

A Place to Call Home
GMC's New President & Family

In 2013, Georgia Military College (GMC) received a new president, Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell, IV-a lifelong soldier with an unmatched career full of distinguished service to his country-a superior leader capable of guiding GMC in its ever expanding campaigns. In return, the school provided something the Caldwell family had never had before-a permanent home.

“The family has landed,” stated General Caldwell. “We made the decision to move to Milledgeville to be part of this community. We plan to continue to live here even after retiring.”

General Caldwell is clearly a highly dedicated soldier, but he is also a devoted father and husband. “I wanted a place where my young children could grow up and call home. They have never been able to form attachments before due to being moved so frequently. They will be able to establish friendships here they will always cherish.”

The General's wife, Reverend Stephanie Hudson Caldwell, is an ordained Methodist minister who still finds the way in which she and the General met quite amusing. She had been assigned to St. Paul United Methodist Church (SPUMC) in Columbus, Georgia, as associate pastor. Her first placement was going well-she was enjoying her job and life very much and did not have love on her radar.

Rick Caldwell, the General's brother and member of SPUMC, knew there was a match to be made. It took months of persistent encouragement to bring the two together, not only by Rick, but many of the Caldwell family who had gotten to know Stephanie through her ministry. "I did not have an interest in dating a soldier, nor did he (General Caldwell) have an interest in dating a minister," remembered Reverend Caldwell.

As most know, love is found when least expected, and when the two finally met there was no question they were meant for each other. Reverend Caldwell recalls, "We finally agreed to meet, were married six months later. I was ordained into the Methodist Church in 1998 and married Bill the next day." Married 16 years, the couple has three children together, Will (15), Anna (13), and Hudson (11).

STRENGTH DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

During the years since 9/11, many military families have endured numerous deployments of loved ones to foreign lands. The Caldwells were no different as the General was called to serve in both Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan.

Reverend Caldwell not only kept the home fires burning by taking care of their three children while the General was away, but she also continued her ministry in different ways. She often spent time guest preaching, teaching, and would often serve as a speaker for the Strong Bonds Retreats for Deployed Spouses sponsored by the US Army Chaplains.

“These were special times for me to connect with other spouses that faced difficult deployments and to motivate and encourage them as best I could based on my failures and successes as a mom to three small children while my husband was deployed multiple times,” stated Reverend Caldwell. “The retreats were a highlight for me over the past 16 years that Bill and I have been married.”

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

A permanent home-something the Caldwells longed for after many years of moving from one military installation to another. “For example, our oldest son has lived in eight homes,” said the General. “We wanted a place that our children could call their permanent home.”

The Caldwells were drawn to Milledgeville’s slower pace and rural feel. They had lived all their lives together on military bases in much larger cities. “The boys have always wanted a more country life where they could hunt and fish and enjoy being outdoors,” responded Reverend Caldwell. “They much prefer the trees to the tall buildings of San Antonio and Washington, D.C.

With the Reverend and the General both being native Georgians from Columbus, living in Milledgeville helps them reconnect to family. “Our families still live here, so it is very nice knowing we are only a couple of hours away for them,” added the General.

Asked how the town has treated the Caldwells, the General replied, “This community has been wonderful to us. We love how we can go into a restaurant like the Local Yolka, and the owner comes out just to speak to us. It’s a very warm and welcoming community.”

According to Reverend Caldwell, the transition for the two oldest children to GMC prep school has been an easy one. She said the children love the school, all the teachers, the activities that are offered, and they feel comfortable in the “military-like” environment. She added “Our children look forward to going to the same school-we generally moved every year and a half to two years.”

When listening to the Caldwells speaking about their new-adopted home, one thing stands out-their commitment to community service. The General sees supporting the larger society as a natural extension of his dedication to his country and to GMC. “We want to be involved as a family in the community we have chosen as our home,” said General Caldwell.

The Caldwells are very involved in service to others through missions at their church, First United Methodist and in other civic organizations such as the Boy Scouts. Reverend Caldwell serves on the board of the Milledgeville Christian Counseling Center that was form in 2013.

CARRYING THE VISION FORWARD

As president, General Caldwell sees his opportunity to bring GMC’s vision into clear focus. He is looking toward the year 2029, when the school will reach its 150th birthday. “What will the faculty and students need from us by this date? We need to start anticipating their needs right now-making plans and goals that our faculty and staff can at present begin working on,” stated Caldwell.

The General is exuberant as he speaks about the accessibility of education provided to the students at GMC. He focuses on the open enrollment the school maintains, “We give everyone an opportunity to get an outstanding education here, including nontraditional students. I’ve always believed in being supportive and giving people first and second chances.”

GMC offers learning support classes that prepare students for college level classes as well as free tutoring in any subject for those needing additional assistance. The General added, “The time a student is here, we hope to develop their mind as well as their character.”

With nine campuses, an online campus and three extension centers, accessibility is indeed a top priority of the institution. Maintaining a cohesive mission with so many individual sites can be a daunting task. General Caldwell, seeing the opportunity to improve the connection between the focus of the main campus in Milledgeville and the other campuses created a new position-Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

The position was filled in July, with a most impressive candidate-Brigadier General Curt Rauhut. A Georgia native of Fayette County, he most recently served as the Army’s Director of Resource Management for the Installation Management Command in San Antonio, Texas, where he directly managed \$11 billion to operate 152 military garrisons and activities around the globe. At GMC, he will be responsible for managing the campuses located statewide and ensuring the college’s enrollment and retention objectives are achieved.

In April, Governor Nathan Deal signed legislation authorizing GMC to offer a four-year degree program at specific campuses across the state. The new Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) will allow GMC to support technical college graduates seeking to earn a four-year degree.

The General emphasizes that GMC does not plan to seek to become a full four-year institution. “We are one of only five Junior Military Colleges in the United States and we serve a large civilian student population as well. We intend to maintain the current status as an exceptional two-year institution.”

With General Caldwell at its helm, GMC is sure to benefit immensely from his strong, unwavering leadership and commitment to keeping education accessible to all who desire it. The community at large will most certainly be enriched by the entire Caldwell family who now call Milledgeville their home.