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Burgess graduates acquisitions fellowship

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. -- Jeff Burgess, Huntsville Center Contracting Directorate's Facilities Support Branch chief contracting officer, was one of 11 members who graduated in March from the Competitive Development Group/Army Acquisition Fellowship program during the CDG/AAF Orientation, Induction, and Graduation events recently hosted by the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center, Redstone Arsenal.

The event served as the capstone event for the program that also saw eight civilian members of the Army acquisition corps introduced into the fellowship.

Burgess said hard work with diverse experiences in contracting and completing various levels of contracting certifications made him competitive for the selection as a fellow.

"I had worked spare parts, commodities, GSA orders, services and major weapons systems," Burgess said. "I had already earned my level III certification in contracting, a level II in program management, and a level I in logistics. Since the CDG Program was an opportunity to get a level III in program management, the fact that I already had shown the initiative to get multiple certifications demonstrated my commitment to the idea of cross-training in multiple career fields."

CDG/AAF is a three-year program that offers developmental assignments in Program Executive Offices, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology offices, U.S. Army Materiel Command headquarters and functional organizations. The program provides expanded training, leadership, experiential, and other career development opportunities.

Burgess said he learned a great deal from the program, but he said he believes the most important thing he takes from the fellowship experience is a greater understanding of the acquisition process from the programmatic perspective.

"The outlook and attitudes of the program and project managers are very different from those of contracting," Burgess said.

"All of the various career fields have different responsibilities and different areas of focus. Those differences are difficult to understand and until you have actually worked on the program side of the process, I don't believe you can fully appreciate that perspective."

The three-day event opened with the orientation for the seven new YG12 members and covered basic administrative topics and program expectations.

Craig Spisak, USAASC director, opened the second day of the event, which was highlighted by a program management panel discussion.

The final day of the event featured remarks from Brig. Gen. Joseph Bass, Expeditionary Contracting Command commander, a question-and-answer panel consisting of previous members of the CDG/AAF program and a senior leader dialogue panel.

"I did not realize how reputable the program is and how many CDG graduates are in such highly visible positions within the Army," said Chenxi Dong-O'Malley, a Year Group 2012 CDG/AAF fellow and assistant product manager for Program Executive Office Soldier.

A dinner reception was held the final evening, which included the official induction and graduation ceremony.

(Bulletin editor William Farrow contributed to this article)