

## **Major General Jessica L. Wright**

“One opportunity just turned into another,” stated Jessica Wright when asked how she had risen to the rank of Adjutant General of Pennsylvania’s National Guard. A native of Monessen, Wright graduated from college in the early seventies with a degree in social sciences. “I had to get a job and my parents thought I should try this,” so she enlisted in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in 1975. She was subsequently commissioned through attendance at the Women’s Army Corps Orientation/Officer Candidate School at Ft. McClellan, Alabama that year. After completing the Rotary Wing Aviator Course at Ft. Rucker, she became the Army National Guard’s first female aviator.

After several aviation assignments, MG Wright moved to Statesboro, Georgia, serving as an Assistant Professor of Military Science at Georgia Southern University for three years, followed by reassignment to the National Guard Bureau Personnel Directorate Headquarters. In 1996 and 1997, she attended the U.S. Army War College Fellowship, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and then proceeded to become the first female maneuver brigade commander in the U.S. Army as she took command of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s Combat Aviation Brigade.

Following her service as a State Army Aviation Officer for the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, General Wright became the Deputy Adjutant General – Army; and in March 2004, she was sworn in as Pennsylvania’s first female Adjutant General, and as such, serves on the Governor’s Cabinet. MG Wright oversees approximately 20,000 national guardsmen (of which about 10% are female), with a budget of roughly a half billion dollars. She is responsible for command, control and supervision of all Air and Army National Guard units allocated in the state of Pennsylvania, six state-owned veterans’ homes, Scotland School Veterans’ Children and programs for Pennsylvania’s 1.3 million veterans. She has earned both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, and received an Honorary Doctorate in Public Service.

She considers her most important priorities at this time to serve Pennsylvania's Veterans, the Soldiers/Airmen deployed, and their families. She is also working to train up and certify the Stryker Brigade Combat Team and its' operational capability. As the largest employer in Lebanon County, the Pennsylvania National Guard has a major economic impact in this area.

As a highly decorated military officer, MG Wright's leadership has also been recognized outside of her chosen profession. The Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce awarded her the 2000 Athena Award, for demonstrating excellence, creativity, and initiative in her career, providing valuable service to her community, and actively assisting women in realizing their leadership potential. She has served on the National Athena Board of Directors, as well as the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

However, she claims the role she is most proud of is that of "mom!" General Wright resides at Fort Indiantown Gap with her husband, retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Wright, and their son, Mike.

Kathy Snively is the chairperson of the Lebanon County Commission for Women.