



August 8, 2016

FRC-SW division director recognized for mentoring



JB Thurmond Jr., director of the Production Activity Control Division at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest, is a winner of NAVAIR's 2016 Mentor of the Year Award for exemplifying the ideal qualities and character of a mentor. (U.S. Navy photo)

FLEET READINESS CENTER SOUTHWEST, NORTH ISLAND, Calif. — A teenager taking a shortcut through a backyard didn't know it at the time, but bumping into NAVAIR's JB Thurmond Jr. changed his life.

Thurmond's backyard was a faster route to get to his high school, the teenager explained. Thurmond told him he was welcome to use the shortcut as long as he maintained a 3.0 GPA.

The years passed. One day, when Thurmond opened his front door, a young man he did not recognize stood there.

"You don't remember me, do you?" the young man asked. It was the teenager, now grown, now a captain in the Air Force with his own family, thanking Thurmond for mentoring him to keep up his grades and succeed.

This is just one example of why Thurmond, director of the Production Activity Control Division at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest, received the 2016 NAVAIR Mentor of the



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Year Award. The award recognizes those employees who exemplify the ideal qualities and character of a mentor.

“Your perseverance, technical expertise, steadfast commitment to mentoring and willingness to help others achieve are truly an example to be emulated by all,” wrote NAVAIR Commander Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags in a letter of appreciation in March 2016. “The superb manner in which you mentor juniors and increase their professional competence is in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. naval service.”

Thurmond said he has been mentoring formally and informally for almost 25 years and, while he currently has 11 mentees, he has mentored more than 100 people.

“I want to give back what someone had taken the time to give me,” he said. “If it wasn’t for someone sharing with me their knowledge — professionally and personally — I’d be remiss if I did not give back to the younger generation. I want to reach back and pull someone up to keep NAVAIR going.”

Joe Becker is one such mentee. When he started his career at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest, he wanted help shaping his professional goals and finding a direction. His supervisor recommended he contact Thurmond as a mentor. Under Thurmond’s guidance, Becker started a job in the Equal Employment Office, which he said closely matched his education and experience.

“I credit Mr. Thurmond with helping me reach my career path and am beyond appreciative for the time and energy he has invested in me as a mentor,” Becker said.

Thurmond has served as the lead mentor for his site’s Journey Leadership Development Program, has participated in mentoring projects for NAVAIR’s diversity advisory groups and also mentors students at Southwestern College.

“A mentor can help you, prepare you and guide you to achieve your goals and objectives in your career,” he said. “If we try to do everything on our own, it might take years, but a mentor can assist you in reaching your objectives sooner.”

He said one of his first formal mentors taught him the importance of saving personal leave — for example, he has used zero sick leave in 28 years — and obtaining higher education. He currently has four mentors.

“You might not have one mentor — you might have multiple mentors. Mentors can open up different doors throughout your life, personally and professionally,” he said.

He encourages NAVAIR employees to seek out a mentor, because “mentoring can help catapult your career, if you have someone who has been where you have been,” he said.

To find a mentor, he suggests being open-minded and not choosing the first one to come



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along.

“Communicate. A mentor can’t read your mind. Be upfront,” he said. “Lay it down so the mentor knows what he has to work with. Come on time to the meeting with your pad and pencil to take down those nuggets of wisdom to build yourself up. There are going to be some times that something isn’t falling in your path, so choose your battles. Find out what you can do better. Turn the negative into a positive.”

NAVAIR’s mentoring program, established in 2007, offers speed and group mentoring, training, a playbook and an online tool, iMentor, to help match mentors and mentees. Currently, there are more than 6,000 NAVAIR civilians registered in iMentor. Read more information about [mentoring and NAVAIR’s other career development programs](#).