



The Sijan Sentinel

Fall 2023, ISSUE 3

October 2023

WELCOME TO AFA
SIJAN CHAPTER #125



President: Caty Rozema
Vice President: Aaron Prupas
Secretary: Gayle Divine
Treasurer: Coen Williams

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT and EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



Lance P. Sijan AFA members,

What an honor! I am absolutely thrilled to serve as the newest president of the Lance P. Sijan AFA chapter. It's not lip service to say that I stand on the shoulders of giants who held this position over the years. I look forward to serving our community as faithfully as they did. I will admit that I have a secret weapon: the Sijan board. They are energized, dedicated, and they can't wait to serve YOU.

Together, we will bring AFA's goodness to the front range as we deliver on our mission to:

Educate:

Through flagship STEM programs like CyberPatriot and StellarXplorers, teacher grants and teacher of the year awards, scholarships, and more.

Advocate:

To promote aerospace power by offering military and industry collaboration opportunities and continuous learning events.

Support:

By delivering vital care and feeding of our military and their families through initiatives like United Forces & Families (F2) and social gatherings.

I want to hear from you! What can your Sijan chapter do to support YOU? Look for opportunities to engage in the near future.

Again, what an honor. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to serve those who have served, are serving now, or who will serve in the future as well as their families, whose faithful service is beyond measure. Thank you for this opportunity.

Now, let's get to work!

On your wing,
Caty



Lance P. Sijan Members,

It is truly my honor to have been elected as your next Vice President. Along with the other new officers under Caty's leadership and guidance, I am eager to roll up my sleeves, open my ears, and get to work for you, our Airmen, Guardians, and families on our mission to Educate, Advocate, and Support. The future of the Lance P. Sijan Chapter is bright and I am excited to be a part of this great chapter!

All the best,
Aaron

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER



The opportunity to serve in the Sijan Chapter as Treasurer is a great honor. Starting my military career with the stories of Lance P. Sijan, the legacy speaks for itself, and I am excited to be a part of this chapter as it serves the DAF community in Colorado Springs, especially the multitude of junior Airmen and Guardians that call this beautiful city home.

V/R,
Coen Williams

A SIJAN SPECIAL FEATURE

F2 TASK FORCE TIED TO AFA MISSION

Contributed by Melissa Gilliam Shaw

F2 Mission: To unite forces and families, strengthening quality of life for Air and Space communities.

F2 Vision: A culture where strong families continually build stronger forces.

F2 Values: Inclusion | Family | Community | Education | Advocacy

The F2 Task Force was created in September 2022 by the Air & Space Forces Association to bring forth meaningful solutions for quality of life issues facing Air and Space Force families. We are a forward-looking, impact focused group of advocates dedicated to bringing awareness, resources, and solutions to some of the toughest issues impacting our military families. The F2 Task Force is as a key piece of AFA's mission of supporting Airmen, Guardians, and their families, and our work recognizes AFA's leading role in enabling conversations and solutions, both. Members are inclusive of enlisted and officer spouses, caregivers, reserve spouses, and spouses of the Air Force and the Space Forces.

At both the 2022 Air Space and Cyber conference (ASC) and the 2023 Air Warfighter Symposium (AWS), AFA integrated quality of life panels into the main agenda, and we are doing the same this year for ASC. Past speakers included senior spouse leaders like Mrs. Sharene Brown, Mrs. Mollie Raymond, and Mrs. Susie Schwartz; spouses like myself and Heba Abedelaal; and Air and Space civilian leaders like Eddie Mentzer and Chris Parrett.

Additionally, in tandem with the work of the F2 Task Force, AFA has invested an initial \$50,000 in quality of life initiatives at the installation level with programs directly benefiting our Airmen, Guardians, and their families. F2's impact is realized through in-person and virtual events, resources and advocacy efforts that improve childcare, education, employment, healthcare and housing issues facing Air and Space Force families. We offer both Field Grands and Focus Grants. The very first Focus Grant was presented to Vance AFB for a Military Spouse Empowerment Expo. More than 400 spouses and Airmen participated!

The second Focus Grant supported an incredible Military Spouse Appreciation Month event featuring both Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Saltzman, with conversations moderated by our F2 Task Force Chari, Lyndsey Akers. 415 people registered, and the event is among AFA's top 50 most-visited web pages. 2023 Field Grants have included contributions to Tinker AFB, the 934th Air Wing, the 133rd Airlift Wing, and more! More than 1,250 Airmen, Guardians, and Family Members have been supported by these first 5 grants offered to AFA chapters this year, and we have more grants in the approval pipeline already.

The F2 Task Force is extremely fortunate to have the support of military spouse leaders like Mrs. Brown, who was at the table with us in September 2023 as we began to envision how spouses, and strong families, could help build stronger Air and Space Forces. We are confident that programs like these that strengthen families will also strengthen the total force now and in the future, contributing to recruitment, retention, and mission readiness.

Questions? Contact me at melissagilliamshaw@gmail.com

AROUND YOUR SIJAN COMMUNITY

AFA NATIONAL CONVENTION

Contributed by Linda Aldrich

Our Colorado delegation turned out in force for the 2023 AFA National Convention. As our Chairman of the Board of Directors, Bernie Skoch, so accurately stated, "...we gather at Convention to do work, renew old acquaintances, keep current ones fresh, and express our thanks to our staff members who work so hard on our behalf every day." First, we took time to meet and greet our Utah delegates from the Rocky Mountain Region, who also turned out in force, and then were off to the workshops, each delegate choosing what was of greatest interest to them or their Chapter. Our Colorado delegates Aaron Prupas, Mike Sumida, Rick Ragaller, Jerry White, Shannon Farrell, Emily Sawicki, Linda Aldrich and Kristen Christy represented three of the four Colorado Chapters, so brought back a wealth of information for the interests of our Chapters. Our Vice Chairman of the Board, Aerospace Education, Stephen Gourley, is also from Colorado and may vote with the delegation or with the board, as we discovered when we went into our Region Caucus late Saturday. The Convention Workshops were "Yes, You CAN Grow your Leadership Team", "Partnering with Arnold Air Society/Silver Wings for New Youthful Chapter Energy", "Re-Bluing our AFA Field and Re-energizing our Chapters", and "Understanding and Supporting Space Force Guardians at the Chapter Level". Our individual Chapters can expect to benefit greatly from all the ideas and discussion that occurred during each of these workshops.

Saturday afternoon kicked off the first of two days of business sessions. Bernie Skoch welcomed us and talked about his year as the Vice Chair for Field Operations. Bernie is a long time AFA advocate and has been a positive influence and supporter for Field Operations. We wish him well and thank him for his service at the National AFA level. And that brings us to the main event for the Convention—elections. Chris Canada, who lives in our neighboring Nebraska, is now the newly elected Vice Chair of the Board, Field Operations.



Chris is the current AFA Nebraska State President and previous Midwest Region President. He has held Board positions with Project Management Institute (PMI), Heartland Chapter (a non-profit 501(c) (3)), for the past six years, in roles including VP Communications and Marketing; VP Operations; President; and Chairman of the Board. He has also sat on the Board of Trustees for Sanitation and Improvement District 243 for the past nine years, in roles including Board Clerk and Compliance Officer. Chris has experience in project and program management through many years in military and post-military. He has been a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) for 10 years and a Certified Scrum Master (CSM) for agile processes for seven years. He also has professional experience in budget management, including two years as the Director of Staff for the U.S. Air Force's second largest combat wing.

As a State and Region President, Chris's responsibilities and connections with Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings have overlapped with Colorado for several years. His dedication to the future of AFA is evidenced by his travel through winter weather to Denver for the AAS/SW Area VIII Conclave to meet with our cadets and students. Congratulations to Chris on his new position! We have no doubt that he will be strong and effective leadership for AFA. The other election results for this Convention are: Todd Freece, National Director, East Area; Robin Rand, National Director at Large; Bill Harding, National Director at Large.

This was Chris' message to the delegates: "Under our recently approved bylaws, there are four positions on the Board of Directors that ensure Field representation for our great Association: the three Area Directors and the VCoB- FO. I have been a member of our Association since 1980, a life member since 1985, and active for decades—I understand our history, strengths, and challenges. It would be great to say that I have all the answers too, but that just isn't so. I have and will continue to "roll up my sleeves" to work on solutions to our challenges, believe in and live our Association's mission, and embrace optimism about its' future so our Association can continue successfully as "the force behind the forces." I have and shall continue to support our Association through time, talent, and treasure at the Chapter, State, Regional, and National levels. When you are committed to a cause or organization, then it's just that simple."

(continued on next page)

(National Convention cont.)

For most of us the Awards Banquet at the Annual Convention is the highlight of our trip to Washington D.C. It is a grand event in a ballroom at the National Harbor Gaylord with big screens, music to accompany each award and lots of shouting and cheering as our Chapters receive awards. Emily Sawicki was proud to accept the Aerospace Education Achievement and Exceptional Service, United Forces and Families Program awards for the Mile High Chapter. In a repeat from last year, Mel Harmon Chapter President Mike Sumida was on stage multiple times. The Chapter was recognized for Aerospace Education Achievement, Aerospace Education Excellence (only awarded to one Chapter nationally in each size category), Community Partner Gold, and for Most Outstanding Small Chapter nationally. This is the fifth year in a row for the Mel Harmon Chapter to be recognized as the most Outstanding Small Chapter in the nation! Now that is certainly an amazing statement about the dedication of our volunteers in Pueblo, Colorado! Additionally, Mike was recognized individually as an Exceptional Service Award Recipient!



Emily Sawicki (Mile High) and Mike Sumida (Mel Harmon) displaying CO National Awards

A long-time friend to the Chapters in Colorado and serving as National Director, West Area, Robert “Bobi” Oates was honored as the National Member of the Year—a well-deserved and long overdue recognition. Bobi has spent a decade supporting and holding Field leadership roles in Nevada and the Southwest in addition to working tirelessly for AFA’s Wounded Airmen & Guardians program. Other honorees were Jim Hannam with the Buck Buckwalter Distinguished Sustained Aerospace Education Award and Bill Croom with the AFA Gold Membership Card. These gentlemen are now in a very elite category of service with awards that are rarely awarded and only by special vote of the National Executive Board. Saturday evening closed with Regional Caucuses, one being held for Rocky Mountain Region and run by Fran Bradshaw from Utah. The primary discussion was on the candidates running for office and it was a general consensus that Chris Canada will bring fresh ideas and motivation to AFA.

Another significant event of the Convention was the introduction of the National Teacher of the Year, Bill McInnish. Bill is a 9th-12th grade CTE Instructor of Aviation Fabrication and Assembly Technician and Private Pilot Ground School Classes at Eau Gallie High School in Melbourne, Florida. The National Award is sponsored by Rolls Royce whose representative stated, “Thanks to his efforts, the future is even brighter for the next generation of aerospace leaders.” Congratulations Bill McInnish and thank you for all you are giving to our students.

The AFA National Convention is always a huge opportunity for delegates to gather information and a host of materials to take back to our Chapters in the field to better support the mission of AFA. We understand it is expensive to travel and staff in DC so we are particularly appreciative of the delegates who donated their time and finances to make the trip. Hopefully next year will see the implementation of on-line voting and participation so more delegates can participate fully without the expense of the trip to DC. We owe a huge thank you to the AFA National Staff for the enormous amount of planning, preparation and time required to bring about an event such as the Convention. Every year is a success because their outstanding efforts.

AROUND YOUR SIJAN COMMUNITY

COLORADO AFA STATE BANQUET

Contributed by Linda Aldrich

For the first time since COVID, there was a full house in attendance at the Colorado AFA State Banquet. In years past, AFA was able to recognize three nominees in each category of Airman of the Year, Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, First Sergeant of the Year, Cadet of the Year, Company Grade Officer of the Year and Civilian of the Year, Categories I and II. However, with COVID restrictions in place, the banquet narrowed down to just recognizing AFA volunteers and last year finally opened back up to one military winner in each active duty category. Now, we're back in business, able to welcome nominees in each category, plus adding Guardian of the Year, Space Force NCO of the Year, Space Force SNCO of the Year, and Space Force CGO of the Year.



Our State event themed "Remembering Vietnam: 50 Years Later" took place at the Heritage Eagle Bend Club House, Aurora, Colorado, hosted by the Mile High Chapter 127. Guests were welcomed by music from the Serenade String Trio, courtesy of our sponsors. Each nominee received a red, white, and blue lanyard containing the AFA coin so they could be recognized and congratulated by all our guests. The formalities included posting of the colors by the Buckley Space Force Base Mile High Honor Guard, the Pledge of Allegiance, remembrance and a toast for POWs and MIAs, introduction of distinguished visitors, and the invocation given by Jerry White.



Colorado State President Cliff Klein welcomed guests, identified the Colorado AFA Chapters and introduced our emcee for the evening, Ms. Caty Rozema, who is now known as "Sparkles" due to her silver sequined tennis shoes. Caty is our State AFA Aerospace Education Vice President and is on the National Aerospace Education Committee. Caty was extremely witty as our emcee, bad jokes included, and kept the evening moving at a fun and efficient pace. With initial formalities completed, everyone headed for the scrumptious buffet line provided by the Chef and staff at Heritage Eagle Bend.



In keeping with the theme of the evening we welcomed guest speaker, Mr. George Nolly, who served as a pilot in the US Air Force flying 315 combat missions on two successive tours of duty in Vietnam. Mr. Nolly earned three Distinguished Flying Crosses and 24 Air Medals, flying O-2A and F-4 aircraft. He was the last Air Force pilot to complete 100 missions over North Vietnam. Mr. Nolly received the Tactical Air Command Instructor Pilot of the Year Award and followed his AD flying for United Airlines, rising to the position of B-777 Check Captain. Subsequent to retirement from United, Mr. Nolly became a B-777 Captain with Jet Airways, operating throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Mr. Nolly shared his heartfelt appreciation for his comrades-in-arms, his heartbreak over those who would not return, and his faith in the current generation to continue the sacrifice necessary to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

After thanking Mr. Nolly for sharing his inspiring story with us, we recognized our Teachers of the Year and the selfless volunteers that make the AFA a vital part of the Colorado communities. Read more about these extraordinary [teachers](#) and [volunteers](#).

The next portion of the State Awards Banquet was all about recognizing the excellence of our Airmen and Guardians, so emcee Caty made sure that everyone knew that whooping and hollering from those who came to support their candidate was highly encouraged!! (continued on next page)

(State Banquet cont.)

A few of the nominees were TDY or unable to attend so a representative from their unit received their award. We are thankful for the leadership and service to this great country by these warriors. [Read more.](#)

- ❖ Outstanding Airman of the Year: **SrA Samuel C. Weber, 140 MXG**
- ❖ Outstanding Guardian of the Year: **Spec3 Andres Mercado, Space Delta 6**
- ❖ Outstanding Air Force Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year: **SSgt Dakota J. Swanger, Space Delta 4**
- ❖ Outstanding Space Force Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year: **TSgt Daniel W. Pielak, Space Delta 3**
- ❖ Outstanding Air Force Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year: **MSgt Bryan A. Nelson, Space Base Delta 1**
- ❖ Outstanding Space Force Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year: **MSgt Steven L. Edmon, Space Delta 3**
- ❖ Outstanding First Sergeant of the Year: **SMSgt Stuart Chumney, Space Delta 6**
- ❖ Outstanding Cadet of the Year: **Cadet Jack Flynn, AFROTC Detachment 90, CSU**
- ❖ Air Force Company Grade Officer of the Year: **1Lt Calvin M. Muramoto, STARCOM Delta 12**
- ❖ Space Force Company Grade Officer of the Year: **1Lt Selena Quintanilla, Space Delta 6**
- ❖ Civilian of the Year (Category I): **Mr. Shawn Krumrei, Space Delta 6**
- ❖ Civilian of the Year (Category II): **Mr. Kerry Winsel, Space Delta 6**

The evening wrapped up with special thanks to Stephen Gourley, Caty Rozema, and Linda Aldrich for their many contributions to AFA over a long period of time. President Cliff Klein received an engraved flask as a reward for his leadership putting together the State Convention. Additional thanks were extended to Linda Aldrich and Felipe Rodriguez, Kenn and Terri Bowens, Mary Ann and Marv Blair, Henry and Margaret Eichman, Mel Harmon Chapter, Mile High Chapter, Rick Peterson, Caty Rozema, Emily Sawicki, and HQ SpOC Financial Ops for their generous donations to sponsor award winners. Also, the event would not have taken place without the Gold Level sponsorship of Denver Springs and the Silver Level Sponsorship of Bent Barley Brewing, CO Realty NOW, Kearney & Company, MAXAR and Tensley Consulting.

The State AFA Annual Awards Banquet is a labor of love to organize and represents only a portion of the thanks deserved by the volunteers who donate so much all year long, not for the recognition, but simply because they believe in giving back to our Air and Space Force and their families. Thank you to the Mile High Chapter for hosting the event this year.

There is no doubt that the evening was a huge success from beginning to end—recognition for so many outstanding individuals, wonderful dinner and lots of good camaraderie and networking. We'll look forward to another great year of contributions from our AFA Chapters and continuing support of the Air and Space Forces mission to promote dominant U.S. Air and Space Forces as the foundation of a strong National Defense; to honor and support our Airmen, Guardians, and their Families; and to remember and respect our enduring Heritage.



A military guest receives a lanyard and coin



Guest Speaker, Mr. George Nolly



L-R: Emcee, Caty Rozema; Member of the Year, Margaret Eichman; State President, Cliff Klein

CHAPTER AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Become a Community Partner!

“Becoming a Community Partner is a great way to get your business involved with your local Air Force and Space Force community! For more than 40 years, businesses have been joining the Air & Space Forces Association to support both AFA National and local AFA chapters.

Not only does a Community Partner receive all the benefits of an AFA membership, such as a variety of product and service discounts, insurance programs, and much more, but the partner will also receive a wooden plaque with a date medallion and a window decal. These will show customers and clients that your business supports our troops!”

Category One (CP I) \$90.00 annually - Business can designate one person to receive AFA Membership and enjoy all benefits thereof.

Category Two (CP II) \$180.00 annually - Business can designate two people to receive AFA Membership and enjoy all benefits thereof.

Want to know more? Check out <https://www.afa.org/membership/community-partners>

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- *To contact us or to be added to the Lance P Sijan chapter distribution list, please email us at: lancepsijanafa@gmail.org*
 - *To update your contact information, email National AFA at membership@afa.org. Note that the chapter cannot change your email, mailing address, or other contact information. It must be done on your National membership profile.*
 - *To join or renew your AFA membership, visit www.afa.org*
 - *For details on your AFA member benefits, visit <http://www.afa.org/afa/memberbenefits>*
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Mailing Address

Air & Space Forces Association
Lance P Sijan Chapter #125
PO Box 77322
Colorado Springs, CO 80970

CALENDAR OF EVENTS *



Lance P Sijan Chapter Monthly Meetings

Every 2nd Tuesday of Month, 5:00PM, Visit our website for location and online link

Veteran's Day Wreath Laying

November 11, 2023, 1100L, Colorado Springs Memorial Park at the military monuments

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

Sijan Chapter

Website:

www.lancepsijanafa.org



AFA National

Website:

www.afa.org

The AFA is an independent, nonprofit, civilian education organization promoting public understanding of aerospace power and the pivotal role it plays in the security of the nation. AFA publishes Air Force Magazine, conducts national symposia and disseminates information through outreach programs. It sponsors professional development seminars and recognizes excellence in the education and aerospace fields through national awards programs. AFA presents scholarships and grants to Air Force active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve members and their dependents, and AFA awards educator grants to promote science and math education at the elementary, secondary, and high school level. Nationally, AFA has more than 100,000 active members. The AFA National Website is WWW.AFA.ORG

The Lance P. Sijan Chapter is one of the largest, most active chapters in AFA, with more than 1600 members. The Sijan Chapter, one of four AFA Chapters in Colorado, primarily focuses on support to the Colorado Springs area, including Peterson AFB, Schriever AFB, Cheyenne Mountain Air Station, and the USAFA. The AFA Sijan Chapter is proud of our rich heritage and strong support for the Colorado Springs Air Force community. We pride ourselves on active support to the local Colorado Springs "Air Force Family," providing approximately \$40,000 and thousands of volunteer hours in support annually!