

**Leadership Aurora Class 2022
Mini-Profile**

Name: Jessica J Hegewald

Company/Position: Colorado Air National Guard/ Medical Support Squadron Commander

Brief Bio/History: I was raised in Southeastern Idaho, receiving a business degree at Idaho State and then went on to Pacific University in Portland, Oregon to get my doctorate in Optometry. When I graduated, the economy had crashed, so I had a difficult time finding jobs and took my first job in Colorado. It was a bit of a culture shock to me, since there were more people in Colorado Springs than in the entire state of Idaho, but what a beautiful state! I joined the Colorado Guard because I wanted to serve, and I felt that was a way that I could do that. That was also a lot different than I expected. What I found, like most things in life, you get out what you put in. The more I took time and invested in the Colorado Guard, the more I got out of it and the more I enjoyed it. I have had opportunities to go do humanitarian missions in both Morocco and in Mongolia. Some of the most fulfilling missions have been in the US, where I have had the opportunity to help neighbors. I work as a “traditional,” meaning part-time for the Guard. My full-time job is as an optometrist. In 2015, my husband encouraged me to open my own office so we could move up to the mountains that we both love and enjoy. I am three years into my own cold-start practice. There has been a lot to learn and there has been a lot that was learned the hard way, but even through COVID, we have found a way forward and to be successful. Life has been an adventure, with a lot of highs and lows, and I wouldn't change a thing.

Hobbies/Interests: I am interested in everything outdoors. I have a lot of hobbies that I am equally terrible at. I love mountain biking, road biking, white water kayaking, backpacking, fishing, hunting, camping, and rock climbing. I would say that I continually strive to get better at my hobbies, but I still fall over my handle bars.