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Chemist and Philanthropist Sue Procell Retires After 43-Year Career

By Aerial Storey



Mike Ellzy, Patrice Abercrombie-Thomas, Sue Procell, and Kenneth Sumpter confer in one of the Center's Chemical Agent Standard Analytical Reference Material laboratories. (U.S. Army Photo by Ellie White).

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD – A chemist and philanthropist is retiring after a 43-year career, leaving behind a legacy that has transformed the quality assurance sector and uplifted peers and elementary school students alike.

Devoting a lifelong career to the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC), Sue Procell has been deeply involved in the Center's mission to support the warfighter, while also dedicating her time to give back to the

community. At the end of March, she retired as chief of the Chemical Agent Standard Analytical Reference Material (CASARM) Quality Assurance Team, marking an important milestone for the Center.

Procell's impact at DEVCOM CBC will remain through the programs she has overseen and the relationships she has built. She has been pivotal in spearheading quality assurance methods at the Center while also developing philanthropic programs to benefit of the community, such as Kids in Chemistry.

The Kids in Chemistry program was initiated after Procell visited her children's teachers and saw they were having difficulty teaching their science courses. As a result, she fundraised and conducted outreach to schools within the local Harford County community for the program. With her encouragement, Center scientists volunteered their time to assist elementary school teachers in educating their students on science by hosting engaging projects and topics in the classroom. The program was hugely successful, with upwards of 15 volunteers each semester committing their time to supporting teachers in their work and engaging children in the world of science.

When discussing her work ethic, Procell explained, "I've always believed that we're not just here to have this wonderful life and take everything we can out of it and have a great time. I always have believed in giving back, that we're here for a purpose."



Procell began her career at an early age – joining the Center workforce in August of 1980 after she completed high school. With humble beginnings in an entry-level position as a clerk typist at the Material Testing Directorate, she harnessed her strengths of compassion and curiosity to create a greater purpose for every role she engaged in. This tendency helped her to overcome the challenges she faced throughout her career. “Early in my career, I had a lot of doubts, but I gained confidence from my successes. The more you persevere, the more confidence you’ll gain and be able to survive the rough times,” Procell said. “Believe in yourself and help others because it’s the right thing to do and it will get you far.”

Procell continuously aimed to achieve higher standards and a deeper understanding of the work she was involved in. This led her to continue her education by earning her Associate of Arts degree at Harford Community College in lab science technology, followed by a Bachelor of Science degree at Towson University in chemistry.

In addition to furthering her education, she also took on numerous roles at the organization to further her career. While working in the Center’s surety labs, Procell took on the extra duties of establishing a quality management system under ISO 17025. Mid-career she transferred to the CASARM office, where she was soon given the opportunity to take on larger leadership responsibilities. Three years later she accepted another opportunity to work as the executive officer to the Center director. Upon her return, she took on the position as chief of CASARM while also taking on management of the Center’s Quality and Continuous Process Improvement programs.

Since then, she has grown the CASARM program to a fully staffed function, expanding the repository and quality assurance sectors to incorporate new agents and customers. Not only has Procell expanded the agents included in the CASARM repository, but she has directed the modernization of the analytical methods used to characterize and determine purity of the agents. On the quality assurance side, the CASARM program’s chemists now provide subject matter expert support to the DEVCOM CBC Qualification Procedure Team at Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois.

The results of her efforts are far-reaching and expansive across the quality assurance sector. She has led many projects for quality assurance at DEVCOM CBC that have impacted the standards for chemical agent analysis and certification requirements which are being emulated across other organizations. The success she has had within her work have not only been recognized by reputable organizations, but from her peers as well.





Sue Procell and Mike Ellzy discuss the projects they have worked together on throughout their careers at the U.S. Army Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center. (U.S. Army Photo by Ellie White).

“I have great respect for her. She has been a wonderful colleague, and I see her as a good friend. I enjoyed all my years working with her to help the warfighter,” said Mike Ellzy, chief of the Center’s Chemical Analysis Physical Properties Branch, on his experience working alongside Procell. “I am going to miss working with her; but by the same token, I hope she has a wonderful retirement and enjoys herself.”

Procell plans to continue her mission of giving back during her retirement by becoming more involved with community programs through volunteer work, such as becoming president of her local bird-watching club. She also intends to travel and looks forward to spending more time with her family.

Looking back on her career, Procell said, “I really feel blessed with the career that I’ve had. One thing I really thought about is that nobody is successful without the help of others. It’s because of the people who believed in me and who supported me. Everything that I’m grateful for is because of the people I’ve worked with; I’ve been really blessed in that.”

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