

Year of the NCO
By CSM John Fourhman

The Army has officially recognized 2009 as the Year of the Noncommissioned Officer. This recognition is a tribute to our elite NCO Corps and the enormous contributions that it has made in shaping our great nation, and our Army.

During the Year of the NCO, the Army will showcase stories of NCOs, demonstrating their leadership, devotion to duty, knowledgeable experience and sacrifice in making our Army the standard bearer for all other Armies to follow.

Our NCO Corps provides the necessary training to numerous Armies across the world as those Nations continue to build and improve their military forces; demonstrating time and again, it is, and rightfully will always be called, the "Backbone of the Army."

In addition to highlighting the stories of our NCOs, the Year of the NCO has four initiatives that it will focus on this year to enhance and improve our NCO Corps.

I want to discuss these initiatives, as they are four important fundamentals that make us better Soldiers and NCOs, and help enhance our Army.

The first initiative is Education. There are numerous ways that NCOs continue their education while serving in our Army; they enroll into college courses, attend Noncommissioned Officer Education System schools and also take correspondence courses. Some of the key points to the education initiative are the Membership Expansion of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Army Degrees system by 10 new online colleges; expanding and enhancing College of the American Soldier, which enhances leadership and warfighting capabilities, and grows the multi-skilled NCO characteristics; improving Warrior University, whose mission is to synchronize and integrate all infantry training so that the right Soldier receives the right training at the right time, regardless of location; and the creation of Army Career Tracker, which is a web-based career management tool that will integrate training, assignment history, and formal/informal education paths.

Fitness is the second initiative and acknowledges the need to sustain and improve both the physical and mental fitness of our NCOs. It is critical for our NCO Corps to remain at the highest level of readiness, and that starts with taking care of yourself, physically and mentally. This year, the current health screening process going on at the Sergeants Major Academy will be implemented in Warrior Leaders Course, Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course and Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course. In addition, develop and implement Phase I, II and III of Master Fitness Course and Mental Health Courses for the structured self-development system. These programs not only stress the importance of our physical and mental well-being as we continue to serve overseas, but also their importance when we return home.

"All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership, I will provide that leadership." Those words are taken directly from our Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer and are at the very core of what being an NCO is truly about... leading Soldiers. In the third initiative, Leadership, the Army focuses on strengthening the NCO Corps through acknowledging the NCOs role and importance in our Army. A new proposed NCO promotion certificate would have both the Army Chief of Staff and the Sergeant Major of the Army signature blocks to demonstrate the important transformation that a Soldier takes when they

enter the NCO Corps. A NCO Wall of Fame inside the Pentagon has also been proposed to identify those NCOs who have demonstrated the qualities and values that exhibit our great NCO Corps. Also, by fully implementing the NCO Leadership Skills Inventory, the Army will diligently work to getting the right NCO into the right positions, setting not only them up for success, but the Army as well.

The fourth and final initiative is Pride in Service. This initiative will show the importance of our NCO Corps to the Army. The projects tie into the current fight and the extensive history of the NCO Corps. By learning where we came from as NCOs we can continue to leave a legacy for others to follow. The NCO Museum, which pays tribute to the men and women who have served before us, is in need of repair and funding has been requested to properly modernize and renovate the museum to appropriately acknowledge and highlight our NCO Corps. In addition, a new NCO video is being created, along with Army Strong videos focusing on the great leadership young men and women will get or how they can aspire to be an NCO leader; both of these videos will also help with the current recruiting market as we continue searching for the future of our NCO Corps.

“I am proud of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the Military Service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself.” It is so important for every one of us to not only know, but live the Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer every day; especially as the Army celebrates our accomplishments during the Year of the NCO.

I am thankful for everything the NCOs in this organization do each day to make our Army and U.S. Army Central Command even better.