



ENGINEERS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RECRUITMENT

By Captain William J. Johnson

The 1st Battalion, 395th (1-395) Brigade Engineer Battalion (BEB), Fort Cavazos, Texas, trains and validates Army National Guard and U. S. Army Reserve units during postmobilization operations to achieve readiness in support of combatant command requirements. Operating from the North Fort Cavazos trainer site, the goal of 1-395 BEB is to provide first-class observer coach/trainer support for mobilized Guard and Reserve units as part of the total Army force.

In addition to its primary mission, 1-395 BEB is at the forefront of supporting the III Corps and Fort Cavazos Adopt-a-School Partnership Program, which was initiated to introduce Fort Cavazos Soldiers into the surrounding communities. Units are matched with local communities/schools, and they contribute military resources to nurturing the intellectual, emotional, and social growth of children in the greater Fort Cavazos area. 1-395 BEB was partnered with the city of Gatesville (the “Spur Capitol of Texas”) and the Gatesville High School. The partnership began with a welcome from Gatesville community leaders and the Gatesville District School Board in the fall of 2022. Once a month, 1-395 representatives attend the Gatesville Community Council meeting, where information, ideas, and support are shared. The battalion also sets up static displays for community events, provides a color guard for football and softball games, and assists with cross-country meets.


As the end of Fiscal Year 2022 approached, the Army had yet to reach its recruiting goal. 1-395 BEB viewed the Gatesville partnership as a way to assist in the Army recruiting effort. The battalion partnered with the local recruiting office in Copperas Cove, Texas, and the recruiting office managed to build on the foundation of mutual trust, respect, and communication that 1-395 had already developed with the students at Gatesville High School. With the support of the Gatesville High School administration, engagements between Army recruiters and Gatesville students have increased by more than 60 percent and 1-395 BEB has helped generate more than 40 qualifying leads for potential recruits, resulting in six Gatesville High School graduates enlisting in the Army.

In October 2023, the Gatesville police chief requested that 1-395 BEB provide a static display for Gatesville Night Out (a celebration in honor of the Gatesville police and fire departments and emergency medical services). Hundreds of people from the Gatesville community attended the event

to support and extend their thanks to the men and women of the armed Services and the first responders in the Gatesville community. That same month, 1-395 BEB partnered with the 120th Infantry Brigade, Fort Cavazos, to provide 10 Soldiers and two high-mobility, multipurpose, wheeled vehicles in support of the Gatesville community “BOOzaar,” a Halloween celebration held around the Coryell County Courthouse in Gatesville, making for a memorable event for the Gatesville community.

Of course, the partnership is not one-sided; Gatesville also hosts events celebrating military Service. Gatesville Community Council members have coordinated with 1-395 BEB to hold military appreciation events such as a Military Heroes Concert, a 4th of July Celebration, and a Military Appreciation Night Rodeo. 1-395 BEB has transported more than 500 mobilized guardsmen and reservists from North Fort Cavazos to attend these types of community events. Through such events, the Gatesville community expresses its thanks to Soldiers for their service to the country and their presence in the Gatesville community. And the events offer mobilized Soldiers the opportunity to enjoy a break from training and to be honored by the community they serve.

Gatesville Community Council leader Ms. Diane Fincher and the mayor of Gatesville, Mr. Gary Chumley, have been overwhelmed by the support from 1-395 BEB. Since 2022, the battalion has contributed more than 400 hours of volunteer work and averaged 10 volunteer Soldiers per event. In the spring of 2023, 1-395 BEB received three partnership awards from the III Corps and Fort Cavazos Adopt-a-School Partnership Program—the Comeback Partnership of the Year Award, the Partnership of the Year Award for the 120th Infantry Brigade, and the Partnership of the Year Award for Gatesville High School.

As 1-395 BEB continues to demonstrate selfless service and provide a pillar of strength in the Gatesville community, it is always looking for additional opportunities to support the Gatesville community and the Gatesville High School and to strengthen the Army’s recruiting efforts. 

Captain Johnson is an Army Reserve officer currently mobilized as an observer/coach trainer with 1-395 BEB. He holds a bachelor’s degree in biology from Tuskegee University, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.