

Sgt Leslie Blair joined the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in the spring of 2007. She says her Basic Military Qualification at CFB Gagetown established the course for her career by encouraging her to set future goals. Focusing on these goals has given her the confidence to pursue her career milestones by continuously going above and beyond the duties depicted in her Occupational Specification.

After Aviation Systems Technician (QL3) trades training in Borden, Ontario, her first posting was to 8 Wing Trenton, Ontario, in January 2009. She received the CC-130 Hercules Propulsion Academic Achievement Award upon completion of her QL5 training. Her first trip as a POM was with 8 Air Maintenance Squadron in support of Operation BOXTOP, a resupply mission conducted twice annually to Alert, Nunavut. At the same time, she also started volunteering at the National Air Force Museum of Canada (NAFMC).

In February of 2010, she did her first of three trips as a member of the Tactical Airlift Unit in support of Task Force-Afghanistan. The 10-person team she was on worked to maintain CC-130 Hercules aircraft and was later recognized with a commendation from the Camp Mirage Commanding Officer for the effort displayed while maintaining a remarkable serviceability rate and supporting all missions. In April of 2010, she was Advanced Promoted to the rank of Corporal 12 months early.

In 2011, she was one of 76 technicians chosen to remain with the ageing legacy CC-130 Hercules and posted to 424 Squadron (Search and Rescue) where she was an integral member of the Maintenance Organization. During her time at 424 Squadron she was part of an Iqaluit Mobile Repair Party (MRP), a Bagotville MRP, two Muskoka MRPs, Tiger Exercise 2011 North Bay, Tiger Exercise 2012 Val d'Or, Tiger Exercise 2013 Churchill, a Jamaica trip, and Operation SICILY (commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation HUSKY).

In 2012, while at 424 Squadron and as a member of the Camp Trillium committee, Sgt Blair started the 8 Wing Herc Pull which raised nearly \$4000 for children with cancer, for which the team received a Wing Commander's Commendation. The following year, in an effort to grow the Herc Pull, the team decided to support the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC). As the Herc Pull OPI and overall GCWCC Event Coordinator, her efforts largely contributed to the total donation of \$140,000 in support of the GCWCC, for which she received her own Wing Commander's Commendation. She also received a Quinte West Volunteer Service Award by the NAFMC for helping create an educational program for school-aged students.

In 2014, Sgt Blair was posted to 12 Wing Shearwater. Promoted to Master Corporal in April 2015, she was appointed by A4 Maintenance to be the 12 Wing AVN Technician Field Recruiter; a position that required her to travel and speak at numerous career days, colleges and air shows.

In 2015, she was a proud member of Helicopter Operational Test and Evaluation Flight (HOTEF) when it received the 12 Wing Team of the Year Award. In 2016, she received the 12 Wing Service Person of the Quarter for the first quarter and, in 2017, she received a Wing Commander's Commendation.

After completing her CH-148 Cyclone type course she was posted to 12 Wing's 406 (Maritime) Operational Training Squadron to instruct. There she created the Top Student Airmanship Award and constructed plaques for each trade course.

In the spring of 2016, she became aware of a program in Ottawa called Soldiers Helping Soldiers (SHS), and with their support, launched the 12 Wing SHS Potato Project to help bring SHS to homeless veterans

in Halifax Regional Municipality. The SHS Potato Project creates a doorway for outreach, breaking the barrier, starting a conversation, leading to help and hope. The program successfully brought in a total of 650lbs of potatoes from 12 Wing members, which were all donated to a soup kitchen in downtown Halifax.

In November of 2016, she set her sights on helping veterans that haven't transitioned well to civilian life. Santa for Nova Scotia Veterans was launched to bring Christmas joy to veterans in need or alone over the holiday season. With 32 emotional deliveries to veterans completed just in time for the Christmas holidays, this project was by far the most humbling and eye-opening experience she has had the privilege to lead. Now, in its fourth year, renamed Santa for Veterans, the project reaches coast to coast, last year sending out numerous packages to veterans and delivering knit socks to veteran hospitals.

In March of 2017, she gathered a team of fifteen 12 Wing members to conduct the restoration of the ageing and weathered 416 Lynx One Voodoo aircraft at the Atlantic Canada Aircraft Museum. Within no time, she raised \$2000 in donations from old Voodoo aircrew and ground crew. The restoration project took most of the year to complete. The museum made the entire team honorary members, and presented Sgt Blair with a plaque.

In 2018, Sgt Blair was appointed President of the Mess Committee of the Jr Rank's Mess at 12 Wing. She was also the lead technician on a cross-country trip to deliver the second CH-148 Cyclone to 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron in Patricia Bay, B.C. The trip took a total of 14 days and Sgt Blair says that seeing Canada from the birds-eye-view of a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter will go down in the books as one of the coolest opportunities that she has ever experienced.

Sgt Blair was promoted to her current rank in April 2019, while in Atlanta, GA at the 2019 Aerospace Maintenance Competition. She was a member of the first all-female RCAF maintenance team, the RCAF Spitfires. Later that year, Sgt Blair launched a Do Good Club and a Toastmasters Club at 12 Wing. The Do Good Club provides opportunities for 12 Wing members to help in the community and helps develop club members in the field of community outreach and leadership.

In December 2019, Sgt Blair started her Master of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. Sgt Blair is currently preparing to Coach the 12 Wing Aerospace Maintenance Team that will be competing in Dallas, TX in April of 2020, and will likely be deploying in the summer.

Sgt Blair met her spouse at 424 Squadron in Trenton, Ontario, in 2012. He is also an AVN Technician. They have been together for over seven years and spend their own time playing with their dogs and working on home projects.

Sgt Blair set a goal for herself to become a top 1% leader as a Non-Commissioned Member in the Canadian Armed Forces. Her goals demand focus and hard work. Outside of work, she continues her formal university education and second language training.

She has seized leadership opportunities in varied sectors of RCAF operations, in the military community, and her personal life — no matter which opportunity, group cohesion and communication were the key elements for success.