

# Young Alumni Excellence AWARD

By Sam Hastings



LT. COL. JEFFREY MICHAEL ALLEN '11

Lt. Col. Jeffrey Michael Allen '11 learned early that service is measured less by the uniform someone wears than by the way they care for others. Growing up in an Air Force family, Col. Allen watched his father serve first as an enlisted airman and later as a career civilian.

"He has been my role model since I was young and is the primary reason I joined the Air Force," Col. Allen says of his father. "Watching him serve for nearly 40 years taught me that leadership is about service, humility and taking care of people."

Col. Allen's interest in leadership developed through Air Force JROTC and participation in scouting, where he earned the rank of Eagle Scout. With military service already in his sights, he considered ROTC, but attending the U.S. Air Force Academy quickly became his goal.

Col. Allen studied political science at USAFA, and he jokingly describes "operation graduation" as his primary extracurricular activity.

The Academy's demanding combination of academics, military training and physical requirements tested his ability to manage time and perform under pressure. Basic cadet training pushed him beyond what he thought he could handle, while Commitment Day reinforced his decision to serve. As an upperclassman, Col. Allen began developing the leadership style he continues to refine today.

"Graduation wasn't the finish line — it was the starting line," he says. "The Academy had prepared me, and it was finally time to earn the privilege of leading airmen."

That responsibility came soon after graduation. On his first day of active duty, Col. Allen became a flight commander overseeing 45 airmen before attending technical

school. The experience set the tone for a career spanning munitions maintenance, aircraft maintenance and logistics.

Across each assignment, one principle remained constant: Take care of your airmen, and they'll take care of the mission.

Col. Allen carried that philosophy into command. In Europe, he led the Air Force's only surety-capable maintenance squadron, responsible for conventional aircraft maintenance, war reserve material, munitions storage and aircraft recovery operations supporting U.S. European Command.

He later commanded the 18th Munitions Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Japan, leading a multinational team responsible for the Air Force's largest munitions storage area and one of its largest war reserve munitions stockpiles. The squadron supported joint and allied operations throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Although the missions were technically complex and strategically important, Col. Allen says command was ultimately about people.

"As a commander, I wasn't the tip of the spear — my airmen were," he says. "My responsibility was to sharpen the spear by ensuring they had the resources, training and support they needed."

His units consistently earned recognition for excellence, which Col. Allen attributes to training, discipline and a strong team identity. He believes leaders set an organization's climate and, over time, that climate becomes its culture.

"The Air Force already gives us incredible airmen and civilians," he says. "My job as a leader isn't to find great people; it's to develop them."

Mentorship has remained central to that effort. Col. Allen encourages young officers to seek guidance from every level of an orga-

nization, noting that some of his most valuable lessons came from enlisted airmen. He sees investing in others as a responsibility owed to those who invested in him.

That commitment extends beyond the Air Force. Col. Allen has volunteered over 1,400 hours with Scouting America, helping develop young leaders in Montana, Florida and Italy. More recently, he became involved with the 501st Legion, which supports charitable causes and local communities.

"Leadership doesn't end when you take off the uniform," he says. "Service isn't defined by the uniform you wear; it's defined by your commitment to improving the lives of others."

Receiving the Young Alumni Excellence Award was an honor Col. Allen never imagined as a cadet. He views the achievement as recognition of the mentors, family members, supervisors and airmen who helped shape him.

"You helped transform a know-it-all second lieutenant into the officer I am today," he says. "Thank you for seeing my potential and taking the time to help me become the officer I am today."

For Col. Allen, being counted among the Long Blue Line carries both honor and responsibility. He believes graduates must uphold the legacy of those who came before them while preparing those who will follow.

This summer, Col. Allen began a new assignment with the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration. He now serves as a section leader for the Department of Energy's Nuclear Emergency Support Team. Although the mission differs from previous assignments, his goal remains unchanged: care for the people he leads, accomplish meaningful work and leave every team stronger. 