

Lori Piestewa Post #80 Attendant Josephine Cook Supports Wingman Day

Hopi women are renowned for baking delicious food and passing on these important skills to their daughters and granddaughters are a proud tradition and highlight the status of woman's roles in the Hopi culture. Reigning Lori Piestewa Post #80 Attendant, Josephine Cook, continues this generations-old practice. She traveled to Luke Air Force Base (AFB), near Phoenix, AZ, on April 3, 2015, to support the "Wingman Day" and delivered over 300 cookies for the men and women stationed at the base. The day before her departure, with the help of Princess Brenda Dacawyma, they baked and sorted the cookies for delivery. Additionally, donations of cookies from other Hopi women were provided as well.

The purpose of "Wingman Day" at Luke AFB is to allow Airmen to take a break from their duties, often face-paced in the military, to get together as squadrons and/or units to discuss safety or morale related issues and usually with some added time to relax by having barbeques, fun sports events and spending social time with squadron mates. Military wide, commanders at times can order the cease of operations for a day and have the personnel under their command to take "down time" to have group meetings and/or trainings whether it is for mission operations, health or morale. Through the efforts of Sharon Kozak, Community Supporter Coordinator, 56th Fighter Wing (FW), she requested local veterans organizations to donate 600 cookies, nuts and other snacks for the "Wingman Day". Despite the distance involved, the Post #80 Royalty jumped at the opportunity to support the cause and with the help of family members decided on a goal of 300 cookies. They met their goal and with three boxes of cookies loaded into their car, Ms. Cook and her mother traveled to Luke AFB to spend the night on base to begin the cookie delivery the next day.

The following morning, Ms. Cook delivered her two boxes of bagged cookies to the collection point and since they could not have access to the base flight line, one box was set aside to visit with Airmen at their work areas. The first stop was to the base headquarters where Ms. Cook delivered cookies to Brigadier General Scott L. Pleus, Commander, 56 FW, and to Chief Master Sergeant John M. Mazza, Command Chief, 56 FW, and their staff. While spending time with Chief Mazza, he presented her with a challenge coin and gave her a brief history of challenge coins and what to do when "challenged". Since Ms. Cook now has a challenge coin in her possession, if in the future should anyone show their challenge coin to her and if she does not produce her coin, then she would have to buy that person a soda. The next stop was to the Security Forces Squadron where she delivered the cookies and met with staff. Since Security Forces is basically the Law Enforcement agency on base, most of the Airmen were guarding the flight line or main entrances to the base. So Ms. Cook provided a batch of cookies to be delivered later to them by their fellow co-worker. From the Security Forces Squadron, the next place of delivery was to the Medical Support Group building. There Ms. Cook had a captured audience in the Dental Clinic where she introduced herself and gave cookies to those awaiting in the lobby for their appointments. One of the highlights was her visit to the base Fire Department, where Ms. Cook not only met briefly with the fire-fighters, but was given a special tour of the fire department's operations. She was escorted into the command center that provides real-time "eyes" and communications of the flight line and the base, and she was shown the large fire trucks and equipment used in their fire-fighting duties. After visiting with the Airmen, Ms. Cook was provided a tour of the base exchange and commissary where the military members and their dependents have their own shopping areas.

Ms. Cook certainly enjoyed her time visiting the Airmen at Luke AFB during their "Wingman Day". Princess Dacawyma and Attendant Cook hoped the Luke AFB Airmen enjoyed their Hopi cookies, made with love and support for them as they serve in the military far from home and family. The Royalty's cookies brought a little taste of home to the Airmen for at least one day.

Ms. Cook would like to express her gratitude to General Pleus, for allowing her to visit the base and for the warm reception she received from all the professional and dedicated Airmen she met. Also special thanks to Ms. Kozak for heading up the cookie drive. Finally to Lori Piestewa Post #80 for their sponsorship of Princess Dacawyma and Attendant Cook as their young ambassadors as they support and honor all Veterans and Military at related events on and off the Hopi Reservation. For information on requesting or inviting the two royalties for your events please contact Geno Talas at (928) 613-4863.



Attendant Josephine Cook takes a picture near the F-16 parking ramp.



Chief Master Sergeant John Mazza, Command Chief, presented challenge coin to Attendant.



Attendant meeting volunteers at cookie collection point prior to her visit on base.

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