



# THE DUGWAY DISPATCH

U.S. ARMY DUGWAY PROVING GROUND

## COMMAND TEAM CORNER

Greetings Team Dugway! I present to you the first edition of our new Dugway Dispatch - a monthly e-newsletter that will feature our teammates who are doing extraordinary things for our community, our Soldiers, and our nation. In honor of those who give us our purpose here at Dugway, our inaugural edition puts the spotlight on two of our heroes in uniform: Purple Heart recipient SSG Michael Caruso and our new Chaplain MAJ Matt Gibson. Their stories will move your heart. In addition to featuring personal testimonies and accomplishments of our teammates, we will also use this venue to keep you posted on upcoming events and social activities going on around the area. Feel free to recommend stories and what you'd like to see in this periodical in the future to make it most useful to you.



While I've got your attention, I'd also like to reinforce my emphasis on safety as we move into the winter season here. For our commuters, please take your time as you travel to and from work. Roads will become slick and the critters will gravitate towards the warmth on the asphalt. Adjust your speeds to accommodate the conditions, eliminate distractions in the driver's seat, and if you feel too tired to drive, don't drive - there are always alternatives.

Before I close, I want to thank each of you for the tremendous work and effort that has gone into a very busy and successful summer testing season. Dugway has accomplished several extraordinary tests and training events over the past few months that will directly and positively impact our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines and will ultimately make our nation safer and stronger. Your contributions to these efforts are greatly appreciated. Very proud to be serving with you.

COL Sean Kirschner  
"Dragon 6"

## PLANNER

- 30 Oct: Trunk or Treat at Bowling Center
- 11 Nov: Veterans Day
- 11-14 Nov: Las Vegas trip
- 14 Nov: Turkey Shoot
- 20 Nov: Outlet Mall trip
- 3 Dec: Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony
- 10 Dec: Dugway Holiday Party at West Desert

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# NATION'S OLDEST MILITARY AWARD PRESENTED TO DUGWAY SOLDIER



The Purple Heart medal on the chest of Staff Sgt. Michael Caruso, an Army medic. The medal is awarded to those who are wounded or killed in combat. In May 2009, an Iraqi insurgent threw an improvised grenade at Caruso's patrolling Humvee, wounding him and six other Soldiers. A series of reassignments, misplaced paperwork and changing jurisdictions delayed the awarding of Caruso's medal.

Photo by Al Vogel, Dugway Public Affairs

More than six years after being wounded in Iraq, Army Staff Sgt. Michael Caruso received a Purple Heart medal Sept. 30, pinned to his chest by his Colorado commander. Caruso, a Medic Squad Leader posted from Fort Carson, Colo., to the Dugway Health Clinic, was wounded May 10, 2009 in Iraq. Then a sergeant, Caruso was in a Humvee patrolling Mosul with Troop B, 4<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team. An insurgent threw an improvised grenade at Caruso's Humvee. The vehicle's machine gunner collapsed with wounds from the blast. Momentarily knocked unconscious, the wounded Caruso came to and manned the Humvee's .50-caliber machine gun.

"He took the fight to the enemy. That's a day at the office, right? I would say it's not,"

Col. Dennis LeMaster, commander of Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson, Colo., said with an admiring grin.



Col. Dennis LeMaster, commander of Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson, shakes Staff Sgt. Michael Caruso's hand after presenting him a Purple Heart medal and certificate. Dugway Proving Ground (DPG) has few Soldiers. No one could recall if or when DPG last had a ceremony to award the Purple Heart.

Photo by Al Vogel, Dugway Public Affairs

After suppressing enemy fire, Caruso began treating six Soldiers and himself.

All Soldiers at Dugway Health Clinic are a tenant unit from Fort Carson, commanded by LeMaster. The colonel came to Dugway Proving Ground (DPG) specifically "To recognize the personal bravery, sacrifice and tenacity of Staff Sergeant Caruso. It is an honor to serve with Soldiers of his caliber. To be in their midst is a great source of personal satisfaction every day." Caruso's awarding of the Purple Heart was delayed six years by changes in jurisdiction after reassignment and misplaced documents, he said. Ironically, he received the award a few days before leaving Utah for reassignment to Alaska. "It's not necessarily a medal we pursue or hope to get, because if you get it, there's usually a piece of metal in you or something's hurt," LeMaster said

Approximately 50 Soldiers and civilians witnessed the ceremony. It could not be recalled if a Purple Heart had been awarded on DPG since it was created in 1942. The Purple Heart, presented to U.S. Armed Forces members who are wounded or killed in combat by the enemy, is the nation's oldest military award. Created by Gen. George Washington in 1782 to honor wounded Soldiers, it began as a cloth purple heart called the Badge of Military Merit. Since antiquity, purple has denoted royalty or holiness because its dye is so expensive -- made from a mollusk found only in a small area of the Mediterranean Sea. Since the mid-1800s, purple dye has been synthesized.



Staff Sgt. Michael Caruso had his hand shaken by approximately 50 Soldiers and civilians who attended the Sept. 30 ceremony, including these Department of Defense Police.

Photos by Al Vogel, Dugway Public Affairs

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# LIFE LESSONS ON BUILDING RESILIENCE



**Chaplain (Maj.) Matthew Gibson, U.S. Army Dugway Proving Ground's new spiritual leader.**

Photo by Al Vogel, Dugway Public Affairs

Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone. But, it always helps to have a counselor, or a religious leader, close for guidance and advice.

Chaplain (Maj.) Matthew Gibson is U.S. Army Dugway Proving Ground's new spiritual leader. He knows from personal experience that building resilience is the key to strengthening one's ability adapt in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or difficult experiences.

Gibson was born and raised in Omaha, Neb. the baby of a large, family—seven brothers and four sisters. “As a small boy my family, and people I hardly knew, would tell me: ‘You’re going to be a preacher when you grow up.’” He said he loved the bonds that tied a family together, but he also longed to be part of something larger. “As I got older, I wanted to be in the military. I had uncles and cousins that served. Some of my friends also chose to join, and I knew that’s what I wanted to do too.”

He deployed to Iraq with the 3rd Brigade 2nd Infantry Division during a turbulent period. While serving there, Gibson's young wife, Debra, kept the home fires burning, caring for their two young sons, Matthew and Mark. It was during this period Gibson experienced his greatest challenge.

Debra was lifting a pot of boiling water from the stove, when somehow the pot tipped, spilling scalding water down her dress. The water severely blistered her skin. She was rushed to the hospital where she was placed in a burn unit, receiving intensive care for weeks. “Everyone believed she would recover, but complications set in and she died suddenly,” he said in hushed a tone as he looked out his office window. “I was notified of her death by email.”

Unfortunately, due to the rising conflict in Iraq, Gibson's commander could not let him return home in time for her funeral. When he returned home, the loss was profound and tough to bear. Standing beside her gravesite, he felt alone with two young sons to raise all by himself. “It was an enormously challenging time,” he acknowledged. He began to consider his life experiences and how to best strengthen himself for the hard days ahead. He said he needed to refocus, pick up the pieces of a broken life for himself and his boys. “This brought a deep period of reflection,” he said.

His thoughts took him back to the traits of faith and fortitude he had been taught in childhood by his faithful mother and father. They became the scaffolding to rebuild his life. Gibson said he felt strongly drawn to counseling and mitigating conflict. He began to move in that direction. He found solace in serving others and eventually became a youth pastor, which brought him to a place of reconciliation. Along the way, he met an “extraordinary woman” and fell in love again. He married Brenda. Together, they blended their four children into a new family, bringing much joy into Gibson's life.

At Fort Leavenworth he was commissioned as an Army Chaplain. He served there at the Combined Arms Center as the Installation Family Life Chaplain, counseling Soldiers, Family Members and other Department of Defense employees as individuals, couples or families. Over the years Gibson has continued to fortify himself and strengthen his skills as a counselor. He recently was awarded a Post Masters Certificate in Therapy with Military Families, from North Central University in Prescott, Ariz. “I believe in being a lifelong learner,” he said.

Serving at Dugway is definitely a new experience for Gibson. But, he said he's excited to be here. His family hopes to visit him during his assignment here. However, prior work and school commitments, unfortunately, will keep them from joining him here full time. Gibson said that everyone will likely experience some kind of tragedy or hardship in their lives. Each could be vulnerable. Difficulties are all but unescapable. But no one should feel they face it alone. Here is a chaplain, a seasoned counselor, who can listen, advise and provide direction. One who knows the difficulties and challenges life can bring and has traveled the path to a more resilient life. “You can't change the fact that bad things will happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to those events,” he said.