

SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 8, Issue 2

"127th Wing — Your Hometown Air Force"

March 2025



WARRIORS WANTED

Serving with purpose: National Guard offers opportunity, readiness and community impact

For those looking for a career that provides stability, purpose and the chance to serve close to home, the Michigan Air National Guard is an unmatched opportunity. As a member of the Guard here at the 127th Wing, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, you're not just serving your country, you're directly supporting your own state and community. Whether responding to natural disasters, assisting law enforcement, or deploying when needed, the Guard allows you to make



Master Sgt. Brandon Hamm

a real difference while maintaining your civilian job, education and family life. Unlike active duty military service, the National Guard gives you the best of both worlds: military benefits and paid training while staying connected to home.

Our new recruiting efforts focus on what truly MATTERS — a career that provides Money, with steady pay, bonuses and tuition assistance; Advancement, with leadership opportunities and career growth; and Travel, with the chance to

see new places while serving. You will receive top-tier Training, equipping you with valuable skills that translate to civilian careers, as well as Education benefits like \$14,400 per year in tuition assistance and up to \$481 monthly with the Montgomery GI Bill-Selective Reserve (Ch. 1606). The Guard also offers Recreation programs, fitness resources and outdoor activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. Beyond the tangible benefits, there's the deep Satisfaction of serving with pride; the Security of stable employment, health care and retirement options; and the Support

of belonging to a strong military community.

For those thinking about joining our team, the 127th Wing's Student Flight program provides our newest Airmen a head start, ensuring you are physically, mentally and emotionally prepared for Basic Military Training. This program teaches military drills, marching, customs and protocols, helping new recruits gain confidence before they even set foot in boot camp! Led by experienced Airmen on our team, Student Flight builds camaraderie and provides mentorship, making the transition into military life smoother and

more successful. We want you to succeed!

While service does come with challenges, the benefits and opportunities of serving in the 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard far outweigh them. From career development to community service, financial security to lifelong friendships, the Guard is more than just a commitment. It's a pathway to personal success, both in uniform and beyond.

If you're looking for a way to serve with purpose while building a strong future, 127th Wing is ready for you. Give us a call at 586-239-5511 to discuss your options.

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SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

President
Jonathan Vandenbossche

The Selfridge Base Community Council's mission is to continue improving outstanding relationships between both the civilian and military-service communities centered at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

Wing Commander
Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato

Deputy Wing Commander
Col. David Spehar

Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant
Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick

127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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Mrs. Penny Carroll

Base Visual Information Manager
Mr. Andrew Schumann

Chief of Community Engagement
Mr. Bruce Huffman

Command Information NCOIC
Master Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick

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Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton
Tech. Sgt. Nicole Erb
Senior Airman Nathan Wingate
Airman 1st Class Jacob Hessen

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

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On the cover: An F-22 Raptor aircraft, assigned to the 94th Fighter Squadron, departs Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, March 6, 2025.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD
PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

**Go hunting
this weekend.**




Michigan Air National Guard



HONORS



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. DAN HEATON

U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato, commander, 127th Wing, Michigan National Guard, right, and Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick, 127th Wing command chief master sergeant, left, present recently-promoted master sergeants at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Feb. 1, 2025. The master sergeants were ceremoniously inducted to the ranks of Air Force senior noncommissioned officers. As senior NCOs, the Airmen provide leadership and technical expertise to their units.

127th Wing recognizes new senior NCOs

By Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton

127th Wing Public Affairs

Thirty-eight Citizen-Airmen of the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing were recognized in February for their promotion to the senior noncommissioned officer corps during an induction ceremony at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on Feb. 1, 2025.

The Airmen were all promoted to the rank of master sergeant in 2024, placing them among the senior tier of the enlisted force of the Air Force.

Advancement to the rank of master sergeant means that the words found in the Air Force creed of "wing-

man, leader, warrior," mean a little bit more, said Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick, command chief master sergeant of the 127th Wing.

"Becoming a senior NCO means that the job is not done. In fact, we need your leadership more than ever and, more importantly, your Airmen need it," Hedrick said.

During the ceremony, each of the newly minted master sergeants was awarded a coin from the Top III Council and a certificate of appreciation.

"We look to these senior NCOs to continue to make a difference not only in their individual shops, but across the wing and the Air Force as a whole," said Master Sgt.

Jabett Glenn, who served as master of ceremonies at the ceremony.

Recognized during the ceremony were:

- Jennifer Sladovich, 127th Wing headquarters
- Jacquelyn Sommers, 127th Wing headquarters
- Chelsea Fitzpatrick, 127th Wing headquarters
- Erica Garza, 127th Air Refueling Group
- Aaron Wacker, 191st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Kayla Walls, 191st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Christopher Johnson, 191st Maintenance Squadron
- Jarod Mansfield, 191st Maintenance Squadron

- Bradley McClellan, 191st Maintenance Squadron
- Michael Owen, 191st Maintenance Squadron
- Joshua Terlaje, 191st Maintenance Squadron
- Jordan Kaminski, 171st Air Refueling Squadron
- Corey Brazill, 127th Civil Engineer Squadron
- Samara Underwood, 127th Civil Engineer Squadron
- James Mack, 127th Communications Squadron
- Joel Canvasser, 127th Force Support Squadron
- Raymond Stier, 127th Force Support Squadron
- Grant Kumfer, 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron
- Michael Godwin, 127th

- Logistics Readiness Squadron
- Christopher Dressig, 127th Security Forces Squadron
- James Myatt, 127th Security Forces Squadron
- Roberto Trevino, 127th Security Forces Squadron
- Tami Morgan, 127th Maintenance Group
- Elizabeth Muhaw, 127th Maintenance Group
- Dain Zielinski, 127th Maintenance Group
- Frank Grebenok, 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Cory Jones, 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Kyle Martinez, 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

- Aaron Mills, 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Adam Ring, 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Jason Chapman, 127th Maintenance Squadron
- Damon Childers, 127th Maintenance Squadron
- Michael Ginzler, 127th Maintenance Squadron
- Drew Reynolds, 127th Maintenance Squadron
- Scott Robbert, 127th Maintenance Squadron
- James Tennimon, 127th Maintenance Squadron
- Shinika Chelcher-St. Croix, 285th Civil Engineer Squadron
- Keisha Huggins, 285th Civil Engineer Squadron

ENDURING FIGHTER MISSION

Mitchell Trophy Air Race revived at Selfridge

By Master Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick

127th Wing Public Affairs

Members of the 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard, hosted the 1st Fighter Wing at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on March 6, 2025, reviving an aerial competition made popular when World War I flying aces were front-page news. In a collaboration 89 years in the making, the 1st Fighter Wing, whose lineage dates back to the 1st Pursuit Group, brought part of the Mitchell Trophy Air Race back to Selfridge, a heritage home of both the unit and the race.

"The opportunity to showcase Selfridge's capabilities during the Mitchell Trophy Air Race is a testament to the enduring fighter mission that's been here for more than a century," said Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato, commander of the 127th Wing and Selfridge Air National Guard Base. "As the largest Air National Guard installation in the United States, Selfridge is equipped to handle the most advanced aircraft and weapons systems in the military fleet."

The 127th Wing actively flies both the A-10 Thunderbolt II attack and KC-135 Stratotanker refueling missions. In addition, the Michigan Army National Guard, U.S. Border Patrol, Customs and Border Protection, and Coast Guard share the 1.3 million square feet of ramp space, flying the CH-47 Chinook, MH-65E Dolphin and multiple other rotary and fixed-wing aircraft from the base, 20 miles north of Detroit.

With all the infrastructure and support capabilities to refuel and house 24 fighter aircraft, the 127th Wing was easily positioned to host the six F-22 Raptor aircraft racing in from Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia on March 6.

"While supporting fighter aircraft is a crucial element of our lethal combat mission, the rich history and heritage of Selfridge makes us an exceptional location for the race," Brancato said.

Between 1922 and 1936, the



"This group was photographed admiring the Mitchell Trophy for which the Mitchell Trophy will be flown [Oct. 17, 1936]. The young set is particularly interested in the event which will begin at Selfridge Field, 10 planes being entered in the race."

Mitchell Trophy Air Race was held 12 times, five of those at Selfridge, including the first and last iterations. Open only to pilots of the 1st Pursuit Group, the first race was held as part of the larger Pulitzer Trophy air races on Oct. 14, 1922. Six open-cockpit biplanes completed five laps on a 20-mile course marked with pylons. The winner, Lt. Donald Stace, covered 100 miles at a rate of 148 miles per hour.

In contrast, the 2025 competitors flew fifth-generation fighter aircraft from JBLE to Selfridge, completed a series of tasks on the ground and arrived back at home station in less than five hours.

While air races were a beloved pastime of a bygone era boasting crowds in the tens of thousands, winning required the aerial skills of lethally trained, combat-tested pilots. The competitions tested mettle and many died during these events.

"The Mitchell Trophy air race was more than just a contest of skill; it was an embodiment of the 1st Pursuit Group's commitment to excellence and innovation," said Joshua Lashley, the 1st Fighter Wing historian. "The competition was fierce and winning the race was one of the greatest honors a pilot could achieve."

Unlike the original series, the

2025 race tested the combat skills of today's warfighter, using the Air Force concept of "agile combat employment." ACE is a skill set whereby pilots, air crews and maintainers operate flying missions in combat zones, without the manning or infrastructure of established air bases.

"This is about replacing the logistical challenges we will face in a peer conflict, where our ability to move, adapt and fight in the face of numerous maintenance, support, weather and intelligence challenges, may very well determine mission success," said Col. Brandon Tellez, 1st Fighter Wing commander.

Three teams of two pilots, each representing a squadron of the 1st Fighter Wing, received the "mission" the morning of the event. They were tasked with getting their jets inspected, armed, fueled and launched to fly to Selfridge. Once at Selfridge, one pilot stayed with the aircraft to refuel and inspect in preparation for takeoff, while the other pilot had a side mission to complete.

Without any logistical support or contacts on the ground, the Airmen left the flight line in search of the Selfridge Military Air Museum to sign the historic guest register. In temperatures well below freezing and with winds gusting up to 30 mph, the first pilot took off on foot to reach the museum, approximately two miles away. In 30 minutes, Capt. Marbro, 27th Fighter Squadron, was the first to put his signature down.

With pages adorned with signatures of former presidents, high-ranking military officials and aviation heroes dating back to 1987, the pilots were instructed to sign their names and to add "Mitchell Trophy Air Race 2025."

Lt. Col. Devil, commander, 94th Fighter Squadron, the second to reach the museum, shook the hands of approximately 20 bystanders in the museum after completing his task and before returning to his jet.

Although the Mitchell Trophy Air Race looked much different in 2025 than in its heyday, the opportunity to exercise military readiness and demonstrate warrior ethos was as strong as ever.

"The race is more than just a competition," Tellez said. "It's a way to honor our heritage as air power pioneers, the legacy and sacrifices of those who came before us and the enduring role of air power in national defense that remains ahead."

Devil and his teammate, Capt. Rizz, both of the 94th Fighter Squadron, were named winners of the Mitchell Trophy. Now, after 89 years, all the Selfridge bystanders who shook Devil's hand can say they met a Mitchell Trophy Cup winner.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

Lt. Col. Devil, a pilot assigned to the 94th Fighter Squadron, runs across the flight line at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, March 6, 2025. The 127th Wing hosted 1st Fighter Wing Airman and F-22 Raptor aircraft competing in the revived Mitchell Trophy Air Race, an event that last took place at Selfridge more than 89 years ago.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

Lt. Col. Devil, a pilot assigned to the 94th Fighter Squadron, prepares to depart Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, March 6, 2025. The 127th Wing hosted 1st Fighter Wing Airman and F-22 Raptor aircraft competing in the revived Mitchell Trophy Air Race, an event that last took place at Selfridge more than 89 years ago.



U.S AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. CHELSEA E. FITZPATRICK

Lt. Col. Devil, an F-22 Raptor pilot with the 94th Fighter Squadron, signs the Selfridge guest book at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, March 6, 2025. The 127th Wing hosted 1st Fighter Wing Airman and aircraft competing in the revived Mitchell Trophy Air Race, an event that last took place at Selfridge more than 89 years ago.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

Lt. Col. Devil, a pilot assigned to the 94th Fighter Squadron, arrives at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, in an F-22 Raptor aircraft, March 6, 2025. The 127th Wing hosted 1st Fighter Wing Airman and F-22 Raptor aircraft competing in the revived Mitchell Trophy Air Race, an event that last took place at Selfridge more than 89 years ago.

MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE

Crew chiefs give the green light to 'go'

By Senior Airman Nathan Wingate
127th Wing Public Affairs

The 127th Wing's refueling mission depends on the readiness, dedication and precision of its Airmen.

Every successful KC-135 Stratotanker mission results from hours of inspections and maintenance.

"We conduct scheduled inspections to ensure everything is operating correctly, as if it were a brand-new aircraft," said Senior Airman Christian Bennett, an aircraft maintenance specialist assigned to the 191st Air Refueling Maintenance Group.

For more than 60 years, the KC-135 Stratotanker has served as the U.S. Air Force's primary aerial refueling aircraft, supporting Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and allied aircraft worldwide.

These specialists pay close attention to detail because even the smallest oversight can mean the difference between mission success and failure.

"We do this so nothing falls through the cracks," Bennett said. "If we get the green light to go in an hour, the aircraft is ready to fly."

During inspections, Airmen like Bennett strip the aircraft down to its core —

removing panels, checking hydraulics and ensuring every system functions at peak performance.

"We take the plane apart to its basic components," Bennett said. "We grease what needs to be greased, check all the flight control systems, and inspect the nose and landing gear struts."

Maintenance Airmen work in close collaboration with integrated avionics, aerospace ground equipment, and aircraft fuel systems specialists to keep the KC-135 mission-ready.

For Bennett, working on this aircraft is more than just a job — it's a passion. He has spent three and a half years specializing in KC-135 maintenance.

"The best part of the job is working directly with the aircraft," Bennett said. "It fine-tunes my skills and gives me the opportunity to work on aircraft in several other countries."

For those interested in maintenance, aviation or trade skills, the Air National Guard provides valuable opportunities.

"If someone doesn't know where to start, I recommend starting here," Bennett said. "This has been a great place for me and learning these aircraft has been an incredible experience."

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Zachary Beltran, an aircraft maintenance specialist assigned to the 191st Air Maintenance Squadron, Michigan National Guard reviews a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft technical manual, at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Feb. 1, 2025. Aircraft maintenance specialists do everything from removing and installing engine components to identifying corrosion for prevention and repair to ensure that every time aircraft are in use they are safe and operating at full capacity.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN NATHAN WINGATE



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christian Bennett, an aircraft maintenance specialist with the 191st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan National Guard, sets the position of a maintenance lift under the wing of a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft prior to an inspection at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Feb. 2, 2025. Aircraft maintainers routinely conduct hour post-flight inspections, which is a visual examination of certain systems and components to determine whether the aircraft is suitable for another flight.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christian Bennett, an aircraft maintenance specialist with the 191st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan National Guard, inspects the spoiler lockouts on the wing of a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Feb. 2, 2025. Aircraft maintainers routinely conduct hour post-flight inspections, which is a visual examination of certain systems and components to determine whether the aircraft is suitable for another flight.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Public affairs Airmen win at telling 127th Wing story

By Master Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick
127th Wing Public Affairs

Two 127th Wing Airmen were nationally recognized on Feb. 28, 2025, when the National Guard announced winners in the 2024 National Guard Media contest. Tech. Sgt. Andrew Schumann and Senior Airman Nathan Wingate, both public affairs specialists with the 127th Wing, brought home accolades.

"The individual and unit entries showcase the best of our public affairs talents in print, photography, videography and public affairs across the country," Tracy O'Grady-Walsh, National Guard Bureau public affairs director, said. "We applaud the dedication and efforts that your Soldiers, Airmen and civilians give to our nation every day to bring the Guard story to the American public."

The National Guard media contest is comprised of two media competitions — one each for the Army and Air Force. Members of the Air National Guard, like Schumann and Wingate, entered the competition named in honor of Chief Master Sgt. Douglas W. Morrell, a decorated combat photographer who earned two Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and was held as a prisoner of war during World War II.

Today, the Morrell Media Awards program recognizes military and civilian public affairs practitioners and military musicians for excellence in outstanding achievements in furthering Air Force, Space Force and Department of Defense communication objectives. The MMA also fosters an environment of innovation and growth, leading to more effective communications programs.

The 2024 MMA was open to public affairs Airmen in the first six enlisted ranks. Schumann and Wingate submitted photos, audio, video and written products in many of the 22 eligible categories.

After being selected by the 127th Wing, their entries competed against public affairs Airmen at the 110th Wing. Michigan National Guard's Joint Forces Headquarters public affairs then selected entries that went on to compete with enlisted Airmen across the ANG.

Schumann won the feature photo of the year for the Air National Guard with a surrealistic image taken during a snowstorm on Jan. 12, 2024.

The photo depicts the 127th Wing's fleet of A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft parked on the flight line with diagonally streaking snowfall. He found inspiration to take photos on a Friday evening when the rest of the base was heading home to beat the incoming snow.

"In a military environment, we're capturing moments that might otherwise go unnoticed — expressions of dedication, camaraderie or military prowess," Schumann said. "I focus on framing the shot in a way that draws people in and makes them feel something, whether they've worn the uniform or not."

His photo did have an impact online; it was shared on Reddit where commenters debated whether it was a real image or a pencil sketch. Another image from the same photo shoot landed on the July/August 2024 cover of Air and Space Forces Magazine.

"Lighting, angles and timing are important, but storytelling is what truly makes a photo stand out,"

Schumann said.

Schumann's protégé, Wingate, also saw recognition in this year's MMA, with a second place in the "video series" category with his podcast, "Welcome to Selfridge." Initiated in July 2024, Wingate began the video podcast series to help introduce key leaders and Airmen.

"I started the podcast to bridge the gap between Airmen and the community, by explaining careers, interests and benefits," Wingate said. "It's a chance for Airmen to get exposed to career fields they wouldn't typically interact with."

The first video in Wingate's contest entry introduced the Wing and surrounding community to the 127th Wing's new command chief master sergeant, Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick, who had just come to Michigan after serving at the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.

This outlet gave Hedrick the opportunity to share his mission and the commander's priorities with Wing members and the community.

In the second video of the contest entry, Wingate interviewed Staff Sgt. Adam Kopczyk, a command support staff Airman whose career field is integral in keeping the Air Force running. CSS are the administrators of all personnel, training and reporting requirements that keep the units running smoothly and supporting leadership teams.

The 127th Wing public affairs mission is to connect the unit, Selfridge Air National Guard Base and community by serving as an information conduit.

The nine-person team is charged with telling the story of the Servicemembers and employees dedicated to the military mis-



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

The National Guard media awards contest named this the best feature photo in the Air National Guard, Feb. 28, 2025. U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Andrew Schumann, a public affairs specialist assigned to the 127th Wing, Michigan National Guard said the key to taking a good photo in a military environment is to catch moments that "might otherwise go unnoticed—expressions of dedication, camaraderie or military prowess."

sions housed at the largest Air National Guard installation in the country.

Penny Carroll, chief of public affairs, is proud of her team's accolades and stresses the importance of sharing the Selfridge story around the world.

"The outstanding talent and skill of our public affairs Airmen continue to set the standard and winning the feature photo of the year for the National Guard is a testament to their dedication, creativity and mission impact," Carroll said. "This achievement reflects the professionalism and excellence that define our public affairs team every day."

Schumann's photo submission will go on to compete in the final level of the 2024 MMA where it will be judged by Air Force public affairs. Whether he comes out on top, he says that



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD COURTESY PHOTO

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Nathan Wingate, a public affairs specialist with the 127th Wing, Michigan National Guard, left, interviews Staff Sgt. Adam Kopczyk, a command support specialist, 127th Air Refueling Group, during an episode of "Welcome to Selfridge." Wingate took second place in the National Guard media contest for a video series for two of his episodes of the podcast he started in July 2024.

winning isn't about personal achievement, but being able to tell the Michigan National Guard story.

"The A-10 Thunderbolt represents Michigan air

power. So if this photo resonates with people, then I've done my job correctly," Schumann said. "Besides, what is more 'Michigan' than a 'hawg' in the snow?"

Macomb County Schools Students and Staff

With Gratitude for our
U.S. Servicemen and Women
who Sacrifice for our Freedoms



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