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Staff Sgt. William Barnett, a combat medic working as a recruiter in York, Pennsylvania, discusses careers in the Army with students at Central York High School. (U.S. ARMY/SARAH ZALER)

Army boosts incentives for recruiters

Soldiers can qualify for several new incentives, including promotions and cash bonuses, if they volunteer to serve as recruiters, the Army has announced.

The Army is working to bolster its recruiting force during one of the most challenging recruiting environments the service has faced in decades. Soldiers who volunteer are being offered incentives along with a promise that they and their families will be taken care of, said Lt. Gen. Douglas Stitt, deputy Army chief of staff for personnel, G-1.

The goal is to get 800 students into the Army Recruiting and Retention College at Fort Knox, Kentucky, over the next two months. The incentives being offered include promotions and cash bonuses.

At the end of October, there was a decrease in the number of students scheduled to attend the college, just as the Army is working to bolster its recruiting corps of more than 10,000 soldiers, Stitt said in a Nov. 1 meeting with Pentagon reporters.

"The losses exceeded the gains, and in order to maintain that momentum that we were seeing within the recruiting force, we [started] to set the conditions for transformation," Stitt said in an Army news release following the Pentagon meeting. "We made the decision this week to bump up the numbers [of recruiting college students]."

In a move that Stitt acknowledged he regrets, the Army in late October screened and selected soldiers throughout the force to report to the

college by Nov. 6, some on very short notice.

Stitt said the Army would contact the selected soldiers and work with their unique circumstances. "I'd like to open up and first of all apologize to the soldiers and the families that received this last-minute notification," Stitt said. "That mistake is mine."

He said the service is working on multiple avenues to minimize the impact to soldiers and families. "It's not lost on me, particularly at this point in time, the impact this last-minute notification, and now being on the cusp of the holidays, has on our soldiers and our great NCOs as they navigate a process to support the recruiting enterprise," Stitt said.

To qualify for the newly announced

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Bipolar ‘survivor’ wants to break mental health stigma

Retired Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin served in the Army for 36 years and deployed to combat multiple times, all while battling undiagnosed bipolar disorder.

“Bipolar disorder ... is not due to a lack of willpower or character, so don’t blame the afflicted [individual]. Bipolar disorder can strike anyone,” Martin said Nov. 2 during an Association of the U.S. Army Noon Report webinar. “My life mission now ... is sharing my bipolar story to help stop the stigma, promote recovery and save lives.”

A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, Martin commanded several engineer units and served as commandant of the Army Engineer School and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He details his experiences of serving as a senior leader with undiagnosed mental illness in his book, *Bipolar General: My Forever War with Mental Illness*.

Bipolar disorder is characterized by extreme mood swings that include emotional highs, referred to as mania or hypomania, and lows, or depression, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Though Martin experienced mild mania that went undetected at West Point, Army Ranger School and throughout most of his Army career,



Then-Col. Gregg Martin, second from right, and soldiers from the 130th Engineer Brigade Headquarters Company discuss a convoy route with a history of roadside bombs and attacks in 2004 in Balad, Iraq. (TOM SAWYER/ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD)

he struggled with his mental health after his first years as a general officer.

“For 12 years ... I cycled into higher highs and lower lows, along with psychosis. In 2014, I shot into full-blown mania,” Martin said. “I was disruptive, bizarre, over the top, frightening and out of control.”

Things came to a head when Martin was forced to resign from serving as president of the National Defense University in 2014, ending his Army career. It wasn’t until 12 years after the onset of Martin’s mental struggles, which were triggered when he

led soldiers into combat during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, that he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and psychosis.

After treatment and community support, Martin recovered. “It took a team to lift me up, [my] wife, family, friends, medical professionals, that gave me the hope and knowledge that I could and would recover,” Martin said. “When I was in bipolar hell, I believed I would never recover.”

Martin must remain vigilant to maintain his mental health, but he now considers himself a “bipolar survivor and thriver.”

“My life is happy, healthy, purposeful, my hyperthymic personality is back, though less intense,” he said. “There’s hope recovery is possible from all mental illnesses, including bipolar. I am living proof.”

Martin encouraged Army leaders to talk about mental health with their soldiers.

“I would recommend that the Army leadership read the book, talk about it [with their soldiers] and ... encourage people all through the ranks ... to read [the book], talk about it and gain a greater understanding, not just about bipolar disorder, but about mental illness [and] about mental health conditions,” he said.



Retired Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin addresses a forum for military authors Oct. 9 during the 2023 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA PHOTO)

Tricare open season gets underway for retirees, beneficiaries



Spc. Lizandro Piloer-Diaz, left, assigned to the hearing clinic at Fort Drum, New York, provides information on hearing loss and protection to a retiree. (U.S. ARMY/WARREN WRIGHT)

Military retirees and eligible beneficiaries who use Tricare can soon enroll in or make changes to their health care coverage.

This year's Tricare open season begins Nov. 13 and ends Dec. 12. During that time, beneficiaries who use Tricare Prime or Tricare Select can choose to stay on their plan, enroll in a plan or change plans. Any changes will go into effect on Jan. 1.

Additionally, eligible beneficiaries have until Dec. 11 to enroll in or make changes to their vision and/or dental coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program.

Known as FEDVIP, the program, managed by the Office of Personnel Management, offers a range of plans at varying costs, and coverage is not automatic, so beneficiaries must act to enroll in a dental or vision plan.

Open season for FEDVIP is Nov. 13 through Dec. 11.

Those who are not already in a plan and don't enroll during open season could still receive care, but

they will "only be eligible for care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available," according to the Tricare website.

Outside of Tricare open season, beneficiaries can enroll or change their enrollment following certain life events, including marriage, the birth of a child or retirement from active duty.

Open season does not apply to active-duty service members. It also does not apply to Tricare for Life—coverage is automatic for eligible beneficiaries who have Medicare Part A and Part B, according to Tricare.

Premium-based plans, including Tricare Reserve Select, Retired Reserve and Young Adult, also are not impacted by open season. Eligible beneficiaries can buy these plans at any time throughout the year, according to Tricare.

For more information on Tricare open season, click [here](#).

For more on the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program, click [here](#).

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lenses and more. Enjoy exclusive member rates, with savings up to 60% in-network, affordable co-pays and nationwide access to discounts. For more information, please visit <https://ausacoverage.com/VisionInsurance>.



Recruiting

From Page 1

incentives, soldiers must be in the grades of E-5 to E-7 and have a minimum four years in service. The incentives include immediate promotion to staff sergeant for eligible soldiers reporting to their first recruiting assignment, and graduates of the school who enroll in the Army Recruiter Course by February will receive a one-time lump sum of \$5,000.

The promotions to staff sergeant will be conditional, and the soldiers will have to meet their professional military education requirements.

Staff sergeants who volunteer will be eligible for promotion to sergeant first class if they field 24 signed enlistment contracts and all 24 recruits attend Basic Combat Training over a maximum 12-month period, according to the news release. Current recruiters who extend their three-year assignment will be awarded \$1,500 a



More than 600 current and future service members receive the oath of enlistment from Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George Nov. 5 during an NFL game in Atlanta, Georgia. (U.S. ARMY/LARA POIRRIER)

month for up to 12 months.

The service also will consider reassigning soldiers slated to attend the Army's Drill Sergeant School at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to the Re-

cruiting and Retention College, and Army Human Resources Command will work with the soldiers' chain of command and career counselors on a case-by-case basis to ensure that recruiter candidates have a smooth transition, Stitt said.

To further build recruiting momentum, Stitt said, Army leaders are working closely with Army Recruiting Command to outline required knowledge, skills and behaviors for the Army's new recruiting MOS—42T, or talent acquisition specialist.

Army Secretary Christine Wormuth announced Oct. 3 that the recruiter career field will shift from a temporary position to a permanent MOS. A pilot program will soon be in development. For now, the Army hopes to attract enough volunteers for the recruiting mission and has asked commanders and leaders throughout the force to encourage soldiers to volunteer.

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Shutdown threat, budget delays remain top concerns

On Capitol Hill, things remain fluid and uncertain, with much work remaining for Congress before the end of the year—and before government funding runs out Nov. 17.

The appropriations process continues to be a challenge. The Senate and the House of Representatives have each passed several bills to fund the government, but it is clear that a stopgap measure, known as a continuing resolution, will be needed to prevent a shutdown when funding ends Nov. 17.

The length of any potential continuing resolution is unknown, but

Government Affairs

Congress will need time to pass any remaining appropriations bills

and then conference and pass final legislation. A lengthy shutdown or a long-term continuing resolution is deeply damaging to national security—a point that the Association of the U.S. Army's Government Affairs team emphasizes consistently on Capitol Hill.

It is possible that supplemental national security funding for Israel, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, the defense industrial base and U.S. border



Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, left, speaks with an attendee at a reception for lawmakers and congressional staff during the 2023 AUSA Annual Meeting. (AUSA PHOTO)

security may be enacted soon. However, it is unclear what could pass both chambers of Congress.

Additionally, negotiations surrounding the National Defense Authorization Act and the authorization process continue, but a formal conference has yet to begin. AUSA's Government Affairs team remains hopeful that the NDAA, which provides policy and program guidance for DoD, will be enacted as it has

been for more than six decades.

You can help build momentum for swift enactment of appropriations bills and the NDAA by contacting your representatives and senators.

Another area of concern involves dozens of senior Army personnel who are among the hundreds of military leaders who still have not been confirmed by the Senate. This delay continues to have a significant impact on readiness, units, Army families and national security, but a quick resolution to the current impasse on nominations is not readily apparent.

On a happy note, AUSA's 2023 Annual Meeting and Exposition in October was a successful event for the Army, AUSA and the association's Government Affairs team. As always, we seek to educate, inform and connect while advocating for the Total Army and fostering relationships with lawmakers and throughout Washington, D.C.

We will continue to monitor these and other developments closely as we advocate for the Total Army with Congress.

Mark Haaland is AUSA's Government Affairs director.



AUSA continues to advocate for swift passage of increased funding for the Army, the Defense Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs. (ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL PHOTO)

Chapter sponsors pheasant hunt for soldiers, veterans

Nearly 60 service members and veterans participated in the inaugural Weekend with Warriors Pheasant Hunt in Rolla, Missouri, sponsored by the Association of the U.S. Army's Fort Leonard Wood-Mid Missouri chapter.

From currently serving drill sergeants to a lieutenant colonel who has been retired for nearly 40 years, those who attended the event in October had more in common than they might have thought.

For these different generations of service members and veterans, the weekend was as much about camaraderie as it was about hunting.

**Fort Leonard
Wood-Mid
Missouri**

"You're connecting with like-minded people," said Eric Hawes. "It's not just a military connection but love for the outdoors."

Hawes, an active-duty soldier, was among those from the Fort Leonard Wood area selected to join the free pheasant hunt sponsored by the AUSA chapter. The hunt was made possible by Cliff and Sandy Fleming with Fleming Farm and Kennels and the planning of retired Air Force Master Sgt. Pitts Lesesne.

The Flemings and Lesesne worked together to organize the hunt to provide a local, outdoor experience and an intentional connection for the veteran and service member participants.

Miguel Barahona, another active-duty soldier, participated in the second day of the event.

"It was honestly one of the most memorable moments of my life," Barahona said. "This reminded me how important it is to care for one another."

The AUSA chapter and Fleming Farm and Kennels were not the only organizations involved in making the weekend events happen. Several community businesses and local volunteers stepped up to help ensure its success.



Service members and veterans show their spoils following a pheasant hunt sponsored by AUSA's Fort Leonard Wood-Mid Missouri chapter. (AUSA PHOTO)

Following a welcome and safety meeting, participants spent the morning in the field before returning for lunch and then finishing up their hunt. "I had a great time and enjoyed the opportunity," retired Lt. Col. Al Parsons said. "It was a great hunt."

Lesesne said he intends for the event to grow and plans to invite different veteran hunters each year.

Many of the participants, who all

were able to bag roosters during the hunt, said they are willing to help as volunteers during future events. "I thoroughly enjoyed the day," said participant Stephen Clymer, a retired soldier. "I am willing to volunteer for these events."

Brittany Raines is the secretary for AUSA's Fort Leonard Wood-Mid-Missouri chapter.



All of the nearly 60 participants in the inaugural Weekend with Warriors Pheasant Hunt were able to bag roosters. (AUSA PHOTO)

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