



August 2, 2012

## Do you know...

... D'Lorah Small does not carry a tape measure or a level with her to a construction job site anymore? Instead, the 28-year-old engineer can size up a construction project and create a plan to help the South District and its customers make right decisions.

And although her opinion carries a lot of weight, the Afghan National Police branch project manager said she sees herself as a facilitator rather than a project boss.

"I am not in charge of anyone in the field. We work as a team. We work together to find resolutions," she said. "I provide collective recommendations to the customer."

Small, who graduated from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va. with a bachelors of science in civil engineering with a minor in environmental engineering when she was 18, describes herself as a combination hands-on and "office" engineer. "To be a good engineer you have to do both," she said. "You need to be able to communicate what you're seeing onto paper and you need to be able to visualize what that would look like on the ground."

Small deployed to Afghanistan for the second time in February 2012 from the Savannah District. During this tour, she has had the opportunity to see most of the Afghan National Police construction projects she is responsible for, but not all. Sometimes she walks the job with project engineers and quality assurance managers but there have been

occasions, due to safety and security concerns, when she had to assess a project from the air or from the window of an up-armored vehicle.

### MENTORS

*"My mother was the biggest mentor for me through positive reinforcement and showing the impact of solidifying a future through hard work and faith."*

*Small also includes the late Dr. Stanley Woodard, former aerospace engineer at NASA-Langley Research Center and Paul Gordy, Tidewater Community College associate professor and her colleagues and leaders at the Savannah District on her list of mentors.*

"I typically go with the project's engineer -- they are the subject matter experts -- and I look at the overall status of construction. If there are issues on the ground that are going to impact time or cost, I communicate those back to the sponsor with ways forward to work around them," she said. "The more opportunities we have to visit the sites, the more chance I have to resolve those issues sooner and minimize the impact."

A successful engineer combines the ability to look at and see a project's successes and failures with the ability to take that information back to the office and solve problems, she said.

Small said she "always had a knack for construction" even when she



was attending Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach, Va. After graduating at 14 years old, she earned an associate's degree in civil engineering from Tidewater Community College at 16 and she earned a master's in business administration from Regent University, Virginia Beach, in 2008.

Before joining the Corps of Engineers in December 2009, Small worked for the NASA Langley Research Center, the Virginia Dept. of Transportation and the U.S. Forest Service.

During her first deployment to Afghanistan with the South District in 2009, Small worked as a program manager and acting resident engineer in the Kandahar Resident Office.

While she has set a professional goal of working her way through the Corps of Engineer's engineer ranks to a senior executive service position, Small's personal ambition is to mentor other aspiring engineers and gifted students.

She is in the process of establishing a scholarship foundation for gifted students who may not have the financial resources to continue their education. The Small Foundation, which is still in the early stages of incorporation, will help "educationally accelerated high school students" with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher with financial assistance for tuition or books.

"I acknowledge and appreciate the people who recognize me as being special but I am not the only one. There are more to follow who will do bigger and better things than me."

Her advice to up and coming engineers: "Stay focused, never stop learning, build upon your strengths and always look to improve your abilities. Be willing to assist others in their efforts. Stay engaged, take initiative, and don't be afraid to explore opportunities. Most importantly: believe in yourself."

Small appreciates the support she and accolades she received from others and is proud of her early successes but now it is her turn to help others.

"No matter how high up you move you have to remember where you came from," she said. "And, you have to give back."

"D'Lorah brings a unique set of engineering and construction experiences to the Afghanistan National Police Program," said Fred Schelby, her previous supervisor in the Afghan National Police project management branch. "Although relatively soft spoken and calm under pressure, she has the ability to articulate her point and remains persuasive to get others to understand her point."

Small carries technical, construction and practical experience in her engineer tool box, he said. These skills help her tackle high profile and challenging projects and communicate effectively with everyone involved.

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“Whether she is working at the district headquarters, a remote project office, or accompanying a general officer on a site visit, D’Lorah has the ability to effectively communicate with various groups of individuals whether they are contractors, construction offices, fellow project managers and the members of the command group,” Schelby said.

“D’ Lorah Small has already accomplished so much by dreaming so big,” said Col. Vincent Quarles, South District commander. “Smart, well-versed, and technically savvy, she successfully engages the most difficult challenges with poise and ease. She represents the best of today’s engineer family and the future of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.”