

# APFRI NCO stays busy, upholds standards

*Spc. Jennifer Rick, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

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*Sgt. 1st Class Ponce Shepard, NCOIC for all three Army Physical Fitness Research Institute annexes, gives Lt. Col. Sonya Edmonds some tips on working out, and finding the maximum weight she can lift. Photo by Spc. Jennifer Rick.*

March 17, 2009 -- From coordinating behind-the-scene details for operations at the Army Physical Fitness Research Institute to helping execute detailed health assessments, APFRI's noncommissioned officer-in-charge has a hand in almost everything.

"I'm in charge of safety and security, maintenance and I have a role in the budgeting and assessments," 14-year Army veteran Sgt. 1st Class Ponce Shepard said.

Each year, more than 600 students pass through the gates of Carlisle Barracks, and each one is encouraged to participate in an APFRI health assessment. APFRI's goal during the health and fitness assessments is to provide the students with the best screening measures available to evaluate their risk for cardiovascular disease and to determine their current health and fitness levels.

This includes hitting the treadmill to test overall aerobic capacity and physical endurance. "They are pushed during this phase to about 85% of their maximal capacity," Shepard said. "That way, we are able to help them understand what is happening to their heart rate and blood pressure. If something isn't working as well as it should, we will see it."

"My role is mostly with assessing body composition using a variety of measures to include the Bod Pod, taping and measuring strength and flexibility," said Shepard, who is a physical therapy technician.

Besides working at Carlisle Barracks, Shepard is also the NCOIC of the other two APFRI annexes at the Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kan., and the Sergeants Major Academy at Ft. Bliss, Texas. He routinely visits each site to do an inventory of all equipment, and help out if needed.

In the future, Shepard will also be the NCOIC at new APFRI annexes. Currently, there are preliminary plans for APFRI sites at the Army Management Staff College, Warrant Officer Candidate School and several Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course locations. Targeted are mid-career commissioned and warrant officers, senior enlisted leaders and mid-career NCOs, who are known to be more at risk for health issues stemming from the strain of multiple deployments.

"We all work as a team to help people improve their lives," Shepard said. "During assessments the teamwork is phenomenal and it makes you proud of what you're doing and proud to be a part of this program."

Shepard enjoys his work and finds it rewarding.

"What we do for our customers really has a positive influence on their lives," he said. "Sometimes they will come back to tell us what a constructive impact this program had on them, and that's a good feeling."

"Not only am I a part of the APFRI team," Shepard said, "I am a Senior Noncommissioned Officer in the United States Army. As such, I am a member of the most unique group of professional military practitioners in the world."

Lt. Col. Stephen Barone, APFRI deputy director, sees Shepard's motivation and dedication.

"He has a very good work ethic and understanding of how NCOs support the organization. He enforces those standards in the organization and does a very good job."