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30 March 2023

## Army Employee Shares STEM Expertise with Local Community

*By Aerial Storey*



**U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center engineer, Helen Mearns, tutors a Harford Community College student at the campus's Learning Center. (U.S. Army Photo by Ellie White)**

### **Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD**

–The U.S. Army, the Department of Homeland Security, Harford Community College, and Fallston United Methodist Church all have one thing in common – they all benefit from the professional expertise accumulated by Helen Mearns over her 25-year career.

Mearns is an engineer with the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC) Strategic Initiatives Group and is matrixed to the Department of Homeland Security where she serves as the deputy director of the Chemical Security Analysis Center (CSAC).

She contributes her spare time at Harford Community College (HCC) as a learning assistant and volunteers at Fallston United Methodist Church for their Summer Tutoring Program.

Mearns is driven to share her knowledge and expertise in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) field to ensure the success of future generations of the workforce by enabling them to be independent learners. She has been mentoring students for over 20 years and finds her efforts rewarding when seeing the students' successes. "I was very touched one year when a student invited me to her graduation ceremony," Mearns expresses. "It's great to be there and see students reach their goals, whether it's their immediate goal or their overall goal."

Mearns relates her passion for educating students to her earliest memories of participating in classroom projects. As she recalls, Mearns has always had an affinity for math and science; however, she attributes her mentors and teachers throughout her life for guiding her to her present career. "I have always been really fortunate along the way," Mearns said when discussing her career trajectory.

Upon completing her engineering degree at the Johns Hopkins University, she moved into the workforce where she received a job offer in May of 1990 at the Chemical Research, Development, and Engineering Center (CRDEC) of the Army Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command – a predecessor to DEVCOM CBC. "When I graduated, my family was going through a rough patch. I had to get the first job that came along so I could be home to help my mom so we wouldn't lose our house," Mearns explained. Five years after taking on her first role at CRDEC in standardization and specifications, Mearns switched into the organization's



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Engineering Directorate where she applied her educational experience to create solutions for new projects.

As she moved into defense acquisition, Mearns had to take business classes to fulfill the position requirements. HCC was able to support Mearns in completing her course requirements where her passion for education was once again sparked. Professors were intrigued with her mastery and understanding of the materials and recommended Mearns to assist at the Learning Center on campus.

“Helen brings so much to the Learning Center environment for both students and our team,” said Pam Runge, the Learning Center manager, “We’re a wonderful, close-knit team and it’s because of people like Helen that keep the team cohesiveness; she truly cares.”

During her time at HCC’s Learning Center, Mearns has proven her natural gift of mentorship by not only tutoring students, but also training other learning assistants to complete their certifications. In addition, Mearns hosts seminars for the campus where she shares her knowledge and expertise in STEM. Her contributions to HCC have piqued student interest in the field, with at least two students from the college obtaining employment at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG). One student commented, “I’ve met with Helen a number of times throughout the summer and fall semesters. I cannot say enough good things about her. She has been so patient, kind, and helpful with me.”

For the future, Mearns plans to continue to mentor students and volunteer her time at Fallston United Methodist Church and a local animal shelter. She finds solace in her contributions to help others succeed and in spending time with shelter animals. “I really enjoy serving others and helping. When I do that, the craziness of the day just falls away,” she said.

Mearns expresses faith in the future generations of the workforce and hopes that each generation can collaborate to tackle big issues. “Be part of the solution,” advises Mearns. “Just listen, be patient, and be open.”

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For more information about the DEVCOM Chemical Biological Center, visit <https://cbc.DEVCOM.army.mil>

*The U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Chemical Biological Center (CBC) is aligned under the U.S. Army Futures Command (AFC) and U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM.)*

*AFC provides Army modernization solutions (integrated concepts, organizational designs, and technologies) in order to allow the Joint Force, employing Army capabilities, to achieve overmatch in the future operation environment. DEVCOM is a major subordinate command of AFC. DEVCOM leads in the discovery, development, and delivery of technology-based capabilities to enable Soldiers to win our nation’s wars and come home safely. DEVCOM CBC is the Army’s principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering, and field operations. DEVCOM CBC is headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.*

