

# Darnall NCOs welcomed to Corps

By Patricia Deal

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FORT HOOD, Texas—Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center's recently promoted sergeants passed under crossed swords during an induction ceremony here June 7 signifying their entrance into the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Corps.

The traditional ceremony gives the new NCOs a better understanding of the significance of becoming a sergeant and moving from follower to leader.

"It really is meaningful for the Soldiers. Everything about the ceremony, from the charge to the NCOs to the official welcome to the recitation of the NCO Creed, brings to life the importance of this critical step in their career," said Command Sgt. Major, Roger Velarde, CRDAMC's senior-enlisted advisor. "The ceremony also recognizes the hard work the Soldier did to get the promotion and defines the higher expectations required of NCOs."

While he's had several milestones in his more than 20-year career, Velarde said he still remembers the pride he felt at his own induction ceremony in 1989, around the time of the start of the rite-of-passage tradition. "I was happy to get my promotion orders, but the ceremony really made it real for me," he added.

In his remarks to the inductees, Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Reed, 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, emphasized the importance of mentoring junior enlisted Soldiers to help them become better Soldiers and future leaders. He told the new NCOs they were responsible for more than just themselves now and they needed to get to know their Soldiers, not just on a professional basis, but on a personal level as well. They should do whatever is necessary to take care of Soldiers.

For Sgt. Sabrina Mena, the ceremony sent chills down her spine. "It was one thing to say, 'okay, now I'm a sergeant,' but stepping through the sabers made it a reality for me," said the preventative medicine NCO. "I am a leader now, and committed to mentoring and taking care of my Soldiers."

Mena said she is motivated to begin her leadership role. "I've had good and not so good NCOs throughout my career. Both experiences have influenced me, helping me to develop my own leadership style. I'm ready to help my Soldiers take it to the next level," she said.

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Recently promoted sergeants display their chevrons after being inducted to the NCO Corps in a ceremony June 7. Pictured are: (from back, left to right) Sergeants Joseph Cameron, Cornelieus Davenport, Sean Grafton, Matthew Drake, Jessica Vinziant, Heather Fisher, Esther Bennett, Samuel Teague, Paul Mendez, Sabrina Mena, Brandon Salinas, Dustin Wittman, Brandon Reid, Joshua Smith, John Visneski. (Photo by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs)