

10TH MOUNTAIN LIFE

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10th Mountain Life features soldier shoutouts, photos of Fort Drum events, memories from post and more.

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SOLDIER OF THE MONTH

Sgt. Klayton Hood, assigned to the 642nd Engineer Support Company, 41st Division Engineer Battalion, is the Soldier of the Month. Sgt. Hood represented the 10th Mountain Division at the All-Army Small Arms Competition where he placed 1st for Active Duty in the M4 A1 Service Rifle Category and was the top scorer from the 10th Mountain Division in the overall competition. Sgt. Hood has been stationed at Fort Drum for over three years and deployed in support of the Joint Task Force Southern-Border mission.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR JOB?

I operate heavy equipment such as bulldozers, backhoes, excavators, and road graders. We do everything from digging fighting positions for howitzer positions, to building roadways.

WHAT MAKES FORT DRUM HOME?

The mountains in upstate New York are familiar to the landscape I knew back home in Colorado, just smaller. I am a homebody that also enjoys the outdoors. I work with a tight knit group of NCOs that rely on each other for a lot to make decisions and work thorough challenges which is what I love most about being stationed at Fort Drum.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO JOIN THE U.S. ARMY?

It was always a goal of mine to join the Marines. When I wanted to join the military again, I realized

NAME: Klayton Hood
RANK: Sergeant
HOMETOWN: Elizabeth, Colorado
YEARS IN SERVICE: 12 (Enlisted in the Marine Corps at 17 as a Heavy Equipment Mechanic. He left the Marine Corp after the conclusion of his first enlistment. After four months as a civilian, he enlisted in the Army as a 19K Armor Crewmen. He switched to a 12N after three years.)
JOB: 12N- Horizontal Construction Engineer

there were more opportunities in the Army. I have been able to get certifications that will translate into a career after the Army.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING IN YOUR FREE TIME AROUND THE AREA?

I am an avid motorcycle rider and serve as the motorcycle mentor for my company. I likes to ride when the weather is nice because I can see the scenery of the north country.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW SOLDIER JUST ARRIVING AT THEIR FIRST DUTY STATION?

If a soldier is arriving at Fort Drum I would tell them to invest in good cold weather gear. I would tell any new soldier to learn when you can, where



Sgt. Klayton Hood

you can and always be flexible. I am appreciative of how much I have moved around. You never know what a place has to offer and trying new things prevents me from being stagnant.

Soldier of the Month is a collaboration with the Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs Office.

Fort Drum graduates recognized for academic achievements

By MIKE STRASSER
Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs

Fort Drum Soldiers, family members, veterans, and civilians were applauded for pursuing their goals of higher education and earning academic certificates during the Graduation Recognition Ceremony on May 13 inside the Multipurpose Auditorium.

A couple of years ago, 1st Sgt. Michael Williamson was at the National Training Center in California, where Soldiers test their proficiency in a high-intensity, large-scale combat training environment. When he wasn't conducting resupply missions or jumps, Williamson pored over his Shakespeare.

He had a book report due for class. And while "Much Ado About Nothing" might not have been as riveting as battlefield scenarios, Williamson completed the task using a portable satellite internet terminal to submit the paper.

"Every person sitting in these chairs today has a version of that moment," Williamson said to his peers as student speaker at the ceremony. "Papers written in a parking lot before PT, exams taken on your phone when you only have one bar of signal, or night classes that you attended after you got off work. The homework that you stayed up late to finish after the kids went to bed — the dishes were done and everyone in the house was done for the night."

After all of that, Williamson, who serves as Echo Forward Support Company first sergeant, 10th Light Support Battalion, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade, earned a bachelor's degree in management studies.

"I couldn't have done it without the support of my wife and kids," he said. "Hopefully now, we can give



Recent graduates were honored during the Graduation Recognition Ceremony on May 13 inside the Multipurpose Auditorium at Fort Drum. 1st Sgt. Michael Williamson, with 7th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), addressed the audience as student speaker, and Col. Jason Adler, Fort Drum garrison commander, spoke to the graduates and their families as keynote speaker. Mike Strasser/Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs

some of that time back. Graduates, I am proud to be crossing the finish line alongside of you. What you did was hard. You should be proud."

Staff Sgt. Katherine Bolcar, a vocalist with the 10th Mountain Division Band, said she appreciated Williamson's words as she reflected on her journey towards earning a master's in voice pedagogy (contemporary commercial music) from Shenandoah University.

"What the first sergeant said was

spot on — so profoundly real to me," she said. "I remember being in Germany at the time, taking lessons on my phone with no service. But this is a degree that I've wanted for a long time, and I had a lot of leaders that supported me, and all those professors who were super supportive of military members."

Bolcar began pursuing her degree five years earlier during the pandemic. A second master's degree seemed like an appropriate use of her time

during COVID lockdowns. Then, two duty station moves made her studies more challenging, but she said it also provided opportunities to combine her work with schooling.

"For instance, I had to record myself teaching voice lessons, and the Soldiers' Chorus in Europe allowed me to do that for them," she said. "They were gracious enough to let me use them in my videos."

The 10th Mountain Division Band performed at the ceremony,

positioned in the back corner of the auditorium behind the audience. When she walked across the stage to receive her diploma, Bolcar's bandmates became her personal cheering section.

"I kind of expected them to have been reserved," she said. "But we're all so close-knit and work together all the time, so we are always supportive of each other. Having that little shout-out from them was really sweet."

As the keynote speaker, Col. Jason Adler, Fort Drum garrison commander, commended the graduates for their determination and hard work.

"You persevered," he said. "You made it to the end, and you earned that diploma. And with it there should come a new level of confidence in your ability to do challenging things. So, I would encourage you to be confident, be bold, believe in yourself, but do so with humility. Recognize those in the audience today who contributed to your achievements. Be grateful for those who stood by your side, encouraged you along the way, and show your appreciation."

Adler said there isn't a course credit for perseverance, nor a syllabus on how to balance academics with work and family responsibilities. Soldiers and family members had to manage college curriculum on top of group projects, late-night assignments, military training and deployments.

"You've navigated challenges that extend far beyond the classroom," Adler said. "Armed with your honor, your integrity and your personal courage to take on challenges that scare other folks away. Today, you are graduates, but I challenge you to see yourselves as leaders, innovators and problem-solvers, all ready to contribute and continue your service in new and meaningful ways."

OUT AND ABOUT

■ The Fort Drum Relocation Readiness Program hosted Military Spouse Appreciation Day on May 8 inside the Family Resource Center to provide spouses with a day of connection, learning and access to installation support services. Kelly Bice and Kelsea Dopler, with the Fort Drum Relocation Readiness Program, organized the event as a series of informative sessions to discuss the unique challenges and opportunities of military life.

"We don't grow up thinking, 'I'm going to be a military spouse,'" Bice said. "It's a challenge and it's a commitment that you all made for your spouses. And they don't always give you a toolkit to manage that." Bice highlighted the goal of building supportive circles, or tribes, to foster safety and resilience, and attendees engaged in an icebreaker exercise to find common ground with each other.

To learn more about Fort Drum ACS, call 315-772-6556, visit www.facebook.com/FortDrumSFRD or stop by the Family Resource Center, Bldg. 11042 on Mount Belvedere Boulevard.

■ Twenty-three Human Intelligence Collector teams from the United States, Australia and Canada competed in the fifth annual Tranquil Storm interrogation competition at Louisiana National Guard's Camp Beauregard in Pineville, Louisiana, on April 26-30. The event focused on improving the proficiency of human intelligence collectors operating in a contingency environment. The competition tested teams on their ability to research, analyze and interrogate detainees while producing accurate intelligence reporting.

The first-place team was the 73rd (General Support) Military Intelligence Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum, New York. The second-place finisher was the 250th Expeditionary Military Intelligence Battalion, 100th Troop Command, California Army National Guard. The Australian Army team placed third.

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