



For Information: Richard Arndt, 410-436-1479

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Army Biologist Recognized for Commitment to Community and STEM Outreach

By Aerial Storey



DEVCOM CBC biologist Alena Calm received the Joseph D. Wienand NDIA CBRN Division STEM Excellence Award at the NDIA CBRN Defense Conference in Baltimore, Maryland on July 26, 2023. (Photo by NDIA)

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD – With over a decade of mentorship and involvement in the community, Alena Calm, a biologist at the U.S Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC), has impacted and inspired thousands of students interested in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). On July 26, 2023, Calm was recognized for her service and contribution to the community as an innovator and STEM advocate who has made a

powerful impact in the CBRN defense industry.

At the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Conference, Calm was presented the 2023 Joseph D. Wienand NDIA CBRN Division STEM Excellence Award. The prestigious award honors innovation and achievement for STEM education in the field by recognizing individuals who demonstrate great overall STEM achievement and efforts that significantly impact CBRN defense programs. The award was named in honor of Joseph D. Wienand, who served as director of DEVCOM CBC (then known as the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center) from 2010-2014.

“It was an honor to be awarded the Joe Wienand Award,” said Calm. “It’s very validating when someone recognizes the work you do, especially when the work is voluntary. Not a lot of people know about the work I do with various STEM outreach programs, so it is encouraging to know that people appreciate it.”

Calm was nominated for the award by DEVCOM CBC leadership based on her commitment and efforts in STEM outreach for the local community. Calm makes use of her time to provide hands-on mentorship to students through internship programs hosted at the Center. Each year, she volunteers to host a summer intern or mentor a high school student on their capstone projects. She also frequently participates in events at local schools such as career days, science fairs, and STEM days.

Dr. Kelly Basi, supervisory biologist at DEVCOM CBC overseeing Calm's work, praised her dedication. "Alena is deserving of this award. Her efforts with STEM education and outreach programs are worthy of this honor because of the impact she has made on the community by going above and beyond the expected roles and responsibilities," Basi said. "Her continual mentorship and involvement in the community has a positive impact on student achievement, inspires the next generation of scientists, and is critical to the mission of the Army and the future of our nation."

In addition to providing mentorship and conducting STEM outreach, Calm most recently helped organize the Magic of Science Fair and Family Festival in partnership with the Discovery Center at Water's Edge, which successfully hosted more than 4,000 visitors. She was awarded the Army Educational Outreach Program STEM Grant for the event with her proposal to pair innovative, hands-on STEM activities with volunteers from DEVCOM CBC. The event included activities in various scientific disciplines that targeted multiple age groups and skill levels. The initiative provided accessible STEM education for a large, diverse community to help shape the next generation of scientists.

Through her efforts, Calm has been a champion for DEVCOM CBC and the Discovery Center at Water's Edge to forge a partnership agreement between the two organizations. "Alena is a highly appreciated proponent of STEM whose contributions have significantly enhanced STEM education and outreach for the Department," said Basi.

Not only do Calm's outreach efforts impact the future of STEM within local communities, but her professional career supports the STEM community at-large. She is continually seeking new and creative ways to solve challenges for the warfighter and to protect our nation against biological threats. Her current projects include the study of freshwater algae blooms across the United States. Her research consists of identifying toxins produced by these algae



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blooms to further characterize, detect, and understand the risk it poses to our Soldiers deployed in areas with algal blooms.

She plans to continue working on her current projects and has no intention of slowing down. Calm was recently awarded two additional STEM First grants under the Department of Defense. She plans to use the grant opportunities to engage the youth in STEM exploration through the First LEGO League competition. "I have a good thing going and I'm going to continue doing them," said Calm of her plans.

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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.

