

# Students learn about test command jobs

by Sarah Rafique, Herald staff writer



Figure 1 Herald/MARIANNE LIJEWWSKI

*Michael Baker, chief of scientific services for test support contractor, far left, talks with Ellison High School students about an unmanned aerial system during Groundhog Job Shadow Day on Jan. 30 at Operational Test Command at Fort Hood.*

Whenever he drives past post, Keyshawn Johnson's curiosity about how the military tests different weapons, systems and equipment peaks. On Jan. 31, Johnson was excited about the opportunity to walk through the rooms of Fort Hood's Forward Test Center, learn about the efficiency of equipment soldiers on the battlefield use and see virtual simulations of real-world scenarios.

"We see the helicopters around and we hear about what they do, but we don't actually know for sure, so being able to see how they test the systems is pretty interesting," said Johnson, an Ellison High School junior, as he shadowed research analysts at the U.S. Army Operational Test Command during the 16th annual Groundhog Job Shadow Day, sponsored by Killeen's volunteer services and the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce's public education adopt-a-school committee.

About 100 juniors and seniors at schools in the Killeen Independent School District were paired with 64 mentors from different professions to help prepare them for joining the workforce, said Heather Nusbaum, business manager at the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce.

Michael Baker, chief of scientific services for the Test Support Contractor at Fort Hood, led a tour of the facility and hoped students learned about the numerous leading-edge opportunities available through the military versus the commercial sector.

The Operational Test Command is essentially a “Consumer Reports” for the Army, which plans, conducts and reports rigorous operational tests and experiments to provide essential information for the acquisition and fielding of warfighting systems.

“It never gets dull,” Baker said. “There’s always something new. It’s a constant struggle to stay ahead of where technology is going, so you know how it works and how to test it when it comes time to test it.”

Baker said he looks for attitude and aptitude, rather than experience, when hiring employees. He offered advice to the three students in his session, all of whom have an interest in math and science.

“Everybody has to be able to do more than one thing,” he said. “The people that are really successful in technology aren’t the people that just do it in school or in class, they live it. They’re passionate about what they do ... It’s just something they immerse themselves in, day in and day out.”

Stephanie Cantillo, an Ellison High School junior, loves physics and was excited to be exposed to the different opportunities in the field.

“Engineering itself — everything it’s composed of — has always interested me,” she said. “This experience today was really eye-opening. There’s endless opportunities, this is just one of them.”

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