



Army Engineer Association: The Engineer Regiment's Lifetime Network

By Colonel Jack O'Neill (Retired)

The Army Engineer Association (AEA) is evolving and adapting to change, just as our units and leaders are meeting today's challenges. Founded in 1988 as the Engineer Regimental Association during then Major General Daniel R. Schroeder's tenure as commandant of the United States Army Engineer School, it became the AEA in December 1991. It was envisioned to be a branch and alumni association for all Army engineers, regardless of grade, component, or specialty. That purpose is still valid, and since 1991 the AEA board of directors and staff have shared, promoted, and rewarded the proud accomplishments of the Regiment. AEA has grown and matured quite well, publishing the superb bimonthly *Army Engineer Magazine*; providing a host of regimental recognition programs; operating a successful gift store in the United States Army

Engineer Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; and offering a variety of events to foster the unique partnership between the Regiment and industry.

Program Improvements

But AEA membership has not sustained a steady period of growth. Thanks to suggestions by Brigadier General Bryan G. Watson, Commandant of the Engineer School, we closely reexamined our member benefits and incentives and are now launching an improved set of programs. Every member of the Regiment can benefit in some way by being an AEA member, and AEA benefits endure for a lifetime. The central theme of AEA is sharing and giving back: sharing knowledge, experiences, ideas, and opportunities through the network and giving back to the Regiment by supporting worthwhile AEA awards and programs.

Engineer Fraternal Network for Life

Our Army engineer family is a proud and powerful network of thousands of professionals. Consider the 80,000 engineer Soldiers in the Active Army, United States Army National Guard, and United States Army Reserve; the 35,000 Soldiers and civilians of the United States Army Corps of Engineers major Army command; the engineers performing installation public works across the Army; and all the engineer veterans of those organizations. That's a huge number.

AEA is the linchpin for that network. We manage a comprehensive professional and historical information network through our magazine, website, and e-mail announcements. AEA's links to engineer alumni organizations, combined with our new presence on Facebook, add to our social network feature, and our business services to supporting firm members from industry enable AEA to provide specialized job networking and an online career center.

Remembering Our Fallen

AEA established a web-based regimental memorial register at www.armyengineer.com/index.html that lists the names of our comrades lost since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. AEA also provides information to help survivors of those fallen. We are raising funds to erect a

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memorial wall honoring fallen engineers of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) at Fort Leonard Wood, and we have a new \$2,500 annual scholarship award for a survivor of a Fallen Engineer from OIF or OEF.

Helping Our Wounded

AEA assists engineer Wounded Warriors by supporting fund-raising efforts, promoting job opportunities, and reaching out to them in our communities. They need help and they're all around us, in hospitals or in our communities, healing and coping. Look for them, reach out, and help them stay connected to the engineer fraternal network for life. We also have a new \$2,500 annual scholarship award for a combat-wounded engineer from OIF or OEF.

Recognizing and Rewarding Our Best

AEA administers multiple award programs that recognize individual and team excellence in the Regiment. AEA-sponsored components of the United States Army Engineer Regimental Award Program, enabled mostly by corporate sponsors, are as follows:

- DeFleury Medal for professional excellence
- Essayons Award for spouses who make significant contributions to the Regiment
- Army Combat Engineer Sergeants (ACES) Award for the best squad leader/section sergeant in every engineer battalion, separate engineer company/detachment in all components
- Best Platoon Leader Award for the top engineer platoon leaders in the Active Army and Reserve Component
- Van Autreve Award for the engineer Soldier of the Year, named for Sergeant Major of the Army Leon L. Van Autreve
- Super Sapper Awards for the best junior engineer Soldier in each battalion or separate company-size unit in the force
- Flowers Award for Best Sapper Team for the winner of the annual competition at Fort Leonard Wood, named for Lieutenant General Robert B. Flowers (Retired)
- Best Warrant Officer Award for the Active Army and Reserve Component
- Lieutenant General (John W.) Morris Outstanding Civilian Award

Supporting Junior Members and Families

Junior members enjoy the most benefit from AEA. First, the annual dues structure is designed to benefit them.

Second, the majority of our annual Soldier memorial scholarships are offered only to junior members. AEA recognition programs that emphasize junior members include the ACES, Best Platoon Leader, Van Autreve, and Super Sapper awards. Family member benefits include a limited number of scholarships and the spouse-focused Essayons Award.

Chapters

AEA chapters are out there, although some are more active than others. AEA has a quick-and-easy “Chapter in a Box” document to assist any group interested in forming a chapter. Several of the brigade-level chapters have recently organized top-notch events and conferences. The Montgomery C. Meigs Chapter in Washington, D.C., annually supports the area Castle Ball, and brigade-level senior leader conferences have been quite successful for the 18th, 20th, and 36th Engineer Brigades. Local chapters can support a variety of events such as unit runs, sports tournaments, award ceremonies, formal dinners and military balls, meetings, and conferences. Some chapters enjoy local sponsorship from area businesses.

Engineer Regimental Store

Long established in the Engineer Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, the AEA Regimental Store is a true asset to the Regiment. Proceeds from the store support the museum and the many AEA programs and services oriented toward service to the Engineer Regiment. The store serves members of the Regiment, family members, and alumni of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, providing a wide variety of one-of-a-kind merchandise.

Conclusion

AEA provides a worthwhile and affordable service to the Engineer Regiment. If you're a leader of engineers, informing others of the benefits of AEA is part of taking care of your people. You can legally advise them that they can benefit from joining AEA and simply provide them with information about what those benefits are. They can share and give back too. 

Colonel O'Neill (Retired) is a 30-year veteran of the United States Army Corps of Engineers and has been the executive director of AEA since March 1998. AEA has offices at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and in the Engineer Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.