



News Release

News Release No. 11

For Information: Don Kennedy, 410-436-7118

8 February 2011

ECBC Helps Kick-Off New EHS Mentorship Program

Employees Aim to Help At-Risk Students Succeed During National Mentoring Month

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. — Five staff members from the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) started the new year by volunteering to serve as mentors in support of a new educational outreach effort sponsored by the National Defense Education Program, Edgewood High School's (EHS) RAM Hour Academic Club.

Eager to start working with their mentees, ECBC mentors rolled up their sleeves and recently held the inaugural RAM Hour Academic Club mentoring session at Edgewood High School. They were assigned to freshmen in the school's RAM Academy, a program designed to provide its at-risk students extra-curricular guidance and reward their academic successes with exciting cohort activities. If no one was watching and pushing the 72 EHS freshmen currently enrolled in the program, they would likely slip and not graduate according to EHS Mathematics Teacher and RAM Academy Coordinator Kristin Davis.

"When you guys [from ECBC] approached us, we were so excited to hear that scientists and engineers from your organization were interested in mentoring our students," Davis said. "You are the perfect resource for this program."

ECBC mentors will meet with students in weekly one-on-one sessions with the goal of helping to boost academic achievements and provide guidance in preparation for their graduation. In their new role as a mentor and friend, they are determined to assist their struggling mentees to build confidence, understand and follow through with their homework assignments, and pave their way to success.

One of the Center's volunteers, Research Microbiologist Russell Dorsey, Ph.D. experienced the valuable support of a mentor in college himself. When he asked what he could do to thank her, she responded that he would never be able to pay her back, but that he could pass it on one day. Recognizing the powerful role of a mentor, Dorsey decided to serve his local community and become a role model to an Edgewood High School student.

"I read a few books on how to become a good mentor and role model before making this commitment," Dorsey said. "While focusing to help my mentee in math and science, I also hope to provide him with tools that will guide him through life."

Davis commented that most students recognize the importance of participating in the RAM Hour

Academic Club mentorship program and that she hoped that they receive the care they are looking for. However, student parents collectively embrace this new initiative and have increasingly requested mentorship support for their children.

Striving to meet the local community's — and more specifically Edgewood's — educational needs, ECBC Community and Educational Outreach Program Manager Mary Doak has reached out to another neighboring school and answered the call by offering mentorship support to its RAM Academy students.

“With America's dropout rates representing an unprecedented challenge, the gap between the number of mentors and the number of young people who need a mentor continues to grow,” Doak said. “I am glad that we were able to successfully establish a new mentorship initiative at Edgewood High School and will continue to encourage our employees to help make a difference in local students' lives.”

The academic performance of EHS student Raquan Witherspoon, who is being mentored by ECBC Computer Scientist Jarell Johnson, has significantly picked up in the week after his first mentoring session. According to his math teacher Davis, he has completed all class assignments and scored 100 percent on a recent math quiz that included adding, subtracting and multiple fractions.

“It is really exciting to see such quick progress,” she said. “This is his first good grade all year.”

In celebration of National Mentoring Month and Thank Your Mentor Day on Jan. 25, ECBC recognized its workforce members that dedicatedly serve as mentors in their community. ECBC employees that currently support the RAM Hour Academic Club initiative include Research Microbiologist Russell Dorsey, Ph.D., Microbiologist Laurie Fazekas-Carey, Research Biologist Darrel Menking, Computer Scientist Jarell Johnson and Chemist Julius Owens.

For more information about ECBC, please visit <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/>.

ECBC is the Army's principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering and field operations. ECBC has achieved major technological advances for the warfighter and for our national defense, with a long and distinguished history of providing the Armed Forces with quality systems and outstanding customer service. Located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., ECBC is a U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command laboratory. For more information about the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, please visit our web site at <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/> or call (410) 436-7718.