

## It's a Wonderful Air Force Life for TSgt. Gray and Family

by Elizabeth Long  
711th Human Performance Wing

1/12/2010 - **WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE** -- Technical Sergeant Michael R. Gray has enjoyed a long and happy life in the Air Force family. As the son of an AF colonel, Gray said he enjoyed the unique opportunities that went with military life, including world travel, meeting new people and participating in base recreation. He especially liked moving around, living in a number of communities throughout the United States and Korea.

Gray followed in his father's footsteps, joining the Air Force in 1996. He has put his heart and soul into serving his country, the Air Force, his community and his family. That is why Gray was selected as the Air Force Research Laboratory, 711th Human Performance Wing, Human Effectiveness Directorate's January representative for the "Year of the Air Force Family" initiative.

The Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force designated July 2009 through July 2010 as the "Year of the Air Force Family." The year's focus is to find ways to expand and develop support for the ever-changing needs of Air Force families based on these four pillars: Health and Wellness; Airman and Family Housing; Airman and Family Support; and Education, Development and Employment.

At work, Gray is the Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge, Information Management at the Human Effectiveness Directorate, Anticipate and Influence Behavior Division, Information Operations Applied Mathematics Branch at Brooks City-Base in San Antonio, Texas. In this position, he maintains, supports and repairs branch computer networks and performs all of the Information Technology duties which allow the base to continue its important research. Last year, his performance in that role earned him the Detachment 5 AFRL Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year award.

On a six-month deployment last year to Qatar, Gray was recognized for exceptional service. He was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal while serving as the NCOIC, Cultural Engagement Group Theater Reports Team in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

"It was a fantastic mission," he said. "I enjoyed it although it was tough being away from my family and home as well as enduring the overwhelming heat of the desert. Yet, I am committed to helping the mission and serving my country to protect the freedoms we enjoy today."

Gray said it is a big honor to be selected as the Human Effectiveness Directorate's January representative for the "Year of the Air Force Family" initiative. "It is a great surprise," he said. "It makes me feel special. I cannot thank my supervisor enough for nominating me and my family."

At home, Gray and his wife, Stacey, have a nine-year-old son, Larsen, and a 14-month-old foster child whom they hope to adopt. Stacey and Larsen each have a second degree black belt in Taekwondo while Gray holds a red belt. The family spends time together traveling the country for regional and national Taekwondo



TSgt. Michael R. Gray, his wife Stacey and son Larsen are the Air Force Research Laboratory, 711th Human Performance Wing, Human Effectiveness Directorate January representatives for the "Year of the Air Force Family" initiative. (Photo by Maj. Anthony Carver, 711 HPW/RHXM)

tournaments. They enjoy watching professional hockey games, and attend as many San Antonio Rampage games as they can. They love camping and boating. They also water ski and plan to teach their son how to water ski next summer.

The Gray family believes the Air Force is a great place to live, work and play. "The Air Force takes care of you 100 percent," Gray explained. "They provide my family and me with housing, medical care, educational opportunities and so much more. I am fortunate to be a part of such a wonderful community."

Gray also gets strong support from his family and the community in which they live. "I got back from my deployment in November and visited my son's school on Veterans Day," he said. "The children in his class each made me a thank-you card for serving and protecting their country - it tickled me to death! I am continually approached in the community by civilians thanking me for my service. I consider it an honor."

The traditional Air Force family includes active duty, reserve and guard members; officers and enlisted personnel; and enlisted civilians, spouses and children. During the "Year of the Air Force Family," family members have been expanded to include parents, siblings, friends and surrounding community members, as the Air Force recognizes that they, too, provide Airmen with a firm foundation of guidance and support.