

# PRESS RELEASE

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Telephone: (732) 323-2811  
(732) 323-1079  
FAX: (732) 323-7676

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Contact: Thomas Worsdale, Public Affairs Officer  
Lawrence Lyford, Deputy Public Affairs Officer

## **ALRE lead receives Black Engineer of the Year Award**

**NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, LAKEHURST, NJ, March 2, 2011** – Kerry Nichols received the Black Engineer of the Year Award (BEYA) Outstanding Technical Contribution award during the 25<sup>th</sup> BEYA Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Global Competitiveness Conference gala in Washington, D.C., Feb. 19.

The annual conference and gala recognizes significant accomplishments of African-Americans in government and industry, who have achieved exceptional career gains in STEM fields.

Nichols, 36, is a Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), Lakehurst, N.J., lead software engineer for the Aircraft Launch and Recovery Equipment (ALRE) program's Moriah Wind System (MWS), a wind measurement system for Navy and Coast Guard ships; and software team lead for the open architecture MWS, designed for Zumwalt-class guided missile destroyers.

According to Nichols, he was shocked to learn he was an award recipient. "We operate in a team-based environment," he said. "I really appreciate that the work my team and I do is recognized in a positive way. It's also a good thing for the Moriah program as a whole."

Bruce Chiodi, the lead for the ALRE Information Systems integrated product team, which manages the Moriah system, said Nichols excels as both an engineer and a leader. “Whether he's developing new code, supporting the contractor in delivering systems to the Fleet, or providing technical insight to a host of new ship initiatives, he is an invaluable team member,” Chiodi said.

“I am a big Fleet support guy,” Nichols said. “I believe our sole purpose is to provide them with the tools they need to defend this country. My biggest joy comes from receiving positive feedback from the ships about the products we supply them.”

Nichols joined NAVAIR’s ALRE team in 2003 as a software developer for the integrated shipboard information system. He was promoted to lead software engineer for Moriah in 2004, when he became responsible for conducting and coordinating testing of all software development.

As lead, he is both the government liaison that oversees the contractors’ development efforts, and test engineer for all new software releases. Nichols also manages software configuration installations on air-capable ships – or ships that launch helicopters – and oversees the MWS laboratory.

“Nichols has proven to be an extremely self-motivated, committed leader whose technical contributions to major projects have been nothing short of exceptional,” said Bill Larsen, branch manager for NAVAIR Software Design and Development. “His work in instituting the required software configuration management processes on the Moriah program, which allows for more accurate and timely software delivery to the Fleet, is just one example of his invaluable contribution to the program.”

The Moriah system is a solid-state wind measurement system that utilizes ultrasonic technology to precisely measure wind speed and direction. It includes numerous multi-functional color displays depicting wind, meteorological and navigation information; and is slated to replace the legacy electro-mechanical “wind bird” system on all air-capable ships over the course of the next 20 years. Moriah is currently installed on more than 30 Navy and Coast Guard ships.

Cutline:

From L-R, Rear Adm. Randy Mahr, Commander, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division; Kerry Nichols, Black Engineer of the Year Award recipient; Kathleen Donnelly, Director, Support Equipment and Aircraft Launch and Recovery Department; and Jesse McCurdy, Deputy Assistant Commander for Research and Engineering, NAVAIR are shown at the BEYA/STEM Global Competitiveness Conference gala in Washington, D.C., Feb. 19. Nichols received the Outstanding Technical Contribution Award for his work on the ALRE program's Moriah Wind System.

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