

ERB-Sailors stay positive despite change in career options

By Fifi Kieschnick

NAS Kingsville Public Affairs

When one door closes, another opens.

That's how ABF1(SW) Nathan Jones is looking at it.

Jones, a Navy veteran of more than 12 years, is one of the more than 3,000 Sailors impacted by Enlisted Retention Boards (ERBs).

Jones is in one of the overmanned ratings that was looked at, aviation boatswain's mate, fuels, (ABF). As such, he's involved in the operation and servicing of fuel farms and equipment associated with the fueling and defueling of aircraft ashore and afloat. He also observes and enforces handling safety precautions and maintaining fuel quality surveillance and control in aviation fuel systems. ABFs are also part of the team that assists in launching and recovering aircraft from land or ships.

"The ERB looked at 31 ratings and Sailors in those ratings that had more than 7 years service, but less than 15, as of Oct. 1, 2011," said NCC(AW/SW) Minerva Verley, NAS Kingsville's career counselor. It was the first year the board was convened and it was set up very similar to a selection board, according to Verley.

"Locally, 10 Sailors were looked at by the ERB and four were not selected for retention," Verley added.

Jones was one of those four and, like many of the Sailors who were not selected for retention, had planned on making the U.S. Navy his career. But now, he is doing everything he can to find employment. "I didn't take 'baby leave' when my wife delivered last month," Jones said, "instead, I went to TAP (Transition Assistance Program) class, got my resume together, and began networking and making contacts."

The first step for separating Sailors is to receive a DD Form 2648, Preseparation Counseling Checklist for Active Component Service Members. The command career counselor goes over the form with the Sailors to ensure they are aware of the assistance and benefits available to them.

The checklist covers employment assistance, relocation assistance, education, training, health and life insurance, finances, and veterans benefits among other items.

The next step is the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC).

The FFSC offers transition assistance classes, among other services for departing service members. Transition as-



Ramon Panganiban manages the Fleet and Family Support Center's transition assistance program.

sistance is one of Ramon Panganiban's chief responsibilities, at the NAS Kingsville FFSC.

"Many of the Sailors I see are really 'stressed out,' especially the 'ERB Sailors,'" Panganiban said. "Many of them came into the Navy straight from high school and have spent the past 12-to-14 years in their current career field. This -- the Navy -- is all they know. I prepare them to become a civilian."

FC2(SW) Natascha Josey is one of those Sailors who entered the Navy out of high school and another one not selected for retention. "I don't take it personally," Josey said. "But it's hard to absorb. It feels like I'm standing on rocky ground and that everything I have been working for has been taken away from me."

Josey is not sure what she wants to do or where she wants to go when her enlistment ends in September.

"We ensure they know what resources are available to them and that they go to TAP class," Panganiban said. "I continue

to touch base with them, too, sending them vacancy announcements, as I see them, and referring them to job fairs and counseling, if needed."

The FFSC offers transitional assistance that includes resume writing, financial counseling and relocation counseling. They also answer questions about veterans' and educational benefits.

Everyone's circumstances are different -- from their rating to marital status or education, and whether they rent or own a home. And, based on their circumstances, Panganiban guides them to varying resources.

For example, Jones would like to move to Georgia where he owns a home. He'd like to work for the military there in his chosen career field. But, he may have to continue to rent out his home there, move to a different part of the country and wait until the economy improves.

"Because of the economy, Sailors may have to relocate to find jobs," Panganiban added, "and not necessarily where they were looking to move to."

"My heart goes out to these Sailors who are getting caught in this (ERB)," Panganiban said. "But, we're here for them -- the FFSC. We not only offer transition assistance, but have two counselors on staff available to talk to. We'll send them information about job fairs and job opportunities, but the rest they have to do on their own."

The command is supporting these Sailors, stated both Panganiban and Verley. The Sailors have opportunities to receive one-on-one counseling, as little or as much as they need, so that they are as prepared as possible to depart the military and enter the civilian workforce.

"After I give them pre-separation counseling," Verley said. "They can come back anytime as questions come up."

"I have the resources I need (because of command support), I just need to decide what I want to do and put it in resume format," Josey said.

"I'm trying to look at it like this could 'open the door' for better opportunities" Jones added. "Things happen for a reason. I may not like how it happens, but when 'one door closes, another opens.'"



FC2(SW) Natascha Josey is another local Sailor not selected for retention.



ABF1(SW) Nathan Jones is one of four local Sailors not selected for retention by the Enlisted Retention Boards. (Photo by IC1(SW/AW) Jesse Booth)

Navy COOL offers opportunities for Sailors

Naval administration message (NAVADMIN) 396/11 released Dec. 22 provides important information on credentialing opportunities available through Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) for those selected for separation under FY12 quota-based Enlisted Retention Board (ERB).

Navy COOL is a centralized, Web-based hub that consolidates information from numerous sources at the federal, state and local levels on certifications, licenses, apprenticeships and growth opportunities that correspond with each

Navy rating, job and occupation. Navy COOL also provides funding for Navy enlisted personnel to obtain these civilian licenses and certifications.

The message describes how Sailors identified for separation may apply for a waiver from the Navy COOL requirement to have a minimum one year remaining on their enlistment to apply for funding toward commercial certification and/or licensure exams found on the Navy COOL website.

"Though it isn't the purpose of the Navy's see *COOL on next page*