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# STARBASE Martinsburg Celebrates

## To the stars: STARBASE celebrates 10 years at the 167th Airlift Wing

7/17/2012 - **Martinsburg, W.Va.** -- The chatter on the bus grows louder as it is cleared through the base's main gate and heads toward its destination. Children press their eager faces against the glass, staring in amazement at the hangars that hide the huge planes. This is the week that these local fifth-graders have been waiting for all year. The week they get to visit the stars. For a decade now, local fifth-graders in Berkeley County have looked forward to the week-long program known as Starbase. The program - which opened its Martinsburg facility in 2002 - traces its roots to a single Michigan classroom in 1989, said Sherra Triggs, the director of the Martinsburg Starbase program.

"Barbara Kosak, the Starbase program's founder, created a curriculum based on space and the Physics of flight," Triggs said. "Barbara's curriculum was 'hands on minds on.'" In the 23 years of the program's existence, it has become much more than just a single classroom. "Starbase has blossomed from a single classroom in Michigan to classrooms across the country in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico," she said. "In Fiscal Year 2011, military commanders partnered with 1,161 schools from 385 school districts to serve more than 60,000 students. Approximately 700,000 students have participated in the program since its inception."

"As of this current year we will have 76 sites nationwide with the capability to reach more than 75,000 students annually," she said. "Here in Martinsburg we currently serve the one school district with eight schools. However, this coming school year, because of expansion, we will serve three school districts and approximately 20 schools."

According to Triggs, the Martinsburg Starbase has come a long way in its 10 years on base. "Our growth has been exponential in every way from, the curriculum to staffing and even facilities," she said. "In 2003 we started with a four person staff in a modular building with one only one classroom. After becoming director in 2006 my goal was to move us from a modular space into a permanent facility."

With command support, Triggs was able to find a home for the Starbase in the then headquarters building. "We had two class rooms for the first time and were able to run two classes simultaneously," she said. "In the summer of 2010, the old headquarters building was demolished and we moved to our current location in the new headquarters building."

The program was such a success that a year after moving to their new home, the Starbase expanded again, she said. "At the end of 2011, the demand was so high that I was given additional funding to expand my staff from four people to six," she said. "With support from base command, a third room was found and given to us to use as a new class room. This will allow us to run three classes simultaneously this coming school year."

Triggs credits her staff for much of the program's success. "My six person team became complete this summer and what a team it is," she said. "I am super excited to start this year with all of the enthusiasm they have already brought to the program." Thanks to Starbase, thousands of kids are exposed to a unique experience every year, Triggs said. "Last year we had 56 classes that totaled 1,512 students," she said. "Since our inception here, we have served 395 classes and approximately 10,385 students!"

Starbase is a sponsored program of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, said Triggs. The program is geared toward giving students "hands on minds on" activities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). "The program provides students with 20 to 25 hours of stimulating experiences at National Guard, Navy, Marine, Air Force Reserve and Air Force bases across the nation," she said. "While on base, they interact with military personnel to explore careers and observe STEM applications in the real world." Students are able to tour different areas of the base and see Airmen in action, she said. "While they are here, military members show students around their shops and talk to them about their careers on base," she said. "Students are able to tour the C-5 airplane which is always the highlight of the whole week." Adding: "Without the support of the members on base, the experience for the children would not come full circle."

According to Triggs, the hands-on nature of the program is extremely rewarding to the instructors and beneficial to the students. "We are able to actively engage the children with more hands-on activities than the normal school environment has time to provide," she said. "Each year I am more and more amazed at what the kids get out of our program and the excitement level they gain for Math, Science, Engineering, and Technology." Triggs noted that "At a time where these areas of study are lacking severely in the U.S., programs like this are a must to help keep our youth on the cutting edge and prepare them to be leaders of tomorrow."

As an added bonus to raising the students' interests in critical fields, they become more aware and appreciative of service members and their jobs, she said. "If you look at the number of children we impact in the community, we are indirectly sending the mission of the 167th and its focus out to the community and ultimately the youth of tomorrow," she said. Adding: "Parents cannot say enough about the program and are always trying to find ways to bring their children back. This is great for us as we are about to implement an after school mentoring program that will involve middle school students."

"Military members are such an important asset to this (program) as children just naturally respect and admire those in uniform," she said. Adding: "From commanders to Airmen,

everyone is always willing to help do whatever we need to get done and without them we would not be able to have the success we have had."

As the children file into the Starbase classroom and take their seats, their eyes are wide with excitement and anticipation. When the class begins a silence falls over the students as they wait with bated breath to hear of the wonders that await them on their journey to the stars.

by Airman 1st Class Nathaniel Taylor  
167AW/PA

<http://www.167aw.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123310265> <sup>[1]</sup>

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