Palmdale.

The state of Florida planned to establish Fisheating Creek as a high water channel, meaning that during the wet season, Cowbone Marsh would be filled with water. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District met with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) staff to explain that under the Clean Water Act, the Corps regulates the discharge of fill in waters of the United States, including many wetlands and, specifically, Cowbone Marsh.

Throughout a period of more than 50 years, the Fisheating Creek channel within Cowbone Marsh had filled in with vegetation. After the FWC acquired the property, they hired a contractor to spray and then cut through the vegetation with a mechanical earth-moving machine known as a "cookie-cutter." This created a large navigational channel resulting in increased water flow out of Cowbone Marsh, draining

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 7)

**COWBONE MARSH** (continued from PAGE 6)



Wood storks fly over Cowbone Marsh in central Glades County, Fla., one of the most valuable aquatic and wildlife resource areas in the country. (PHOTO BY BRIAN CORNWELL)

much of its 5,500 acres. The dredged material was sidcast into the marsh. Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, such discharges are regulated by the Corps. In July 2010, before the work was completed, Jacksonville District's Regulatory Division issued a cease and desist order and referred the matter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The EPA ordered interim corrective action and in an attempt to repair the damage, the state chose check dams and weirs to keep the creek open to navigation; however, this was soon deemed ineffective in retaining water in the marsh even during the dry season, and efforts redoubled to determine the permanent solution to restoring the marsh. The FWC then proposed to refill the navigation channel, using clean sand as fill. Nearly two miles of channel needed to be filled. But how would the fill material get to this remote area? Options included helicopter transport, piping pumped material up Fisheating Creek from a local mine, trucking material to the local FWC office and pumping it from there or trucking it into the site.

The FWC chose to borrow the sand from a suitable nearby area and truck it to the channel. To access the channel, they proposed to construct a unique and innovative floating mat roadway across the marsh. The mats will reduce the impacts of truck traffic and will be removed once the channel restoration work is complete. The state is preparing to restore the site during a limited, five-month environmental window, between November and April.

"This area is an incredible resource," said Theresa Hudson, chief of Regulatory Division's enforcement section. "Fisheating Creek is the only free-flowing tributary into Lake Okeechobee and represents nine percent of watershed to the lake. Cowbone Marsh is incredibly important to water quality, as it is a filter marsh for everything upstream – the last big filter on the way to Okeechobee."

Because Cowbone Marsh is a peat marsh, explained Hudson, it responds like a sponge. Without water, the soil dries out and collapses, which reduces its capacity to store fresh water for human and wildlife use. During the dry season, it can then be susceptible to burning and it will dehydrate without the restoration.

Cynthia Ovdenk, project manager, coordinated the review and ensured that all federal laws were followed.

"Decreased water levels contribute to decreased numbers of beneficial insects and an unproductive wildlife food chain," explained Ovdenk. "Cowbone Marsh is an excellent wildlife habitat. Wading birds of all types - ibis, herons, egrets, wood storks, roseate spoonbills - as well as hawks, osprey, and owls are common. Several bald eagle nests are located in the area. Warblers are abundant during fall and spring migrations. River otters are common, and alligators are ubiquitous. One American crocodile was recently confirmed in the area."

Cowbone Marsh has been an important staging area for swallow-tailed kites before their migration to South America in August. In April and May, they nest and raise their young along Fisheating Creek. The communal roosting area of Cowbone Marsh may at times be used by half of the U.S. population of swallow-tailed kites. The federally endangered Audubon's crested caracara and Florida sandhill cranes may be seen on the prairies, depression marshes and on the adjacent conservation easement land.

In 1973, working for the World Wildlife Fund, Roy McBride and his hounds treed an aged Florida panther female nearby, confirming that panthers still existed in Florida. At the time, the Florida panther was among the most endangered animals in the world. Since then, several young males have been documented dispersing from the core population area to the south through Fisheating Creek. The area may become even more important to the Florida panther as its population continues to expand.

The area is also an important cultural resource to the Seminole Tribe of Florida. It holds historic properties, including mounds, and was traversed by the U.S. Army during the second Seminole War.

"With wildlife, cultural resources and clean water issues, this was a complex process that required collaboration and the cooperation of all agencies," said Ovdenk. "With the efforts of the EPA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we successfully reduced the time to reach a permit decision down to one month. This is obviously a resource that many care about and want to help preserve." ♦



An alligator makes his way down Fisheating Creek to Cowbone Marsh, home to a variety of species. (PHOTO BY BRIAN CORNWELL)

## Reaching out in south Florida BY ERICA ROBBINS



When students from the Hobe Sound Early Learning Center visited the St. Lucie Lock and playground, volunteers Richard Wagner and Wayne Quint invited them to experience the interactive exhibits at the visitor center and presented a water safety program, including a showing of the Bobber the Water Safety Dog cartoon. (PHOTO BY ST. LUCIE LOCK VOLUNTEER JOANNE WAGNER)

Reaching out to the communities we serve, to engage them by providing information as well as seeking their input on our projects and processes, is a basic tenet of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District.

From formal meetings about the Central Everglades Planning Project to participating in community-based events, the Jacksonville District team is continuously engaged in a multitude of public interactions in south Florida.

Lt. Col. Thomas Greco, deputy district commander for south Florida, recently spoke about water releases from Lake Okeechobee with a group of about 100 marine and biological science students at the Jensen Beach High School. The invitation came from marine science teacher Crystal Lucas, who wanted to educate herself and her students about "the other side of the story." Her goal was to get information directly from the source and to provide some balance to the messages in the local media. Jensen Beach is close to Stuart in Martin County, where water releases from Lake Okeechobee and their effect on the

St. Lucie estuary and the Indian River Lagoon are frequent features in the local news.

After a brief introduction, Greco began the presentation began with this question: "What do you know about the Corps and what we do?"

The first answer out of the gate? "You dump water."

Greco, who was an instructor at West Point earlier in his career, was intent on clearing up misconceptions and providing a better understanding of the Corps as a whole. He provided a highly interactive presentation about the complexities of water management and Corps missions, prompting students to provide answers and their own solutions to some of the challenges that the Corps faces.

"It's very important that we maintain an open dialogue with the people we serve," said Greco. "In south Florida a critical component to this dialogue is helping others understand how decisions to release water are rooted in the complexities of an immense and unique ecosystem that has changed dramatically over the past century. The Corps has taken equally dramatic steps towards restoring this ecosystem – sharing that part of the story with students and others is especially important."

Another effective way to continue to build relationships with students and families is to participate in established annual events that draw large crowds, such as the 14th Annual Everglades Day Festival at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. This year's theme was, "Healthy Everglades, Healthy People" and the Corps had the opportunity to provide information on its missions, including Everglades restoration and water safety to more than 4,300 attendees of all ages. Corps mascots Okee the Osprey and Bobber the Water Safety Dog were also on hand, as was Freddy the Alligator, mascot of the South Florida Water Management District, the local sponsor for many of the Everglades restoration projects.

Sometimes the Corps goes to the people, and sometimes the people come to the Corps. When they do, Corps staff and volunteers do their best to make the most of the experience. When students from the Hobe Sound Early Learning Center visited the St. Lucie Lock and playground,



Everglades Day at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge brings many families and children like Sara Green to the Corps booth, where they spin the "Wayne Drop" wheel and learn about the Everglades and water safety. (PHOTO BY ERICA ROBBINS)



# Jacksonville mayor celebrates Black History Month with Corps employees

BY ANNIE CHAMBERS



"Black history means accountability, responsibility and opportunity. It means that we have the ability to work together to fully empower people and believe that they too could live the American dream," said Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown when he spoke at Jacksonville District's Black History month closing ceremony. (PHOTO BY CHRISTINA SWANSON)

Jacksonville District wrapped up its 2013 Black History Month events with a visit from Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown Feb. 27.

The Raines High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) color guard participated in the event. During his first 30 days in office, Brown had fought to save all of JROTC in the city's public high schools.

Brown, the first African American mayor in Jacksonville, took office July 1, 2011 and has made military affairs a priority. His office has received \$1 million in grant funding and a \$1 million commitment from the Jacksonville Jaguars for military affairs. In addition, his Jobs for Veterans program has more than 100 participating companies.

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History marks two important historical anniversaries in 2013. President Abraham

Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation Jan. 1, 1863, effectively ending slavery in the United States. A century later, at the 1963 March on Washington, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech as hundreds of thousands marched for civil rights and equality.

Brown served on the National Board of Directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and got to know Coretta Scott King. He invited members of the King family to Jacksonville to talk about civil rights and what it means to celebrate King's legacy.

"Black history is our history, everyone's history," said Brown. "No matter who you are or where you live it's very significant. It affects us all."

Brown also served as a senior member of the Clinton administration and served with the Bush-Clinton Katrina Interfaith Fund, which distributed more than \$20 million to rebuild houses of worship on the Gulf Coast.

"In Jacksonville we're very fortunate to have deep history," said Brown. Mary Singleton was the first African American city council member, elected in 1967 by a margin of 4,000 votes. A. Phillip Randolph, along with other civil rights leaders, rallied to encourage President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign the Fair Employment Act in 1941.

"Black history means accountability, responsibility and opportunity. It means that we have the ability to work together to fully empower people and believe that they too could live the American dream by getting a good education, by focusing on what they can do to be successful," said Brown. "We must examine our past to appreciate the value of our future."

Brown reminded the audience that many people have paid a dear price for us to enjoy our freedom, and he encouraged Corps employees to reach back and help others by becoming mentors. He thanked the Corps for its leadership and congratulated Tim Brown on his award as Black Engineer of the Year.

Two Florida State College students, Jazmyne Jones and Alexis Lewis, performed a monologue titled, "Equality to Come, Equality to Be." ♦



Col. Alan Dodd (right), district commander, presented a plaque to Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown to thank him for his participation in the Black History Month closing ceremony Feb. 27. Brown is the first African American mayor of Jacksonville, and has made military affairs a priority for his administration. (PHOTO BY CHRISTINA SWANSON)

## REACHING OUT (continued from PAGE 8)



Both families and fierce creatures visited the Corps booth and learned about the Everglades and water safety at the Everglades Day event at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. (PHOTO BY ERICA ROBBINS)

volunteers Richard Wagner and Wayne Quint invited them to experience the interactive exhibits at the visitor center and presented a water safety program including a showing of the Bobber the Water Safety Dog cartoon. Park ranger Paula Bratschi said, "It was quick-thinking by volunteer Richard Wagner that made their visit into a learning experience on many levels. In addition, we plan to make this an annual event for the group."

The Corps also makes an effort to connect with people in the places that are part of their everyday lives. In Clewiston, more than 850 Walmart shoppers and bass fishing enthusiasts spoke with park rangers who were on hand to promote Corps missions, including water safety, during the two-day Walmart FLW Expo for the EverStart pro series bass tournament in Clewiston. Walmart shoppers and crowds that came to watch the competitors weigh in their catch from Lake Okeechobee stopped by the Corps booth and the mobile outreach trailer. The trailer is a great way to learn about Lake Okeechobee and the Okeechobee Waterway. The displays and take-away information featured native wildlife, recreational opportunities, water safety, invasive species, navigation, a timeline of the history of the waterway and Jacksonville District.

"Park rangers had so many visitors at the booth that they were able to give away two cases of coloring books with tips from Bobber the Water Safety Dog," said Rick Pelzl, supervisory park ranger. "It's a great way to meet with the community and get our important water safety messages out. I would support this event again."

Whether it's a school, a visitor center, a local event or even the local Walmart, Jacksonville District will continue to be there to educate and serve. ♦



Lt. Col. Thomas Greco, deputy district commander for south Florida, provided a highly interactive presentation about the complexities of water management and Corps missions to Jensen Beach High School marine and biological science students. (PHOTO BY ERICA ROBBINS)

## Close competition in the 2013 Black History Brain Brawl

BY ANNIE CHAMBERS



Carlos Clarke (left) and Robert Meekie, Contracting Division, celebrate their victory as 2013 Brain Brawl champions. (PHOTO BY CHRISTINA SWANSON)

Jacksonville District divisions are about to go head to head in the 2013 Black History Brain Brawl. The defending champions, Regulatory Division, walk in and set a large trophy on the table in front of them.

Chatter begins and friendly taunts fly between divisions. Spectators arrive to cheer on their teammates. Loud clapping or boos follow each question answered. Jeopardy-style competition with questions ranging from 200 to 2,000 points each. The categories include: Freedom and Equality, March on Washington, Emancipation Proclamation, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Participants were given materials to study prior to the Brain Brawl. Questions ranged from specific event dates to fill-in-the-blanks for quotations from civil rights leaders. The competition got fierce in the second round, but Contracting took the lead and the trophy from Regulatory. The team included Robert Meekie, Carlos Clarke, Remi Eggers, Shannon Hyatt and Nancy Krause.

"Black history is still relevant because civil rights movements occurred in the '60s; this is not an ancient issue," said Remi Eggers, contract specialist.

Among the more surprising facts were that Abraham Lincoln is enshrined in the Wrestling Hall of Fame and that he created the Secret Service hours before he was assassinated. Even the spectators were able to learn bits and pieces of history from the sidelines.

"It's not about winning or losing, it's about learning things," said Eggers.

Members of the Contracting Division would like to see more competitions for other historic events and observance months.

"I participated because it's a great way to interact with coworkers and it's a lot of fun," said Nancy Krause, contract specialist. ♦



# OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

## WELCOME HOME

RAFAEL FELIX  
TROY COLLINS  
ROBERT MEDLOCK



Robert Medlock (left) arrived in Jacksonville Feb. 13 following his 12-month assignment in Afghanistan. Jeffrey Couch welcomed him home.  
(PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFFERY COUCH)

# Women's History Month

# WOMEN

*inspiring*

# INNOVATION

*through*

# IMAGINATION:

*Celebrating Women*

## in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics



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FIRST DAY OF

*Spring*  
MARCH 20