

Medical Recruiting Brigade celebrates fifth anniversary and a record performance

FORT KNOX, Ky.—In just a few short years, the Army's Medical Recruiting Brigade has set new records accessing professionals to join the ranks of the Army Medical Department, Chaplain Corps, Warrant Officer ranks, and Special Operations forces.

The Medical Recruiting Brigade (MRBDE) recently celebrated its fifth anniversary in a ceremony that featured the Command General of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Maj. Gen. David L. Mann and other dignitaries at the brigade headquarters at Fort Knox, Ky.

"What the Medical Recruiting Brigade has been able to accomplish is truly historic," said Maj. Gen. Mann during the anniversary celebration. "We couldn't meet this incredibly important recruiting mission without the hard work of each of you," he said in his address to members of the brigade.

On Oct. 2, 2007, the U.S. Army's Medical Recruiting Brigade was formally established. Col. Rafael Montagno was appointed as the first commander, and Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Telepak assumed the position of command sergeant major, or the senior enlisted advisor to the commander.

The Medical Recruiting Brigade concept was discussed at various levels of the Army chain of command in the years prior to 2007. Before that, the medical recruiting mission was divided amongst five medical recruiting detachments assigned to each of the enlisted recruiting brigades across the country. The idea of a brigade dedicated solely to the medical recruiting mission gained serious traction in 2005, when the medical recruiting detachments became battalions. The concept became reality with its approval by Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, Commanding General of U.S. Army Accessions Command, in late 2006.

The Brigade had a few challenges in its early days.



Left to Right: Sgt. Maj. Manuel Atencio, Medical Recruiting Brigade (MRBDE) Command Sergeant Major, Col. Karrie Fristoe, MRBDE Commander, Maj. Gen. David L. Mann, Commanding General, U. S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), and Sgt. Maj. Todd Moore, Command Sergeant Major, USAREC, cut the Medical Recruiting Brigade's 5 Year Anniversary cake during a ceremony in the command conference room at the brigade headquarters on Fort Knox, KY on Oct. 2, 2012..

“We essentially had to train the entire Brigade staff,” said Col. Rafael Montagno, the first brigade commander. “We had a few members of the staff who had the training and background to help the brigade function, but we had many more that did not. It took some real effort to get everything established across a footprint that spanned the entire United States and overseas, and to get everyone on the same sheet of music in terms of how we were going to conduct business,” he said.

The creation of the Medical Recruiting Brigade also had success early on—it reaped an immediate surge in the volume of applicants, according to Sgt. Maj. Telepak.

“Morale improved. The brigade members felt a new sense of pride in their new organization, and recruiters felt like they were part of an organization that was concerned with their well being and success,” Telepak said. “Early on, we also developed new tactics, techniques and procedures that we shared across the brigade. They helped us to reach consistent levels of mission success across the board,” he said.

In October of 2009, the brigade assumed responsibility for recruiting special operations Soldiers, warrant officers and chaplains. Today, the Medical Recruiting Brigade provides the command, administrative, advertising, logistical, legal, financial and operational control of five medical recruiting battalions spread across the entire United States, plus the Chaplain Recruiting Branch. It also continues to provide administrative and logistical support to the Special Operations Recruiting Battalion and Warrant Officer recruiters. Operational control of the Special Operations Recruiting Battalion and Warrant Officer recruiting shifted to Recruiting Command on 1 October of 2012.

In August of 2010, the Medical Recruiting Brigade received the Unit Special Designation ‘Allgood’s Highlanders’, in memory of Col. Brian D. Allgood, the highest-ranking medical officer to give his life for his country in the Iraq war. Allgood was killed when the Black Hawk helicopter he was riding in was forced down by enemy fire and ambushed on the ground northeast of Baghdad Jan. 20, 2007. Col. Allgood was well known for his steadfast commitment to his Soldiers, patients, staff and Army families.

Today, ‘Allgood’s Highlanders’ continue to succeed, increasing its number of accessions in volume, critical areas of concentration, and focusing on the highest quality applicants. The Army’s Soldiers, families and retirees deserve nothing less, according to Col. Fristoe, the current commander of the brigade.

“The Medical Recruiting Brigade has enjoyed unprecedented success in both volume and critical need categories since the brigade’s activation,” said Col. Karrie Fristoe. “Due to the hard work of our recruiters and civilian staffers, we are providing the quality professionals needed to treat and minister to our Soldiers, wounded warriors, family members and retirees.”