

# OTC Volunteers give back to Special Olympics Texas, use paint

by Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)

KILLEEN, Texas -- Mixing 21 Soldiers and Army Civilians with 15 gallons of paint over about five hours in 55 degree drizzly weather became a recipe for making a difference in the community here Saturday.

That's how volunteers from the U.S. Army Operational Test Command at West Fort Hood, Texas saw things when they painted the Special Olympics Texas, Heart of Texas -- Area 12 "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street.

"The reason I'm here is, it's a good opportunity to volunteer my time and effort toward an organization that could use some help," said Lt. Col. Christopher Courtland, an operational test officer with OTC's Maneuver Test Directorate, and co-chairman for SOTX's Area 12.

"So, we're just kind of hanging out, painting the building; getting the things done that need to get done that we can ... volunteering our time."

Courtland said his daughter Kyleigh, 18, is a Special Olympics Olympian who enjoys cycling and bowling, so she has participated with SOTX for three years, allowing her to "better herself with better opportunities in the sports world." Kyleigh is a senior at Copperas Cove High School, Copperas Cove, Texas.

Other parents, like Army Civilian Cheryl Seymour, a budget analyst with OTC's Resource Management Office, brought her two kids as well.

"I brought my kids to show them that any time you have a chance, you help out others that need help," Seymour said. "I come from a family with eight kids and we didn't have anything. We were poor. And, so, those people who were willing to step up and help us when we needed help, I was very grateful for, and I just pay it forward."

Russell P. Ansbach, a certified Special Olympics coach and volunteer Treasurer of SOTX -- Area 12, has worked with the organization for 30 years, and has 58 area athletes he regularly trains. "This building has been needing a paint job for a long time," he said.

"Colonel Courtland, he took care of getting all the supplies ... I take care of getting the food for you guys for lunch today."

An 86-year-old Army Veteran, Ansbach became a Soldier during July 1947, and retired during 1967 as a Logistics Sergeant First Class.

A housing construction worker, he was asked during 1985 to give a hand putting wood siding on the building OTC Volunteers painted.

"Back then, I put new windows on the building. So, it makes me feel great because I don't have to worry about it (re-painting) anymore," he said, thinking of the OTC Volunteers. "It's done. And once it gets done, it's done. It used to be hard to get volunteers. Now, we don't have to worry."

Volunteer mindsets were the same among all OTC volunteers.

One OTC Soldier, Master Sgt. Moussa Doukoure, is originally from Ivory, a small West African nation. The NCOIC of OTC's Maneuver Support and Sustainment Test Directorate said, "Being a Soldier, we need to be involved in our community. This country (America) has been good to me. It has provided me lots and lots of stuff, and I feel I have that obligation to give some of it back to the community."

OTC is subordinate to the Army Test and Evaluation Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, and is the Army's only independent operational tester. Testing and assessing Army, Joint, and Multi-service warfighting systems in realistic operational environments, OTC uses typical Soldiers to determine whether the systems are effective, suitable, and survivable. OTC is required by public law to test major systems before they are fielded to its ultimate customer -- the American Soldier.

Note from the Special Olympics Texas (SOTX) website: Special Olympics Texas is a privately funded non-profit organization that changes lives through the power of sport by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities, promoting acceptance for all, and fostering communities of understanding and respect. SOTX provides continuing opportunities for more than 51,300 children and adults with intellectual disabilities throughout the Lone Star State to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship. <http://www.sotx.org>

**Source:** [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil), April 9, 2016



**Photo Credit: OTC file photo**

The "before view" of the Special Olympics Texas, Heart of Texas -- Area 12 "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas, needing a new coat of paint. Twenty-one Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers of the U.S. Army Operational Test Command created a "Make a Difference Day" Apr. 9 to give back to the Killeen community.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**

Mission complete, the Special Olympics Texas, Heart of Texas -- Area 12 "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas, stands with a new coat of paint, courtesy of 21 Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers of the U.S. Army Operational Test Command. OTC created its "Make a Difference Day" Apr. 9 to give back to the Killeen, Texas community.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**  
Lt. Col. Michael C. Firmin, senior test officer with Operational Test Command's Maneuver Support and Sustainment Test Directorate, reaches for more paint in the bucket held by Nathaniel Eschmann, a Salado High School (Salado, Texas) student and son of Army Civilian Cheryl Seymour, a budget analyst with OTC's Resource Management Office. A handful of children joined 21 Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers during OTC's "Make a Difference Day" Apr. 9 to give back to the community by painting the SOTX's "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**  
U.S. Army Operational Test Command Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers stand exhausted but happy after giving back to the community during their "Make a Difference Day" Apr. 9. OTC's Volunteers painted the Special Olympics Texas, Heart of Texas -- Area 12 "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**

Bill Dano, a Civilian student intern with Operational Test Command's Test Technology Directorate, rolls paint onto the Special Olympics Texas, Heart of Texas -- Area 12 "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas. Twenty-one Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers created OTC's "Make a Difference Day" Apr. 9 to give back to the Killeen, Texas community.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**

Capt. Marion E. Williams, an operations officer in Operational Test Command's Operations Directorate, paints double-fisted Apr. 9 at the Special Olympics Texas, Heart of Texas -- Area 12 "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas. Twenty-one Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers created OTC's "Make a Difference Day" to give back to the Killeen, Texas community.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**

Eighty-six-year-old Russell P. Ansbach, a certified Special Olympics coach and volunteer Treasurer of Special Olympics Texas -- Area 12, has worked with the organization for 30 years, and has 58 area athletes he regularly trains. He provided lunch to 21 Operational Test Command Soldiers and Army Civilians in exchange for their volunteer efforts in painting the SOTX's "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas Apr. 9. An Army Veteran, Ansbach became a Soldier during July 1947 and retired during 1967 as a Logistics Sergeant First Class.



**Photo Credit: Mr. Michael M. Novogradac (Hood)**

Lt. Col. Christopher Courtland, an operational test officer with Operational Test Command's Maneuver Test Directorate, and co-chairman for Special Olympics Texas -- Area 12, stands with his daughter Kyleigh, 18, a Special Olympics Olympian who enjoys cycling and bowling, outside the SOTX's "Killeen-Cove-Hood Phantoms" headquarters building along Conder Street in Killeen, Texas. A senior at Copperas Cove High School, Copperas Cove, Texas, Kyleigh helped her Dad and his 20 fellow Soldier and Army Civilian Volunteers paint the building during OTC's "Make a Difference Day" Apr. 9.