



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
FORT LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI 65473
VOICE: 573-563-5034 / 563-4145
FAX: 573-563-4012
EMAIL: Martha.I.yoshida.civ@mail.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 13-049

May 10, 2013

Marine NCO Wins TRADOC Instructor of the Year Honors

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Fort Leonard Wood is now home to the best non-commissioned officer instructor the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command has to offer – her name is Marine Staff Sgt. Erin Rios.

Rios is currently the assistant academics chief for the Motor Transport Instruction Company, Marine Corps Detachment.

To compete at the TRADOC level, Rios had to win several post competitions. First, she won at the company, then at the detachment level. She represented the Marine Corps Detachment at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence Instructor of the Year competition, where she won first place in the non-proponent/non-commissioned officer category — sending her to the TRADOC level.

Rios doesn't believe she has any special teaching abilities other than she enjoys sharing her knowledge with others. She said if her team leader wouldn't have asked her to take part in the MTIC Instructor of the Quarter competition back in 2011 she probably would not have competed.

"I just like to teach," Rios said. "I have seen instructors that are just as good, if not better than me. I know they can compete all the way up also; they just have to start with the instructor of the quarter."

Rios said the Army's checklist was different than the one the Marine Corps uses and she had to modify a few things. Most of her preparation time was spent doing the class presentation over and over until it was second nature. She attributes much of her success to her fellow Marines.

"For the MSCoE board, a demonstration and practical application portion was integrated into the period of instruction. Three motivated sergeants assisted me in getting the Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement to the training area, operational checking the self-recovery winch and practicing all the steps to ensure the practical application and demonstration would go smoothly on the day of evaluation. These Marines were instrumental in the overall success of the evaluation. I truly appreciate their hard work and dedication," Rios said.

(more)

In addition to her colleagues, Rios said she couldn't have won if it wasn't for her caring husband, kids and parents.

"I seriously could not have done this without the support of my Family — them cheering me on. There were many nights of easy dinners, or my husband cooking, so that I had time to work on my PowerPoint and outlines," Rios said.

Gunnery Sgt. Steven Baker, Motor Transport Instruction Company academics chief said Rios' determination and work ethic is what placed her above her peers.

"She put in a lot of rehearsal time. We put her through the gamut, but she didn't take our criticism personally. She just changed what needed to be changed and rolled with it. Her determination made her successful — she never quit," Baker said.

Two more 2012 TRADOC Instructor of the Year winners came from Fort Leonard Wood. Air Force Tech. Sgt. David Carr from the U.S. Army Engineer School placed second in the non-commissioned officer category; and Lynetta Powell from MSCoE placed third in the educator category.

"As a past Fort Leonard Wood Instructor of the Year winner, I think that this sets you above your peers in that you had to put in many more hours of preparation to make sure that you stood out amongst your peers to achieve that award. All of our winners can be proud of their accomplishments," said Bryan Boytek, G-37, Staff and Faculty Development training instructor. "This annual competition should be on instructors to-do-list — to stand out above your peers."

Baker said the entire Marine Corps Detachment is proud of Rios and he is excited to have her on his team as a master instructor, teaching at the Marine Detachment Instructor Academy.

"She now teaches the new instructors how to teach. You can't beat this," Baker said.

Rios hopes that one day her fellow instructors and students will follow in her footsteps.

"Just go for it. If you don't make it, you will get better the more you try," Rios said.

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Story and photo by Melissa Buckley, Guidon photojournalist.

Photo Outline:

130509instructor.jpg: Marine Staff Sgt. Erin Rios, Motor Transport Instruction Company, Marine Corps Detachment, checks the schedule of classes on her computer. Rios was recently named TRADOC's Instructor of the Year. (Army photo by Melissa Buckley/Released)

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains 80-90,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S.

Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Non Commissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.

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