

[PHOTO DETAILS / DOWNLOAD HI-RES](#)

Official Tinker Air Force Base mascot 'Tink' aims to educate and inspire



Published Aug. 14, 2023

By Clayton Cummins

TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. -- Tinker Air Force Base and its off-base community may notice a new team member visiting schools, parades and other local gatherings.

Tinker Air Force Base's official mascot 'Tink' was unveiled recently with its main mission to assist with community outreach and inspire Oklahomans to be interested in STEM programs, as well as create a buzz as to how a lizard can mean so much to the base.

Children at the Tinker Youth Center were among the first to be introduced to the newest member of Team Tinker, as they also learned about the bases extensive environmental program to save the species, the Texas horned lizard, which the mascot is designed around.

Populations of Texas horned lizards across the country are on the decline. To help discover why, Tinker biologists track the lizard's movements on base to learn more about their needs. It's all part of a conservation effort on base and in partnership with the local Oklahoma City Zoo and University of Oklahoma to enable the lizard to thrive once again.

Naturally, it was fitting for the mascot to connect on a personal level with many Oklahomans that used to find the lizard in their backyards years ago when the species was more prevalent.

The mascot's name "Tink", is a tribute to the bases' namesake, Maj. Gen. Clarence L. Tinker, an Osage member who was the highest ranking Native-American officer and the first general lost in action during World War II. According to base historians, the general was often called Tink, a nickname given to him by his wife.

"We wanted to inspire the younger kids," said Col. Abby Ruscetta, 72nd Air Base Wing commander. "The horned lizard is environmentally protected and lives on base. It shows the community that we respect the environment and are doing our part—plus it introduces the sustainment and maintenance mission to a new generation."

Tink is the first Air Force maintainer-themed mascot that is focused on educating the public on the importance of aircraft sustainment. Tink's back story includes Tink striving to be the best mechanic at Tinker Air Force Base while supporting the team and the warfighter. Tink wears an engine-based jet pack to represent one of the core missions on Tinker Air Force Base, where thousands of STEM-based

