



NCO Honored With AMEDD Leadership Award

By Meghan Portillo

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The Army Medical Department has honored Master Sgt. Anthony Forker with the 2013 Capt. John R. Teal Leadership Award for his exemplary service in Afghanistan.

While assigned to the 30th Medical Command at Bagram Air Field, Forker worked for Task Force Medical Afghanistan, a 1,500-strong theater mission command element in charge of providing health care service support to U.S. and coalition forces in the area. As NCO in charge of current operations, Forker was a key leader among the seven officers and eight NCOs manning the Tactical Operations Center.

“Our job was to ensure that we were providing enough medical coverage throughout the theater of Afghanistan to support the warfighter,” Forker said. “Because the warfighters are withdrawing simultaneously along with closing forward operating bases and small camps, we have to decide where to place our assets so that warfighters — whether U.S. or coalition forces — have the support that they need.”

Named in honor of the first medical officer killed

during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Capt. John R. Teal Leadership Award is given annually to an officer and NCO who demonstrate significant contributions to their mission and to the medical support of the Army. Recipients receive a plaque, a congratulatory note from the Army surgeon general and an Army Commendation Medal.

Sgt. Maj. Anthony Stevens, chief operations NCO for 30th Medical Command’s G3 operations, nominated Forker for the award. He said he quickly recognized Forker’s competence and sound judgment. Though it was Forker’s first deployment, Stevens selected him as a member of the advance party charged with coordinating the change of command.

Stevens said that upon arriving, Forker immediately made a positive impact by setting up training for the arriving units. Forker often coached and mentored others on counseling, leadership development and Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. He taught junior soldiers as well as senior officers how to draft, process and manage clinical operational orders.

“He takes the time to make sure people get the mission, understand the task and are able to perform at a level of excellence,” Stevens said. “While we were deployed, he would sit down with a person, one-on-one, to make sure they understood all that was needed. Or, if more than one person needed extra help, he would organize a class.

“He has a very good approach when talking with personnel, regardless of rank. The key is that he does it in a way that doesn’t belittle the individual. They appreciate his time and his effort, knowing that he is helping to make them better.”

Col. Scott Dingle, a member of the award’s selection board, said the decision to honor Forker with the award was unanimous.

“It was evident, as we compared him to the five other candidates, that he had a phenomenal work ethic,” he said. “His duty to the medical operations mission was stupendous, and it was clear that he had an impact not just on his Soldiers within the 30th MEDCOM headquarters, but within the entire theater. . . . We saw that he lived the Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer, of a leader.”

When speaking of his accomplishments, Forker was quick to give credit to his fellow Soldiers.

“Success comes from the team. Nothing would have been possible had it not been for the team that I deployed with,” Forker said. “We had senior NCOs and seasoned commissioned officers who were willing to listen to people of lower rank, without hesitation, and

they were humble in how they did it. This is one of the reasons the 30th MEDCOM really is the best and most powerful MEDCOM in the world.”

Even when dealing with the best in the Army, however, Forker acknowledged that synchronizing a team of leaders is not easy. He said his background in psychology allowed him to understand the dynamics of a group involving so many senior personnel.

“Being able to demonstrate restraint — emotional restraint — was key to our team’s success,” Forker said. “Because you are stuck with the same people for nine months — living with them, working with them, eating with them, sleeping in the same room as them — emotions have a tendency to run high. Having emotional restraint allows you to take a step back and identify what it is you are there for, who you are working with, whether you have the same goal, and a way to move forward.”

Through Forker’s dedication to his team, he demonstrated the qualities every NCO should possess, Dingle said.

“He is a living example,” he said. “His professionalism, his fitness, his attention to detail on the job and off the job, and the high standards he set impacted the entire command.

“His leadership and contributions are what the Teal award is all about . . . recognizing outstanding performance by officers and NCOs in the medical operations arena. In 2013, Forker was the man who achieved that honor hands down.”



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