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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University information technology director participates in Army’s National Educator Tour

FORT LEE, Va. – The U.S. Army is on a mission to correct misperceptions about military service, and it’s setting its sights on educators who are influential in the lives of young people.

Ben Garcia, director of information technology customer service and operations support at the University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas, was one of 26 individuals from across the country selected to spend two days here as part of Army Recruiting Command’s National Educator Tour June 21-22.

The tour provided the educators with information about Army careers and educational opportunities and gave the participants some hands-on experience with a variety of the Army’s 150 different career paths, to include logistics, culinary arts and robotics.

“I have seen a completely different view of the Army, more advanced, more focused on ensuring that its young men and women and its existing Soldiers are positioned for success,” Garcia said.

Many people don’t realize the majority of jobs in the Army are not combat related, according to Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Snow, who leads the U.S. Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The command is charged with finding more than 85,000 qualified new recruits for the active-duty Army and Army Reserve this year alone.

Studies show less than 29 percent of 17-24 year olds qualify for military service, Snow said. The majority are disqualified because of obesity, drug use, health issues, aptitude or legal challenges.

Adding to the qualification challenge, Snow said, is that 50 percent of youth admit they know little to nothing about any of the military services or the jobs they offer.

“The Army has demonstrated, that again, it positions its Soldiers for success, from education, to training, citizenship, and character. That is what K-12, post-secondary and we, in higher education are trying to accomplish. We are trying to position our students for success by the resources we offer,” Garcia said. “So, the Army is the blueprint for that.”

Snow said the National Educator Tour is one way the Army can help educators fully understand what the Army offers, so they can ensure their students have the ability to make an informed decision about their future.

“Students are told they can choose to go to work, pursue a college degree, or look to technical education when they are planning for life after high school,” the general said. “They don’t realize they don’t have to choose -- they can do all three at the same time with the Army.”
The tour participants saw this firsthand. They drove Army vehicles in tactical simulators, tested their robotics abilities, watched students demonstrate advanced culinary skills, and visited one of the Army’s 109 education centers.

The Army spent $162 million on tuition assistance for Soldiers last year, according to Tony Castillo, chief of education for U.S. Army Recruiting and the tour’s organizer. He added that 6,900 Soldiers earned degrees last year while simultaneously serving their country.

“It’s about the job and education,” Castillo said. “The Army truly focuses on constant professional development and lifelong learning.”

It’s this message Snow said he hopes will inspire the tour participants to encourage the youth in their community to consider military service as a potential career path.

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