

St. Louis Region Celebrates Recognition as the 2012 Winner of the Coveted Abilene Trophy

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The St. Louis Region's recent selection as the winner of the prestigious Abilene Trophy seems more real today in the wake of the official presentation of the magnificent trophy, which acknowledges the extensive support demonstrated for the airmen of Scott Air Force Base, and their families, during 2012. Also known as the Air Mobility Command Community Support Award, the prestigious Abilene Trophy is presented annually to recognize the community that provides the finest support to an Air Mobility Command unit. The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois spearheaded this year's

nomination on behalf of the St. Louis region, but it was the wealth of supporting information that flowed in from across the metro area that produced the true victory that was highlighted at today's community celebration.

"We couldn't have done it without the contributions from the various individuals, businesses, organizations and communities we reached out to, that told us what they did to support the base last year, and the dozens of letters of endorsement from local, state and federal legislators and regional businesses that helped to make our case," noted Ronda Sauget, President of the Leadership Council, which hosted the event. "The overwhelming response to our region-wide call for information demonstrated the depth of our region's commitment to Scott AFB and was instrumental in our ability to develop a winning package. This truly is a victory that we all can be proud of."

On hand to make the official presentation were General Paul J. Selva, Commander of the Air Mobility Command at Scott AFB and Gray Bridwell, Chairman and Kristina Jones, Vice Chair of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee, which has presented the award annually since 1999 to a civilian community for outstanding support to a nearby AMC base. In the remarks leading up to the presentation, they discussed the history of the award and highlighted the reasons the St. Louis region beat out several other communities across the nation vying for the award, citing how well the region told its story, and the excellent supporting documentation provided.

"Everyone in the community around Scott Air Force Base had a part in making this happen," said General Selva. He complemented the region on its "world class" support and dedication to the airmen and base. "It is your hospitality that makes us comfortable that when we go out and do hard things, that when we deploy, when we are gone from home, that you will take care of our families and you will take care of the Airmen we leave behind."

The nomination that propelled St. Louis into the winners' circle showcased over 270 examples of community help for the airmen and their families, including;

- donations of furniture, presents, diapers and other necessities, including \$496,843 in documented material aid to the air units at Scott AFB that came from H.E.R.O.E. S. Care alone;
- creation and maintenance of the Regional Alliance for the Troops website (www.rafft.org), through which almost 7,000 military members and their families accessed key resources during 2012;
- recognition from major league teams like the Cardinals and the Rams, as well as high school sports teams that brought the airmen and their families on the field to honor them;

- discounts on various events and attractions;
- hosting and financially supporting dozens of events offering opportunities for civilian/military interaction, and
- countless other examples of the financial, physical and emotional support provided throughout the year.

Also on-hand for the presentation was Col. Dave Almand, 375th Air Mobility Wing commander, for whom the event took on extra special meaning as he is in his last week at Scott AFB before being reassigned to Andrew's Air Force Base.

"The region's support of Scott is by far among the best in the Air Force and the Defense Department, and we are thrilled to be able to recognize the greater St. Louis metro region with this award," noted Col. Almand. "The Leadership Council, area civic leaders, communities, businesses, and military supportive organizations all joined forces to put together a competitive package that clearly shows the good things they do for Scott, our service members and our families. The Abilene Trophy is an amazing opportunity for us to say thanks and to show our appreciation. Scott would not be able to carry out its missions without the region's supporters and now they get an award they can see and hold that reminds them what they do matters."

Scores of individuals were in attendance representing the businesses, organizations and communities that had contributed information for the nomination, and many of them gathered around the stage to be part of the group accepting the award on behalf of the St. Louis Region. Friends and colleagues from Scott AFB also were on site at the Scott Field Air Heritage Park for the festivities, which included a rousing performance by the U.S. Air Force Band of MidAmerica and a casual barbecue lunch.

"We're so blessed to have Scott Air Force Base in our region, and our communities benefit every day from its presence and the presence of the airmen and their families, so it's always been our honor to support them," noted Gerry Schuetzenhofer, chairman of the Leadership Council's Military Affairs Committee. "We're thrilled to have such a great turnout to celebrate this victory with our friends and colleagues at Scott and we look forward to continuing to deliver the world-class support that's being recognized today."



About the Abilene Award

The AMC Community Support Award was established on 1 January 1999 by the Military Affairs Committee of Abilene, Texas, and the United States Air Force Air Mobility Command. The award originated in 1989 under a different Command but Air Mobility Command assumed sponsorship of the award in 1999, at which time it was renamed the Abilene Trophy. The award is now presented annually by the Abilene Chamber of Commerce (ACOC) Military Affairs Committee and the Commander, Air Mobility Command to a civilian community for outstanding support to a nearby AMC base. The award is sponsored by the ACOC Military Affairs Committee, and administered jointly by the committee and the Air Mobility Command Office of Public Affairs. The award is to provide recognition for activities conducted between January and December of the preceding year.

The City of Abilene is not eligible to receive this award. For more information, contact Debra Morotini at the Abilene Chamber of Commerce at (325) 677-7241 or at dmorotini@abilenechamber.com.

About the Leadership Council

The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is a member-based, economic development corporation representing Madison and St. Clair counties. The Council works to unite business, industry, government, education and labor for economic growth in Southwestern Illinois. These effective partnerships serve as a driving force behind successful economic development efforts throughout the Metro East region. www.leadershipcouncilswil.com.