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Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin's latest Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award recipient reflects on leadership

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Maj. Jordan Schultz, training officer for the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, said he has been blessed throughout his Wisconsin Army National Guard career to serve under and alongside several exceptional leaders. That experience has helped refine his own principles on leadership.

"People are always first," Schultz said. "Get to know your Soldiers. Empower them, build trust and push them outside their comfort zone."

Schultz emphasized the importance of establishing a positive culture through strong moral, ethical and personal standards. This enhances individual and unit readiness, he said.

Schultz also outlined a training philosophy designed to lead a Soldier to excellence.

"Allow Soldiers to attempt a task with initial guidance through creative solutions," Schultz explained. "Accept initial failure, but expect improvement. Adapt your tactics, techniques and procedures based on lessons learned, and excel on future opportunities in similar settings."

Schultz said those leadership principles align with Gen. Douglas MacArthur's famous dictum: "Duty, honor, country — those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be."

The reference to MacArthur is intentional, as Schultz is the Wisconsin Army National

Guard's current Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award recipient. The award is presented annually to the top 28 company-grade officers in the active Army, Army Reserve and National Guard. Schultz, the former commander of the 457th Chemical Company, was one of seven National Guard recipients nationwide.

"It is a true honor to represent the state of Wisconsin and receive this award," Schultz said.

During Schultz's time as a company commander, the 457th Chemical Company was part of the state of Wisconsin's initial COVID-19 response effort, working with local public health representatives to develop statewide testing sites and mitigation protocols. He said his unit's key to success for Soldier caring focused on three areas.

"First, build a strong and unified command team," he said, "and develop short, intermediate and long-term goals as a group, with consistent messaging."

Setting goals was paramount, Schultz said, in focusing unit leadership efforts on what was important, where they wanted to take risks, and getting buy-in at all levels.

Second, innovative command policies developed open communication and trust in the unit. These include introducing peer support groups and Microsoft Teams to encourage a holistic Soldier approach, and being flexible with Soldiers in allowing them to reschedule training where warranted.

Third, the company would annually review and refine its policies during a group discussion referred to as "company state-of-the-state address."

"Here we discussed real-time analytics from command climate surveys, unit risk inventories, after-action review comments and training schedule reviews, to identify if our policies were working or if we needed to refocus our efforts," Schultz said. "Soldier caring needs to be the foundation for our readiness. A 'whole' Soldier, in holistic terms, only increases our training and equipment readiness levels needed to complete our state and federal missions."

Schultz said he would counsel young leaders to be patient, particularly when dealing with subordinates.

"All Soldiers at every level have personal issues not seen on the surface," Schultz

said. “Take the time to talk with Soldiers, to actually listen and learn about their lives. This is half the battle to building trust and culture.”

Schultz cautioned that positive results take time, and National Guard units operate within a limited calendar.

“We only have one weekend a month and an annual training period — choose what your priorities are and focus on changing those areas, but be realistic about time,” he said. “We can’t train or fix everything in one leadership stint.”

Schultz emphasized following through on planning.

“If you promise resources, training plans or policies, do everything you can to meet your promises,” he said. “If you are prioritizing personnel readiness on your training schedule, don’t let it be the first thing to fall off in times of strain. Have a good communication channel with your battalion leadership to identify your company priorities.”

Schultz also advocated integrating squad leaders — non-commissioned officers typically responsible for up to 10 Soldiers.

“This is where the rubber meets the road, and is the lynchpin for success or failure of a plan,” Schultz explained. “Build resilient squads who are able to operate independently under common guidance and intent.”

Schultz said a successful leader is only a reflection of the quality of Soldier with whom he or she is able to serve.

“I get to serve with the best,” Schultz said.