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Liberal High School graduate from the Class of 1996 Brian Brooks stands in front of one of America's newest jet fighters, the Lockheed Martin F-35 STOVL version, which stands for short takeoff/vertical landing which will be put to use in the U.S. Marine Corps, U.K. Royal Air Force and Royal Navy as well as the Italian Air Force and Navy. Brooks has worked for the aircraft manufacturer for 10 years and helps with supply flow management to build the new aircraft. Courtesy photo

Honoring those who support our military might

By JESSICA CRAWFORD

As the nation's No. 1 defense contractor, Lockheed Martin's trademarked motto, "We never forget who we're working for," speaks volumes. This Memorial Day, former Liberal High School graduate Brian Brooks feels a great sense of pride in his involvement with a company that provides those defending his country with the necessary tools.

Brooks graduated from LHS in 1996. He continued his education at Kansas State University by earning his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering. Upon completion of his education, his career at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics in Fort Worth, Texas, began.

"I interned the summer of 2000 as a Lean Manufacturing Specialist and I got my full time job in July of 2001," Brooks said. "Currently, I work in the Supply Chain Management Organization for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics. I am in a group called Supplier Collaboration and Development

where I get to work closely with our suppliers for the F-35 Program. “The goal of the Supplier Collaboration and Development group is to re-architect the supply chain to meet the requirements for F-35 full rate production,” he explained. “We perform assessments for the suppliers, and work with them to develop improvement plans to get them ready for full rate production for the F-35 Program.”

Lockheed Martin describes the F-35 as “the world’s most advanced multi-role fighter.”

“The F-35 is the next generation fighter jet,” Brooks said. “There are three difference variants: one for the Air Force, one for the Navy and one for the Marines. It is not just for the U.S. either, there are many international partners as well.”

F-35s don’t just roll off an assembly line on a whim. Lockheed Martin’s Aeronautics business unit is currently undergoing the painstaking process of making the fighter jet live up to very high expectations.

“Right now, we are in the development and testing phase of the program,” Brooks said. “The current plan is to ramp up production by about 2016 to the rate of one aircraft per day. That is a really steep curve. The goal of my group is to make sure our world-wide supply chain is ready and able to provide us the parts we need to meet that demand.”

Although Brooks doesn’t work side by side with military personnel on a regular basis, he is part of an important team on which the military depends greatly.

“I don’t get to personally work with the military personnel much,” he said. “Lockheed Martin, though, is the No. 1 defense contractor in the U.S. We make the F-16, the F-22, and the C-130 in addition to the F-35 at the Aeronautics business unit.”

When Brooks stands back and takes a look at the big picture regarding his chosen profession, he is in awe at what he feels he has the honor of being a part of.

“When I am back in the factory in Fort Worth, often there are military personnel getting tours of the F-35 assembly line,” he said. “They range from high level generals to aircraft technicians. Each are getting a close look at the plane that they will soon use to defend our country. It really makes me proud knowing that I am a part of this.”

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