

WASPs

Runner inspires others

Wright Flight

MOHAWK

Mohawk

A-10 pilot prepares for Test Pilot School



OLIVIA ELLIOTT

Air Force Reserve Command

Vol. 62, No. 6

June 2010

442nd Fighter Wing Online

www.442fw.afrc.af.mil



Suggest to Friends

Subscribe via SMS

Information

Location:

931 Arnold Avenue
Whiteman Air Force Base, MO,
65305-5070

4 People Like This



Sariethia Lemos



David Kurl



Danielle Wolf

Photos

1 album

See All



442nd FW A-10 Photos
Created on
Saturday

No one has added fan photos.
[Add Photos.](#)

Links

3 of 5 links

See All

A-10 community guides civilian pilot to safe landing
1:48pm May 22

A-10 Thunderbolt II C-models take flight, improve wing's capabilities
1:47pm May 22

442nd CES firefighters receive national fire academy certifications
1:45pm May 22

442nd Fighter Wing

Wall

Info

Photos

Discussions

Commentary by Senior Airman Danielle Wolf, 442nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs...

Attach:

Share

442nd Fighter Wing + Others

442nd Fighter Wing

Just Others



442nd Fighter Wing

I've been a proud member of Facebook now for almost four years.

Back then the majority of my contacts were old high school or college friends. But the world has undergone many changes. Today, both of my parents, most of my relatives and professors, every wingman I've ever been stationed with and even my 74-year-old grandma are proud users of my favorite Web site.

As times have changed, so has the Air Force. Our uniforms now are camouflaged to our aircraft, and at many bases the timed 1.5-mile run is calculated by an ankle bracelet. Nevertheless, until recently, we were unable to use social media to stay in contact with fellow Airmen via government computers – even though some squadrons and a few shops had their own Facebook groups.

Because the social media sites were blocked, many Airmen still consider the new privilege taboo. One 20-something I talked to this week about the change said she didn't want to go on Facebook because she felt like she was doing something wrong.

I'm not here to tell you how much to update your status from work or when it's appropriate to be on these sites; that's what supervisors are for. I am simply here to tell you that when you go on these social media sites, and most of you will, to remember that the 442nd Fighter Wing is up with the times!

Not only do we have a wing Facebook site, but as your public affairs representatives, we are determined to use it to our fullest advantage.

During the winter months, I often found that updating my status with reporting procedures was equally as effective as updating the wing Web site. In fact, a certain crew chief and I battled it out on those early mornings to see who would notify Whiteman Facebookers first.

Social media is an excellent way to let Airmen know what's going on in the wing (just in case that Mohawk gets lost in the mail.) But not only do we want to use it to disseminate valuable information and feature our Airmen, but we want you to use it to tell us what you would like to read about.

In many places print media is a dying art form. Few Reserve units have the ability to print a monthly magazine and even fewer have dedicated readership. As the editor of the Mohawk, I am constantly asking people for story ideas or input on what they would like to read. I scour other units' publications to see if there would be any value for our Airmen, but undoubtedly, there are things you would like to read that I haven't thought about yet.

That's where social media can play a valuable role. Not only will we, as public affairs, ensure you get to see photos and read stories about your fellow Airmen, but we'll take your input into consideration when planning each month's publication.

So feel free to "Like" the 442nd Fighter Wing on Facebook. I would bet my 74-year-old grandma will :)

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

'inside' 'inside' 'inside' 'inside'

Commentary page 2



TEST PILOT SCHOOL

A-10 pilot prepares to fly more than 20 aircraft during training

PAGES 6 AND 7



WRIGHT FLIGHT

Students rewarded for hard work and dedication throughout school year

PAGES 4 AND 5



FIT TO FIGHT

Maintainer inspires "running boom" among wingmen

PAGES 10 AND 11

442nd Airmen honor WASPS page 9



T 442nd Fighter Wing

Tip of the Spear

TECH. SGT. VAN SWEARINGIN 442ND SECURITY FORCES SQUADRON

Tech. Sgt. Van E. Swearingin is a fire team leader in the 442nd Security Forces Squadron. He uses a huge array of past experiences in the day-to-day operations for which he plays an invaluable role. His unique personality and forward-thinking style has created leadership qualities, which enable him to be successful in all of his assigned objectives.

His technical expertise garnered many accolades during his recent deployment to Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq. While deployed, Sergeant Swearingin served as the lead operator of the vehicle and cargo inspection system, which prevented any prohibited items, weapons and explosives from entering the base. This ensured the safety of coalition personnel. He was a recipient of the 506th Air Expeditionary Group's Non-commissioned Officer of the Month program. Sergeant Swearingin was a key factor in ensuring the smooth and incident-free entry control operation at the base and one of the reasons why morale and camaraderie remained high through the duration of his tour. He is also active in his community. Sergeant Swearingin gives freely of his time as demonstrated by his involvement with the American Heart Association and the Girl Scouts of America. In addition, he provides mentoring for children and young adults by coaching youth sports teams near Sedalia, Mo. where he currently resides. The dedication Sergeant Swearingin shows to his squadron, his teammates and his community involvement play a major role in making him a vital asset of the 442nd SFS and the 442nd FW. He is the epitome of a Citizen Airman.

June 2010
Charge-of-quarters



SENIOR MASTER SGT. TODD SIELEMAN

442ND AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

Call the CQ from on-base at 99-1 (660) 238-7428. From a local off-base number (i.e., Concordia, Warrensburg, Sedalia, etc.), dial (660) 238-7428. To call toll free from off-base, dial (800) 260-0253 and press seven after the prompt.

COVER PHOTO: Maj. Olivia Elliott, a 303rd Fighter Squadron A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot, was accepted to Test Pilot School, where she will learn to fly dozens of different aircraft and get one step closer to her dream of becoming an astronaut. (Photo by Senior Airman Danielle Wolf)

MOHAWK

Vol. 62, No. 6
June 2010

This funded Air Force Reserve magazine is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services.

Contents of the Mohawk are not necessarily the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the 442nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office, 931 Arnold Ave., Whiteman AFB, MO 65305-5070.

All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.

Deadline for article submission is 12:30 p.m. Sunday during the unit training assembly preceding the desired month of publication.

COMMANDER, 442ND FW
Col. Mark Clemons

CHIEF, PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Maj. David Kurle

EDITOR
Senior Airman Danielle Wolf

PA STAFF
Staff Sgt. Kent Kagarise
Staff Sgt. Tom Talbert
Staff Sgt. James Emerich
Senior Airman Tracy Brown

For more information, call Public Affairs at commercial voice number: (660) 687-3842 or fax at: (660) 687-2985. DSN: 975-3842/3844, or fax: DSN: 975-2985. E-mail submissions or questions to: danielle.wolf@whiteman.af.mil
This newspaper is printed on recycled paper.



Wright Flight soars

Story and photos by Senior Airman Tracy Brown

Students from Knob Noster High School in Knob Noster, Mo. and Genesis Alternative Middle School in Kansas City, Mo. took to the skies at Skyhaven Airport in Warrensburg, Mo. Apr. 16.

Members of the Whiteman Air Force Base Human Resources Development Council facilitated the event through the Wright Flight program.

Capt. Chad Rogers, 303rd Fighter Squadron and instructor for the KNHS students participating in the program, has been involved in Wright Flight for the last three years.

"Every year it is rewarding to see how the students react and show interest in the field of aviation," Captain Rogers said. "This year was exceptionally rewarding, as we were able to offer

the students incentive flights at the culmination of the semester of work.

"Of the 11 who completed the class, six earned the incentive flight. The agreement with the students involved improvements in school work, staying drug and alcohol free and finding a way through volunteering and giving to become a better member of the community."

Karen Taylor is a guidance counselor at KNHS who works with Wright Flight students.

"It's a wonderful program," she said. "The children who did not meet the criteria have been given the opportunity to try again in the fall. We look forward to the students who have met their goals to give testimony to the other students to encourage them and get them motivated."

Theresa Ochsenein's son, Victor Ochsenein, also partici-





Wright Flight students were awarded April 16 with an incentive flight on a Piper Cherokee 140 (left), a Cessna 172

(right), or a Cessna 310 for their academic achievements and dedication to remaining drug and alcohol free.

pated in the program.

"Victor is doing really great and Captain Rogers has taught him so much," she said. "He is doing well and learning control."

She said she was happy with the knowledge Victor was walking away with, and that he was taught both safety and situational awareness through the program.

Tech. Sgt. Shannon Kennedy is the 442nd Wright Flight program's air reserve technician liaison.

Among other things, her duties included lining up instructors for the schools and coordinating with the schools and teachers, and setting up class dates and times.

Sergeant Kennedy, along with her husband, Senior Master Sgt Rodney Kennedy, began teaching for the program more than four years ago at Genesis Alternative Middle School.

Sergeant Shannon Kennedy said they instruct in uniform, "not to recruit, but to promote questions and to instill the Air Force core values."

"Wright Flight is a program that teaches kids to set goals by teaching them aviation history," she said. "We start with teaching them about the Wright brothers and showing them the progress of their work through trial and error. Basically, we explain that all throughout history we would not be where we are today without trying, and maybe we didn't succeed the first time. The most important thing is to keep trying."

"At Genesis there are a lot of negatives that these students grow up with. I think one of the benefits of this program is that they get a steady person showing up every week and teaching them about something that we care about," Sergeant Shannon

Kennedy said. "If you teach about something you care about, it becomes infectious."

The former 442nd FW vice commander, Col. James Mackey, also participated in the day's events and made lunch for the students before their takeoff. Colonel Mackey addressed all the children with a safety brief prior to flight.

"This is the most important information of the day. The most crucial point of your flight will be the transfer of aircraft control," he said.

The students were instructed on proper actions while taking aircraft control for optimum safety.

The students were taken up two at a time. They were instructed they would fly to a certain destination and transfer positions. Then they would rotate from the back to the front so that both students would have the opportunity to take the wheel.

At the end of the event, Captain Rogers presented each participant with a certificate of completion in the Wright Flight program.

"Through the program, I hope that they learn that they can ac-

complish anything they set their minds to do," Sergeant Shannon Kennedy said. We have them set goals; we monitor their goals and see where they can improve and if something isn't working, we re-adjust. More than anything, I hope they learn respect for themselves."

Captain Rogers agreed.

"I hope the program was both rewarding and beneficial to them as they continue their path of education. I know it was rewarding to me and all the instructors who participated," he said.

Wright Flight was founded in 1985 by Robin Stoddard. The same year, he was awarded the Anthony C. Shine award, which was established in 1980 and each year is awarded to the Air Force's most distinguished fighter pilot. The award is given to the fighter pilot who most exemplifies a high caliber of professionalism, tactical ability and moral character.

Wright Flight's mission is to use the inherent motivational power of aviation as a stimulus for students to set and achieve higher goals in their educational and personal development. The program uses aviation role models to teach students that through their commitment and hard work they can achieve their own goals and earn the reward of an exciting aviation experience.

Students participate in a nine-week academic course involving the history of aviation as well as basic aviation knowledge.

Once students meet the requirements, they are given the opportunity to experience a hands-on-flight and co-pilot an aircraft.

Major Takes off to new heights

442nd pilot gets one step closer to being an astronaut

By Senior Airman Danielle Wolf

At 12 years old, Maj. Olivia Elliott knew she wanted to be an Air Force pilot.

Within a few years, she became spacey – literally – planning to eventually work for NASA as an astronaut, something she knew she could only do if she joined the Air Force and became a fighter pilot.

Today, nearly 20 years later as an active-duty pilot for the 303rd Fighter Squadron, part of the 442nd Fighter Wing, she is one step closer to hanging up the flight suit and putting on a space suit.

After months of applications, interviews and test flights, she has been accepted to Test Pilot School at Edwards AFB, Calif.

“When I found out I was accepted to Test Pilot School, I was shocked,” she said. “I was on my way out to fly and Col. (James) Mackey, who I was going to be flying with, got a message on his Blackberry that I was accepted.”

While attending TPS at Edwards AFB, Calif., she will attend academic training for a year while flying the C-12 Huron, a twin-engine turboprop aircraft. She will also fly the F-16 Fighting Falcon, fighter aircraft capable of possessing many roles, on a regular basis.

Major Elliott's academic training will include systematic training in gathering flight data and then interpreting it. Additionally, she will fly the T-38 Talon, a trainer aircraft she is now familiar with after several years working as a T-38 instructor at Sheppard AFB, Texas before coming to the 442nd FW to fly the A-10 Thunderbolt II.

For the next year after her academic training is complete, she will visit Air Force bases, one week at a time, to fly more than 20 different aircraft. Not only will she be responsible for testing developmental aircraft, but also their munitions. She will have to handle the airplanes with precision, control and accuracy.

While she has only been an A-10 pilot for two years now, after training she said she hopes to eventually be stationed at



Maj. Olivia Elliott, a former T-38 instructor, now a 442nd Fighter Wing A-10 pilot, has been accepted to Test Pilot School where she will learn to fly more than 20 different aircraft. TPS, she said, is a step toward her ultimate goal – becoming an astronaut.

Eglin AFB, Fla. where she can test new developments with the A-10.

“I like the A-10 because it is a single-purpose aircraft,” she said. “The A-10 is not a supersonic, pointy nose, fast aircraft, but is has what an (close air support) aircraft needs.”

Major Elliott said often people are impressed with one general aircraft that can accomplish everything. She likes that the A-10 has a specific mission to support ground troops, and she wants to continue to “keep the CAS mindset alive.” Also, she



Major Elliott participates in the 1999 National Collegiate Skydiving Competition for the USAF Academy Parachute Team, Wings of Blue where she completed more than 500 jumps with the team.



Major Elliott practices precision landing during the competition, attempting to accurately hit a sensor on the match. Precision is a skill she will need for TPS and possibly someday in a career as an astronaut.

said, she thinks the fighter-pilot experience she has received on the A-10 assisted her in getting accepted to Test Pilot School.

The school, which has only two, 24-student classes each year, is made up of 12 pilots and 12 engineers. While she said time management will be her biggest challenge, Test Pilot School is not for the faint at heart. The school requires applicants to have scientific and engineering knowledge, critical and reasoned judgment and excellent managerial skills, all in addition to superior flying skills. While the academic and flight training will be tedious and even painstaking at times, Major Elliott can be sure her colleagues at Whiteman AFB are behind her 100 percent.

Capt. John Tice, former 303rd FS pilot, now an A-10 pilot at Moody AFB, the 442nd FW's associate unit, encouraged her to apply, she said.

"He kept telling me to put in the application and if I didn't get accepted, it wasn't a big deal," she said.

"She's extremely intelligent and an exceptional pilot," Captain Tice said. "I just thought that if anyone had a chance, she would be the one, being a top graduate of the Air Force Academy and having her master's degree."

The two other female pilots in the 303rd FS, Maj. Valerie Saur and fellow-active duty pilot Capt. Laurel Lee, have also been an encouragement to Major Elliott.

"Being female pilots, they have been such great supporters and can really empathize with me and help push me further," she said.

Major Elliott said she has found many mentors from around the squadron.

"There's so much experience in this reserve squadron," she said. "Instead of always flying with lieutenants and captains, I am flying with majors and colonels with thousands of flying hours. There are more viewpoints, more experience and it's a very tight-knit community here."

While someday, hopefully not too long after TPS, she hopes to board a shuttle headed to space, she said she is thankful to have had the 442nd FW as a stepping stone to reach her goals.

"Every kid has a dream to want to be an astronaut," Captain Tice said. "There are a few people who can legitimately aspire to be one though, and she is one of them."

History



During World War II, 38 WASPs died while serving their country. Because the female pilots were not considered to be military members under the guidelines followed at the time, each WASP who died was sent home at their own family's expense. There were no military honors given to these women, nor any note of heroism. The WASPs were denied the right of the United States flag being placed in their coffin upon their final return.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SENIOR AIRMAN DANIELLE WOLF

New faces in aviation

By Senior Airman Tracy Brown

During World War II, female pilots were given the opportunity to become pioneers, heroes and role models to women throughout history.

These women were the Women Airforce Service Pilots. They were the first women in history to train and fly American military aircraft.

In 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt said, "This is not a time when women should be patient. We are in a war and we need to fight it with all our ability and with every weapon possible. Women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used."

Prior to the war, women played the roles of nurses, teachers, stay-at-home mothers and librarians. During the time surrounding the creation of WASPs, many people could not imagine that women were capable of flying or that they should.

After Pearl Harbor, the United States government determined there were not enough male pilots to complete the neces-

sary missions. In July 1943, the WASPs became official by the merging of two separate entities — the Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron and the Women's Flying Training Detachment.

WASP training spanned 19 groups of women. Each WASP had an average of 1,400 flying hours and held a commercial-pilot rating. The women were given a 30-day orientation to learn Army paperwork and military regulations, although they were never recognized as being military members and never received any military benefits — unlike their male counterparts.

Initially, there were 1,830 women accepted to receive pilot training at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. Avenger Field was the first, and only, all-female Air Force base in history. The motivation for the creation of female pilots was to free the male pilots for combat missions and to use the females for ferrying aircraft from factories to military bases.

The WASPs became the first women

to fly American military aircraft, and 1,078 women earned their wings. Following their training, the women pilots were stationed at 120 air bases across the United States. Women pilots were eventually used to relieve male pilots from combat duty and delivered more than 12,650 aircraft of 78 different models. During the time the military implemented female pilots, more than 50 percent of the ferrying of aircraft within the United States was done by WASPs.

In 1944, the House Committee on the Civil Service reported that they considered the WASP program to be unnecessary and unjustifiably expensive, and they ended the program. In the end, there were 916 female pilots, and none of them received any military benefits.

Finally, in 1977 these women were given veteran status — but not without a fight. More than 30-years later, the WASPs were finally given honor at the nation's capitol.

442nd Airmen help honor World War II WASPs

By Heidi Hunt

509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

In today's Air Force, it isn't uncommon to see a female pilot boarding a fighter or cargo jet, suiting up and taking off – but it wasn't always that way.

Five Airmen from the 442nd Fighter Wing traveled to Washington, D.C. to serve as escorts to the Women Airforce Service Pilots and attended the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony, March 10.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest award Con-

gress bestows to civilians in the U.S.

"These women finally received the long-overdue recognition they deserved, and it is just in time as it is nearing the end of the World War II generation," said Maj. Olivia Elliott, 442nd Fighter Wing A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot who attended the event.

More than 200 WASPs also attended the event, many of them wearing their World War II-era uniforms.

"Listening to the speakers gave me goose bumps and brought tears to my eyes," said Major Elliott.

Major Elliott escorted Elizabeth "Betty" Wall-Strohfus, 90, from Minnesota. Betty's nine family members were also in attendance at the ceremony.

"Betty and her family were absolutely amazing, and I will never forget them," Major Elliott said. "I made friends for life."

Additionally, Chief Carol Tripp, 303rd Fighter Squadron chief of aviation resources management, escorted Barbara Hart-Kennedy and echoed her experience with WASPs members.

"I have had many extraordinary experiences in my career, but the WASP ceremony ranks pretty high up there," she said. "It was really that rewarding and amazing."

Major Elliott said she is proud and honored to be able to stand on their shoulders, which allows her to do what she loves.

"The WASPs were the trailblazers and broke down many barriers for women in uniform," she said. "The WASPs clearly sacrificed and portrayed loyalty and patriotism with such grace. My life is easy compared to what these ladies had to go through. They did it without complaining and didn't expect to be applauded at the end of it all."

Adding to Major Elliott, many of the WASPs were not angry or disappointed about the long-overdue recognition.

"For a lot of these ladies, it's not that they didn't understand what was going on, but they didn't necessarily understand that it was such a big deal," Major Elliott said. "Betty's family understood that it was a big deal, but to her generation, what they did was for their country, not for recognition."

Joining Major Elliott and Chief Tripp were Tech. Sgt. Shannon Kennedy, Tech. Sgt. Nicole Willeford and Senior Airman Sarah Knauff.

Major Elliott and Chief Tripp said that from the conference, they took home with them a lifetime of memories.

The 442nd Airmen also left their mark. "Our WASP gathering in D.C. was absolutely wonderful," Mrs. Wall-Strohfus said.

"Seeing so many of our gals again was such a blessing and forever treasured. The respect and care we received from our military escorts was outstanding. Thank you and may God bless each of you," she told them.



Senior Master Sgt. Cindy Roller, 442nd Fighter Wing chaplains' assistant, escorts WASPs around Washington, D.C. during a trip sponsored by the Human Resources Development Council.

COURTESY PHOTO



Geri Nyman and Betty Blake, WASP members, stand in front of a P-51 Mustang near the 56th Operations Support Squadron at Luke AFB, Ariz.

PHOTO BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS RONIFEL YASAY

Runner inspires others to get fit

By Senior Airman Tracy Brown

He may not be Steve Prefontaine, world famous runner, but he certainly shares something in common – they are both responsible for inspiring a “running boom.”

Tech. Sgt. John Straka, weapon’s load crew chief of the 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, not only loves running, but also encourages and inspires other Airmen to run.

Sergeant Straka has a passion and respect for running and has been an avid runner for the past 12 years. He participates in several runs throughout the year that benefit charities, but said the biggest personal reward of each race is simply, finishing.

Staff Sgt. Wendy Wray, 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron support technician, with encouragement from Sergeant Straka, ran her first half marathon last summer when she completed the 36th Annual Hospital Hill Half Marathon June 6, 2009 in Kansas City, Mo.

The Hospital Hill Half Marathon, a charity run, began in 1974 and is one of the oldest half marathons in the country. The 5K, 10K and half marathon involve many challenges including multiple hills and weather, which is often hot and humid.

“I had no intentions of running a half marathon ever, until Sergeant Straka suggested it to me. Even after I repeatedly stated that I could never run 13.1 miles, he said I could. So, I set out to try,” Sergeant Wray said.

She said Sergeant Straka was very helpful as she trained for the run. He was encouraging and always quick to throw suggestions her way, she said.

Through Sergeant Straka’s suggestions, Sergeant Wray customized a training plan.

“I had a goal,” she said. “I trained the best I could for it, and I accomplished that goal. I don’t think Sergeant Straka would have let me quit if I wanted to.”

Sergeant Straka’s reassurance and his confidence in her ability to complete the run was encouraging throughout the training process, she said.



Tech. Sgt. John Straka ran 16 miles to honor Tech. Sgt. Sean Corlew, who died during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sergeant Straka said he recognizes the benefits of running, not only for an individual’s physical health, but also the advantages toward positive mental health.

“The most obvious physical asset is being more fit and healthy, but when I don’t run for three or four days I can tell a



Sergeant Straka participated in the 2009 Whiteman AFB triathlon, where he completed a 438-meter swim, 10-kilometer bicycle route and 5-kilometer run.



PHOTOS BY SENIOR AIRMAN DANIELLE WOLF

big difference in my attitude. Being physically active is a natural stress reliever.”

Sergeant Straka has not only been an encouragement to Airmen but also to his friends and family. He said his children are now involved in running and his daughter plans to participate in the 37th Annual Hospital Hill Half Marathon June 5.

TRAINING AND DEDICATION

Sergeant Straka runs three to four times a week and implementing swimming into his schedule. He tries to take one day off a week to rest and prevent injury, he said.

Sergeant Straka stays true to his training, even during a deployment when many find it difficult to find the time, opportunity or motivation.

When he was deployed to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan in 2006, Sergeant Straka said he couldn’t afford to miss out on training for the Chicago Marathon while deployed. So, he took advantage of the perimeter road on base.

“The last month of training before a marathon is really the heart of your long runs,” he said.

The 7.1-mile perimeter road proved to be the perfect stretch for which to take advantage.

Sergeant Straka said there were many interesting things he has witnessed while running.

“I remember there were old mud huts sporadically located along the perimeter, some very elaborate but most with no roof or a partial roof made of scrap metal or sheets. One hut housed a woman and two children. They would always stare at me as I ran by, and one day they saw me coming and began running my way and waving at me. So, I waved back. From then on, every time they saw me they would run my way and we would wave at each other,” Sergeant Straka said.

During one of his longer runs, Sergeant Straka was forced to take a detour. Twenty-four miles later, his run was complete. He said he considered that quite an accomplishment in Afghanistan, with the heat and dust.

BENEFITS

Sergeant Straka said there are many benefits and different reasons for an individual to take up running as a hobby.

“There is a group out there called Run for the Fallen. It’s an apolitical organization to remember the fallen servicemembers. On June 14, 2008 they started running one mile for every servicemember killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The runners ended at Arlington National Cemetery on Aug 24, 2008.

“The group encouraged people to run, wherever they were,

one mile for a fallen servicemember. I ran for Tech. Sgt. Sean M. Corlew.”

Sergeant Corlew died during Operation Enduring Freedom. Sergeant Corlew, along with two other servicemembers, died when an Air Force MC-130H Combat Talon II aircraft crashed in the Paktika province, Afghanistan. He was assigned to the Air Force’s 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Fla.

I was in Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan when the crash occurred, and I drove the truck that carried his casket during the fallen comrade ceremony. I ran 16 miles in memory of Sergeant Corlew that day and still have the printable bib I wore during the run – I always will.”

EXPLORATION

“When I get somewhere new, I don’t feel like I have really been there until I run there. You can find out so much about an area while running,” he said.

“Running in a new place forces you to slow down and really take in the sights. You have a much better chance of learning your environment or finding alternate routes while running rather than passing by quickly in a car. You have the opportunity to see small details in an area while running that you may not get the chance to see otherwise.”

Among the benefits for Sergeant Straka, is the opportunity to regain a positive mental attitude.

GIVING BACK

He is always looking for the next race to participate in, and this September, he doesn’t have to look very far. Dana Straka, Sergeant Straka’s wife, is planning the 3rd annual Murdock Banner Financial Group Warrensburg Half Marathon. The half marathon is scheduled for Sept. 18, and will benefit the Warrensburg Animal Shelter.

“We wanted to do something to give something back to the community,” Mrs. Straka said.

Sergeant Straka said he told her the half marathon was the perfect idea for a community fundraiser because of the kind of personalities it attracts.

“Running usually attracts positive-minded, goal-oriented people,” he said.

Local businesses and the community have donated time and supplies to support the half marathon. Airmen from Whiteman AFB have been involved with the run in the past, not only as participants but also as volunteers.

“We would love to see participants from Whiteman Air Force Base in this year’s event,” Mrs. Straka said.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
442ND FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS
931 ARNOLD AVE.
WHITEMAN AFB MO 65305-5070

Airmen from the 442nd Fabrication Flight of the 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron were presented with the Safety Shop of the Year award by Col. Mark Clemons, 442nd Fighter Wing commander, and Lt. Col. Patrick Murphy, 442nd FW chief of safety, during a ceremony April 18. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tom Talbert)

TO THE FAMILY OF:



I know the price of success: Dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen.

- Frank Lloyd Wright