

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Burch named to Army Guard enlisted post

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard's top command sergeant major is heading to Washington, D.C., to take over as the top Army National Guard enlisted sergeant in the nation. Command Sgt. Maj. Richard J. Burch, formerly the state command sergeant major for the Nebraska Army National Guard, was selected to become the new command sergeant major for the Army National Guard in mid-January. A native of Hastings, Neb., he was scheduled to take over the post in early March.

Burch said he's excited about the opportunity to represent the enlisted members of America's Army National Guard.

"It's a huge honor for me to be selected by the leadership of the Army National Guard," said Burch. "With that honor comes responsibility. I've never been one to shirk responsibility. I'm looking forward to the



Burch

See BURCH on 4

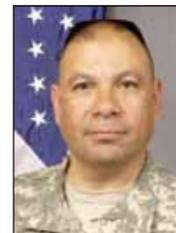
Valenzuela named state command sergeant major

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Longtime Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier has been named to the state's highest enlisted Soldier position. Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, who has served as a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier since his enlistment into the organization in 1979, was selected to become the Nebraska Army National Guard's state com-

mand sergeant major, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, announced Feb. 2.

Valenzuela assumed his new post from departing Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, who



Valenzuela

See VALENZUELA on 4.

Winter Weather Work



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Blowing Hot Air: Tech. Sgt. James Daberkow, a crew chief with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, operates the AirPlus de-icing system while removing ice from a KC-135R refueling tanker at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Jan. 9. The AirPlus is an enclosed, heated, operator cab which is attached to a twenty foot boom on a truck and produces a high-velocity heated air-jet.

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek
Staff Writer

Keeping tankers ready to respond a chess match during icy months

When it comes to keeping the Nebraska Air National Guard's KC-135R Stratotankers ready to respond to any mission, even Mother Nature or Nebraska's sub-zero temperatures cannot get in the way of the members of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. Still, with this winter's frequent storms and harshly cold conditions, the Nebraska Air National Guard maintenance specialists have been tested as they conduct a brilliantly orchestrated team effort

See SNOW OPERATIONS on 7.

Guardsmen put holiday on hold to assist rescue crews

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Christmas day 2009 was one for the record books. With record amounts of blowing snow blanketing Lincoln and creating monster snow drifts throughout much of eastern Nebraska, holiday travel plans were disrupted or cancelled altogether. Travelers struggled to maneuver unplowed side streets hoping arterial roads were passable, while

others elected to just stay home and make the best of it.

Although the adverse weather conditions caused many people to simply postpone or cancel their holiday travel plans, for those people responsible for responding to medical emergencies, going out into the storm simply wasn't something that could be postponed.

That's exactly the situation the Lincoln Fire and Rescue Department found itself in when the department's ambulances began

struggling to reach the scenes of emergencies because of the snow.

They had to find help. The Nebraska National Guard was tasked to provide that help.

Sgt. Maj. Robert Morgan, operations sergeant major for 92nd Troop Command, said he had just finished the dessert portion of the Christmas dinner he was sharing with his wife when his phone rang.

A "Merry Christmas" greeting from Lt. Col. Kevin Garner, 92nd Troop Command executive officer,

was followed by laughter from both because they knew there was work to be done and their Christmas celebration would be cut short. Morgan quickly learned that members of the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion had been tasked with providing two four-wheel-drive Humvee ambulances to help the Lincoln fire and rescue personnel get to anyone needing assistance.

Although they are not outfitted with all of the amenities a civilian

See HUMVEES on 8.

Nebraska aviators glimpse future

■ National Guard's newest light utility helicopter makes brief fuel stop in Lincoln

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Pilots, crew chiefs and support staff assigned to the Nebraska Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Lincoln, Neb., had a chance to take a look at their not-so-distant future, Feb. 11, when a LUH-72A Lakota helicopter landed at the facility to receive fuel.

According to Maj. Mark Eschrich, commander of the District of Columbia's 121st Medical Company (Air Ambulance,) the helicopter was enroute to Kansas City, Mo., after spending five days in Rapid City, S.D., preparing for a major summer exercise. He said

See LAKOTA on 6.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Stopping For Fuel: A District of Columbia Army National Guard LUH-72A Lakota helicopter lands at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Lincoln, Neb., Feb. 11. The helicopter, which is the newest helicopter in the Army National Guard inventory, landed in Lincoln to refuel during a flight between Rapid City, S.D., and Kansas City, Mo. According to Nebraska Army National Guard aviation officials, Nebraska is scheduled to receive its first LUH-72A helicopters in 2011.

155th Air Refueling Wing notches 10th outstanding unit award

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing has been named a recipient of the 2009 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. This marks the 10th time that the Lincoln-based organization has earned the award in its 64-year history.

The 155th Air Refueling Wing is one of only 14 Air National Guard wings from across the United States to earn the award this year.

"The competition was extremely keen and each winner is commended for having been selected from an outstanding group of nominees," said Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director of the Air National Guard in making this year's award announcement.

"The dedication and commitment of the members of these organizations enable the

See AFOUA on 5.



Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

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NEWS DIGEST

■ Gates tells Congress: 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' to get review

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – A new panel assembled to review the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy that bans openly gay people from military service will consider the views of those affected throughout the chain of command, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told Congress, Feb. 3.

The review also will consider the impact of a potential policy repeal on morale, unit cohesion and retention, he said.

Gates attempted to allay concerns within the House Armed Services Committee that the working group he announced Feb. 2 will overlook getting input about a potential policy change from the troops themselves.

If there's one thing he learned during his career — as director of Central Intelligence, president of Texas A&M University and as defense secretary — Gates said it was to get input from the people affected before imposing change.

“In each of those (positions), I have led and managed change. And I've done it smart, and I've done it stupid,” he told lawmakers. “Happily, I think, the stupid was early. But stupid was trying to impose a policy from the top without any regard for the views of the people who were going to be affected or the people who would have to effect the policy change.”

Gates said the working group, headed by Jeh Johnson, the Pentagon's top lawyer, and Gen. Carter Ham, the commander of U.S. Army Europe, will review the full range of issues associated with a repeal to “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.”

“One of the purposes of the review that I have directed (to) be undertaken by General Ham and by Jeh Johnson is precisely so we can understand not just the views and concerns of the (service) chiefs, but of our military people and their families,” he said.

“If you want lasting and effective change, you had better bring the people who are going to be affected by it into the discussion and get their views,” Gates said.

“At a minimum, it will help you mitigate whatever negative consequences there are.”

The panel also will evaluate the impact of a policy change on military readiness and effectiveness, Gates said, including unit cohesion, morale, and retention, “so we can get some facts into this debate, or at least some data that we think is reliable and objective.”

As part of that, Gates said he will ask the Rand Corporation to update its 1993 study that led to the policy's adoption, expanding the review to cover a broader range of issues.

■ Nebraska National Guard training site identified to receive increased federal funds

ARLINGTON, Va., (NGNEWS) — Increased funding for National Guard facilities across the nation was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2010, enacted in December, National

Guard officials said, Jan. 20.

Among those projects identified for use of the funds was the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb., which would receive \$2 million to update the current water supply and distribution while also making sure that it is correctly sized.

“While all reserve components received significant increases in funding above requested levels for military construction, the Army and Air National Guard received larger increases than any other Army or Air Force active or reserve component,” read a report from the National Guard's legislative office.

The bill not only funds \$555 million for 30 construction projects requested by the administration for the Army and Air National Guard, but also provides nearly \$400 million in added funds for 73 additional projects nationwide. The bill also included a unique “Guard and Reserve Initiative,” which appropriates an extra \$30 million each for the Army and Air National Guard to address urgent unfunded requirements.

■ Air Force studying traumatic brain injury treatment options

WASHINGTON (AFNEWS) – Compression chambers used to treat divers who experienced “the bends” after ascending too quickly may offer clues to treating wounded warriors suffering traumatic brain injuries.

An Air Force study at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio hopes to determine if hyperbaric oxygen therapy shows promise in treating patients with mild to moderate traumatic brain injuries.

A team with the San Antonio Military Medical Center Hyperbaric Center and Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine launched the study last year, and expects to come up with preliminary results as soon as this summer. The study seeks to determine if patients experience improvements in their cognitive abilities after being exposed to pressured, 100-percent oxygen in a hyperbaric chamber, according to Dr. E. George Wolf, a physician directing the study.

The goal is to improve the patient's ability to think, remember, recognize and concentrate. These abilities often are impaired in troops with traumatic brain injuries, many attributed to blows to the head, nearby explosions, concussion or penetrating wounds.

Twenty-five Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines afflicted with TBI are currently participating in the study, with another 25 to join in the months ahead.

Half are receiving hyperbaric therapy and half are in the control group that is not, although neither the subjects nor the researchers know at this point which subjects are in which group, Wolf said.

The subjects enter the room-sized hyperbaric chamber for 30 treatments over a course of six weeks, he said. Inside the chamber, a hood is fastened over the head to deliver pure oxygen. Pressure within the chamber drives more of this oxygen into the subjects' bloodstreams than they otherwise would receive.

The control group goes through the same procedure, but their chamber isn't pressurized, and they breathe standard air, a 21-percent oxygen concentration.

The study hopes to provide scientific evidence proving that the increased oxygen provided through hyperbaric therapy helps to restore abilities lost due to traumatic brain injuries.

Col. (Dr.) Robert Michaelson, chief of hyperbaric medicine at San Antonio Military Medical Center, said it's not yet fully understood why hyperbaric treatments may help TBI patients. One popular theory is that it helps to restart damaged brain cells that have stopped functioning properly.

“For some reason, and it is still unexplained, hyperbaric oxygen allows these cells to be turned back on by stimulating the production of energy within the cells,” he said. “It seems to have a positive effect.”

As the study continues, the Defense Department is considering another, larger study to further explore the use of hyperbaric medicine in treating TBI, Michaelson said.

■ Review strikes right balance for military, admiral says

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Pentagon's military leaders say the new Quadrennial Defense Review strikes the right balance between today's wars and the need to combat future threats.

Navy Vice Adm. Stephen Stanley, Joint Staff director for force structure, resources and assessment, told the House Armed Services Committee the review sets the department on a new path.

“The QDR focuses not just on winning today's fight, but also on the complex and uncertain future security landscape and potential conflicts the United States and our partners are most likely to face in the future,” Stanley said, Feb. 4. The admiral testified alongside Michele Flournoy, undersecretary of defense for policy. The two were the point persons for the document in the Pentagon.

Stanley said the review addresses the top three goals of Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: winning today's fight; balancing global strategic risk; and preserving and enhancing the health of the force.

The review supports the military's mission to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida globally, and particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan through investment in critical “enablers” such as rotary-wing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and special operation forces that have experienced persistent shortfalls over the years.

“Winning the fight requires changing our capability mix and we are doing it,” Stanley said.

■ McChrystal notes progress being made in Afghanistan

ISTANBUL, (AFPS) – Although he stopped short of saying the worst is over for troops as they prepare to surge into some of the toughest Taliban-held areas, the top NATO and U.S. commander in Afghanistan said Feb. 4 that conditions no longer are deteriorating.

“I am not prepared to say that we have turned the corner. I am saying that the situation is serious. But I think we have made

significant progress in setting conditions in 2009 and... we'll make real progress in 2010,” said Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, commander of the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

The general spoke in an interview with reporters who accompanied Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to Istanbul for a meeting of the alliance's defense ministers to determine how many more additional resources, if any, they will contribute to the fight in Afghanistan.

Last summer, McChrystal delivered a much harsher description of the situation on the ground to the Defense Department and the White House, saying that conditions were deteriorating, Taliban influence was growing and the confidence of the people of Afghanistan in U.S. efforts there was waning.

President Barack Obama directed a revamped strategy for Afghanistan. As part of that change, Obama ordered 30,000 more U.S. troops to deploy to Afghanistan by this summer.

McChrystal called 2010 an important year, as critically needed troops flow into the country as fast as facilities and bases can be built for them. U.S. forces will number about 100,000 by the time all of them arrive this summer. NATO has offered up an additional 9,000 forces, but that still leaves ISAF about 4,000 short of the mentors and trainers it needs, officials said.

Sixty-four mentoring teams are operating now in all five regions of Afghanistan. Another 80 are expected in the next few months, but 20 more are needed as the Afghan security forces grow this year.

Over the past few months, McChrystal said, ISAF has made internal command changes and has begun partnering more closely with the Afghan government, from the ministries down to the local level.

He said progress has taken place as the government now works to direct the planning efforts to provide security.

Recruiting is up for the Afghan forces, McChrystal said. More than 11,000 joined in December and January. Attrition still is higher than officials would like, he acknowledged, but it is dropping.

As of December, the Afghan army had just more than 100,000 troops, and officials want to grow its force to more than 171,000 by October 2011.

■ Nebraska National Guard enters social media world

LINCOLN, Neb. – The Nebraska National Guard has entered the world of social networking.

Along with www.neguard.com and the Prairie Soldier, information can now be found on the Nebraska National Guard's official Facebook fan page, Twitter page. Photos can be found on the organization's flickr page.

The official ‘Facebook’ fan page can be found at www.facebook.com/NebraskaNationalGuard. There people will find information about current and upcoming events, photographs of recent operations, and discussion topics. People can also become a follower of the Guard's ‘Twitter’ page at www.twitter.com/NENationalGuard.

Finally, images of Nebraska Army and Air National Guard activities can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/nenationalguard.



Photo by Sgt. Annie Kobza

Nebraska Army Guard medics serving overseas

Taking Cover: Pfc. Dena Engel, a medic assigned to the Nebraska Army National Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance,) takes cover behind a concrete bunker during a tactical movement exercise. Engel and other members of the Lincoln, Neb., medical company are currently serving in Iraq as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Commanded by Maj. Grant W. Siedenburgh, the unit treated hundreds of patients and traveled more than 10,000 miles in a little more than a month of duty in Iraq.

Prairie Soldier

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Weighted Down: An active duty Soldier from Fort Bragg's 528th Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne) stands ready to have his gear inspected before loading onto a C-130 aircraft. Soldiers were required to strap their weapons and military equipment onto their harnesses for the combat equipment night jump.



Photos by Mark Roland

Tree-Top View: Pfc. John Herfel, a combat engineer with the Omaha-based 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne,) hangs from a tree branch after the wind at the Husker Drop Zone caused him to drift into the trees during a nighttime airborne jump, Nov. 21.

"It takes a special kind of Soldier that is willing to step off of a ramp at night."

Into the Night

Guard paratroopers complete night combat equipment jump

By Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Jumping from an aircraft is unnerving enough, but 40 airborne Soldiers took it to the next level by doing it on a cloud-covered night at the Husker Drop Zone near the Mead Training Site, Nov. 21.

The combined forces operation involved members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) and the 165th Quartermaster Company, regular Army Soldiers from Fort Bragg's 528th Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne), and C-130 Hercules aircraft support provided by the 94th Airlift Wing, an Air Force Reserve unit from Dobbins Air Force Base near Atlanta, Ga.

The night jump was the second jump of the weekend for the group and the first combat equipment night jump for the 195th FSC (SO) (ABN.) It was also another step as the unit prepares for a possible deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, say unit leaders.

Though a night jump is scheduled during initial airborne train-

ing, not all Soldiers get to complete it during the school.

"Not everybody does it. It's not a requirement to do a night jump to graduate from airborne school," said Maj. Judd Allen, commander for the 195th FSC (SO) (ABN.) "It just depends on the scheduling and availability of airplanes. We have about half of the 40 jumpers that have done a night jump."

Carrying a 35-pound rucksack and a weapon inside a padded carrying bag strapped to one's leg adds a new dimension to any jump, said Allen. "It gets kind of heavy with the rucksack on you," Allen said. "It's a little different, a little bit more challenging."

"At about 100 to 200 feet off the ground, you pull the handle neck and the rucksack drops about 20 feet on its tether and then there is another hook for the weapon and it slides down," he said, adding that a paratrooper then listens intently for the sounds of the equipment reaching the ground.

"When you land, you hear your rucksack land... you have about 20 feet of space."

For the newest members of the unit, the November jump was the first time they had departed an aircraft door outside of a school environment. Pvt. Brian Rydberg,



School Solution: Pfc. John Herfel uses the skills he learned at Airborne School to successfully lower himself from a tree following a nighttime parachute jump at Drop Zone Husker.

a wheeled vehicle mechanic for the 195th FSC (SO) (ABN), graduated from jump school on Sept. 11 and admitted he was more than just a little stressed about his first jump outside of school.

"I'm a little nervous," he said as he waited to load onto the waiting C-130 aircraft, the nervousness dripping from his voice. "First ramp exit out of an aircraft and first night jump, it's a little nerve racking."

"I did not get to do a night jump, but the only difference is that it's dark," he said, before adding: "So



Final Preparations: Capt. Nicholas Breen, executive officer for the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), ensures his parachute straps are properly sized before strapping himself in as he prepares for his unit's combat equipment night jump, Nov. 21.

they say."

After the jump, Rydberg said the experience was exhilarating.

"Scary," he said. "It was like my first jump all over again."

"It wasn't quite stepping out into blackness because you have all the lights from the cities around. It was nice being able to see that and get a direction of where I should be looking when I was coming down," he said. "After I stepped out it was good; I got a little twisted up and fixed that."

"I was watching the ground to make sure when I should drop my pack and slip. I dropped it about the right time and closed my eyes and hoped for the best," Rydberg said with a chuckle. "I am definitely looking forward to the next jump."

For Pfc. John Herfel, a combat engineer with the 195th FSC (SO) (ABN) who just completed his advanced individual training in September and Airborne school on Nov. 6, the November jump was his first drill with the unit.

He said that jumping with the unit was definitely different than conducting a jump in a school environment.

"(The night jump) was different than the day because you can't see anything and you don't know how fast you're falling," he said. "It feels like you were falling faster than

what you really are."

"You can see some of the lights on the ground, but that was about it," Herfel added.

During the night jump Herfel released his rucksack and weapon as he approached the ground. He also continued drifting toward a tall tree line on the ground. With no time to correct his location he had to do an emergency tree landing.

The landing put his rucksack in the top of one tree and his parachute covering the top of another. Herfel was left suspended over 30 feet off the ground, too far for the ground crews to reach him.

Utilizing the training he received at jump school, Herfel had to extract himself from the tree tops by deploying his reserve parachute and releasing himself from the harness. Herfel then climbed down the suspension lines to the ground, completing a textbook-perfect self-extraction.

Herfel said even though his landing wasn't perfect, he was still excited about his first drill. The emergency tree landing couldn't lower his enthusiasm for being an Airborne Soldier and he was impressed with the pace of activity of the unit.

"This was a lot more than I thought we were going to be doing," Herfel said.

New Top Sergeant

Valenzuela becomes state's senior enlisted Soldier

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

The change of responsibility between outgoing state Command Sgt. Major Richard Burch and incoming state Command Sgt. Major Eli Valenzuela was held in Lincoln, Neb., Feb. 7, in front of a formation representing every major Nebraska Army National Guard military command and a mass gathering of friends, family and distinguished guests.

The ceremony marked the beginning of a new job for both Burch and Valenzuela. Burch moves on to become the Army National Guard command sergeant major while Valenzuela begins his new responsibilities as the 10th state command sergeant major for Nebraska.

Burch, Nebraska's ninth state command sergeant major, is set to become the ninth Army National Guard command sergeant major.

Burch thanked the families and everyone else present at the ceremony, calling the event a celebration for both Valenzuela and himself.

"As with any Soldier or Airman standing in formation, families are very important to all of us and I want to extend a special thank you to my family for the years of support and years of sacrifices and the many trials and tribulations I have put you through," Burch said.

"The formation today represents the nearly 5,000 Soldiers and Airmen, which are Nebraska's finest. Your sacrifice and dedication is what makes this state and this nation great," Burch said. "I am proud of the professional NCOs of the Nebraska National Guard; your



Photo by David Nore

Accepting The Sword: Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons (center) presents Command Sgt. Eli Valenzuela with the noncommissioned officer sword as the state command sergeant major of the Nebraska Army National Guard during the change of responsibility ceremony, Feb. 7 in Lincoln, Neb. Also pictured is outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch (right) who has been selected to be the Army National Guard command sergeant major.

competence will continue to lead the way to success. Look to the future and seize opportunities."

The passing of responsibility was demonstrated by a passing of an NCO sword during the ceremony to signify the senior NCO's commitment to being responsible for the Soldiers in their organization.

According to Burch, the history of

the senior NCO sword presentation dates back to 1840 when the War Department adopted the unique NCO sword.

The swords were recently given out to every Nebraska command sergeant major and first sergeant to be used during ceremonies and passing of responsibilities.

"This is a tremendous tradition

and ceremony to recognize the taking of responsibility from CSM Burch to CSM Valenzuela," said Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general. "Both of these NCOs have excelled in their careers. The thing that sets them apart is that they have always sought out the hard and difficult positions and jobs throughout their careers."

"Command Sergeant Major Burch, we wish you and your family the best as you make this important step in your career and service to our nation," Lyons said, before adding a special thanks to Burch's wife, Sandy, daughters Jennifer and Jody, and all of the Burch extended family that was present for the ceremony.

Nebraska's newest state command sergeant major said he was overwhelmed by the ceremony.

"Thank you for this great honor," said Valenzuela as he addressed the mass formation for this first time as the state command sergeant major. "I stand before you humbled and privileged to be your next state command sergeant major."

Valenzuela thanked his wife Faye, daughter Diane, daughter Brittney and her husband Jason and grandson Corey William, for their support during his career, saying that he recognized that they played a large part in his success. He also thanked the many extended family members who had driven long distances to attend the ceremony.

"My commitment to the Soldiers of the Nebraska National Guard is that I will do my utmost to take care of the Soldiers and take care of the families that support those Soldiers and make sure that our employers are well informed so that we can do our mission correctly," he said.

"We will continue to recruit and retain our good Soldiers to make sure that you are successful in the Nebraska National Guard because I know as well as the general knows that without Soldiers we are not a Nebraska Army National Guard. So together we will work to continue to be a vibrant organization."

VALENZUELA continued from page 1.

was recently selected to become the top Army National Guard command sergeant major in the nation, during a ceremony, Feb. 7, at the Spirit of 1776 armory in Lincoln, Neb.

"Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela is the consummate senior noncommissioned officer," said Lyons. "He brings a depth and breadth of experience that is unmatched. He has served in noncommissioned officer leadership positions throughout his career at all levels of command including service supporting units across the state as a first sergeant, battalion command sergeant major and brigade command sergeant major."

As the top command sergeant major, Valenzuela will serve as the primary advocate for enlisted personnel concerns for the Nebraska National Guard's enlisted force.

Valenzuela said he is honored to be selected as the state's top enlisted Soldier.

"It's a culmination of a career spanning 30 years in all levels of responsibility coming up through the ranks," said Valenzuela. "I feel fortunate to have been selected as the state command sergeant major given the number of great candidates we do have out there."

Valenzuela enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard in September 1979 and attended Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Okla. During his time in the military he has served as an artilleryman, signalman, instructor, drill sergeant and military policeman.

In December 2002 Valenzuela deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation Joint Forge. Upon his return, Valenzuela was appointed as the command sergeant major of the 168th Quartermaster Battalion in February 2004.

In June 2006 Valenzuela deployed with the 867th Quartermaster Battalion in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The unit was transformed into a corps support battalion comprised of six Army National Guard and Army Reserve companies and four active Army companies. Valenzuela was responsible for the health and welfare of the over 1,600 Soldiers who made up the corps support battalion.

In January 2008 Valenzuela was selected as the command sergeant major of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

Lyons said Valenzuela's leadership experience and how he has handled the responsibility of caring for the enlisted force throughout

his career are truly remarkable.

"Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela epitomizes the values most desired in our leaders," said Lyons. "Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honesty, integrity and personal courage are more than words to him. He has focused his energy over the course of his career to teach, coach and mentor his subordinates, peers and leaders. Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela will be sharply focused on Soldier and Airman welfare and readiness. Furthermore, he cares deeply about family and employer needs as we continue to call upon their loved ones and employees."

Valenzuela praised the work Burch accomplished during his time as the state command sergeant major and said he hopes to build upon Burch's success.

"My goal, like any other position, is to leave it in better shape than I received it," he said. "I need to continue that continuity we've had and the success we've had with the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and take that a step further."

Valenzuela will provide many valuable functions for the leadership of the Nebraska National Guard, said Lyons.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Valenzuela will be an integral part of the command team of the Nebraska National Guard," said Lyons.

"He will provide counsel to ensure that decisions contemplated consider effects on our entire force, both full-time and traditional members, as well as our families and employers. He will focus on Soldier and Airman readiness and welfare, efficient utilization of resources, continued engagement in our communities to ensure the Nebraska National Guard's unique aspect of service to our state and nation is known, and opportunities to serve with us are realized. He will work to continue our efforts to be reflective of the communities we serve and that our service members have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their abilities."

Valenzuela said he plans to lead and advise the adjutant general on enlisted issues based on his perspective as a traditional Guardsman for his entire career.

"One of my strongest suits is that I've been a traditional Soldier for 30 years," he said. "Most of our organization is traditional Soldiers, so when I make decisions or I advise the (adjutant general) at this level I'm advis-

BURCH continued from page 1.

new responsibilities this job will bring."

Burch is a 33-year veteran of the Nebraska Army National Guard, beginning his career as an enlisted Soldier in Hastings, Neb.

A graduate of Hastings' St. Cecilia High School, Burch began his military career on Feb. 3, 1976, when he joined Company C, 2nd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, serving as a traditional Army National Guard Soldier until July 1984.

During that time he served as a communications specialist and infantryman rising to the rank of staff sergeant.

He entered the full-time Active Guard and Reserve program in July 1984 and served as an infantry platoon sergeant, infantry company first sergeant, infantry battalion operations sergeant, acting infantry battalion command sergeant major, human resources senior sergeant, quartermaster battalion command sergeant major, area support group command sergeant major and recruiting and retention command sergeant major.

Burch served in Afghanistan from July 2005 until July 2006 as a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 209th Regional Training Institute's 53rd Brigade Combat Team Training Assistance Group at the Kabul Military Training Center. While in Afghanistan Burch was assigned as the Training and Doctrine Command sergeant major—mentor and was awarded the Bronze Star and Combat Action Badge.

Burch had served as the senior sergeant in the Nebraska Army National Guard since March 2007 when he was selected for the position by then-Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke. During that time, he served in a variety of roles as the principal advisor to the Nebraska adjutant general on all issues relating to the state's enlisted force.

ing the (adjutant general) on that private that works at the grocery store, that sergeant that works in the lumber yard."

"Our Soldiers, they truly don't need us; we need them," he added. "I know where I came from and I won't forget that."

Valenzuela's civilian occupation was also one of public service.

He is a retired Nebraska State Trooper with over 25 years of service. His State Patrol assignments over the last 25 years have

Burch said he was encouraged by Brig. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, former Nebraska adjutant general who recently became the deputy director of the Army National Guard, to apply for the national position when it came open.

"Brigadier General Kadavy had asked on a couple of occasions if I was interested in going to National Guard Bureau," said Burch. "When the last announcement came out, I really got serious about it."

In announcing Burch's departure, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, said that while the sergeant major will be missed in Nebraska, he's confident that Burch will accomplish great things in his new national assignment.

"It's always a pleasure to see folks get recognized for their professionalism, their caring for Soldiers and their welfare, and just their overall approach to the way they perform their duties, their outlook on life and their zest for their job," said Lyons. "This is just a tremendous recognition of his talents, his initiative, his drive, his caring for Soldiers."

Burch said he is looking forward to the new challenges that will await him, adding that while he hasn't received direct guidance from the director of the Army National Guard he expects to focus on such things as helping Army National Guard Soldiers maintain a balance between their current national and international commitments and their private lives, families and careers.

He also expects to focus on readiness issues, training and professional development programs, morale and welfare systems, and Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve issues.

Burch and his wife Sandy have two daughters, Jennifer (Umana) and Jody. They also have two grandchildren.

included the Traffic Division, the Nebraska State Patrol Training Academy and the Executive Protection Detail.

Valenzuela is a 2001 graduate of Concordia University and holds a bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Management.

Valenzuela and his wife, Faye, currently reside in Seward, Nebraska. They have two adult daughters Diane and Brittney (Poppe), son-in-law, Jason Poppe and grandson, Corey William Poppe.



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Relearning Skills: Staff Sgt. Matthew Kilgore (left) and Staff Sgt. Zachary Smith, 155th Security Forces Squadron, practice subduing a perpetrator using an extendable baton during training at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. The January exercise was designed to give the Nebraska Air Guardsmen additional experience before deploying overseas.

Security cops practice critical skills before overseas mission

By Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Staff Writer

Several members from the 155th Security Forces Squadron spent a recent morning in January beating and handcuffing their fellow Airmen.

Fortunately it was all an exercise designed to better prepare the Nebraska Air National Guardsmen for an upcoming overseas deployment.

The training, provided by civilian law enforcement officials, included classroom and hands-on training that tested the security Airmen on the knowledge they need to accomplish their missions overseas.

"Each country has different rules about the use of deadly force, so we need to have other tools in our toolbox," said Staff Sgt. Jennifer Schmid, a security specialist with the 155th SFS.

Once the classroom portion was completed, tables and chairs were put in a corner to allow extra room for the various types of hand-to-hand, baton and handcuff training.

The civilian law enforcement officials started with different types of baton training, demonstrating the different ways law enforcement officials can use the equipment to subdue an attacker by striking them at certain areas of the lower body with an extendable baton while at the same time protecting themselves from injuries.

"I thought the training we received was very beneficial in that I now have the confidence knowing I can subdue an attacker larger than myself," said Senior Airman Katie Paden. "I wish we could have received this type of training sooner."

Other training techniques demonstrated and practiced included various hand-to-hand combat and handcuffing techniques. The goal, say unit officials,



Practicing Baton Techniques: Tech. Sgt. Mark Nelson (left) swings an extendable baton at Master Sgt. Mike O'Connell (right) while preparing for an overseas deployment. The exercise was taught by civilian police authorities to give members of the 155th Security Forces Squadron refresher training on how to subdue potential perpetrators by using a baton.

was to provide the Airmen with techniques they can use in the event that they have to subdue, restrain and control possible perpetrators while deployed.

"The training we received was in-depth and will prove to be valuable to us when we deploy. It has given me more confidence in my abilities to do my job when I deploy," said Airman 1st Class Kyle Eddy.

Following the Lincoln training, the 155th SFS members were scheduled to travel to Texas for additional training in desert warfare, security patrols and convoy operations before deploying overseas.

Deploying Airmen, families receive valuable information

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

■Nebraska Air Guard security forces attend new Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program training

Twenty-two 155th Security Forces Squadron Airmen became the first Nebraska Air National Guardsmen to receive training from the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program when they and members of their families attended a day-long session at the downtown Holiday Inn in Lincoln, Jan. 8, a day before beginning a six-month deployment to Iraq.

According to program officials, the YRRP is a legislatively-mandated program that provides information, services, referrals and proactive outreach programs to National Guard and Reserve service members and their families through all phases of the deployment cycle.

The program is designed to prepare National Guard and Reserve members and their families for the deployment, sustain their families during the deployment and reintegrate the service members with their families, communities and employers after the deployment is complete.

"It's kind of a training session to teach the Airmen and their families the resources that are available... educate them (and) provide outreach programs," said Robrenna Redl, YRRP specialist.

Army National Guard Soldiers have been receiving YRRP training since the program's inception less than two years ago. The Air National Guard deployment model differs greatly from the Army National Guard, meaning the program needs to be tailored to fit the different model.

"The difference is when the Army deploys, they deploy for a long period of time and when the Air deploys, they deploy for shorter periods of time, but more often," said Redl. "They could be gone for six months, come home for two months and go again. The challenge is not to make it redundant."

"That's been my challenge, to tailor the



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Employment Issues: Retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Roger Lempke, Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve state committee member, speaks to members of the Nebraska Air National Guard about different programs that help protect their civilian careers while they are deployed away from home in support of on-going global missions.

program to meet those needs," added Redl. "The customization is still in the works."

Attendees were given information on a number of resources available to them before, during and after the deployment, such as information about military family life counselors, MilitaryOneSource.com, financial issues, health and wellness issues, legal matters, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Tricare and family readiness.

The information proved valuable to Tech. Sgt. Bleu Swetland and his wife Michelle. With her husband deploying for six months, Michelle can use all the help she can get.

"I'm pretty stressed out," said Michelle.

Normally, Bleu Swetland is in charge of taking their four kids (Miranda, 15; Kelly, 13; Kyle, 12; and Matthew, 4) to appointments because his job is more flexible than Michelle's. Hearing there was someone she

could turn to if she needed help while Bleu is deployed was welcome information.

"The civilian employment (presentation) was pretty interesting," said Michelle. "I think it's nice because you get to find out things you normally wouldn't."

Michelle added that being included in the day's session was valuable because she and her husband know they can work things out with the help of the YRRP.

"It means a lot," said Michelle. "It helps the stress level; it helps the communication between us because we both know a little bit more."

But beyond life's normal trials and tribulations, the Swetlands said they will simply miss being a complete family while Bleu is gone.

"Just not being with my family, that's the biggest (challenge)," said Swetland. "Missing birthdays... actually I'm going to miss all of their birthdays."

"Just not having him there for those things...the kids are going to notice that," added Michelle. "I think they are going to have a hard time with that."

Although it will be difficult for the deploying Airmen and their families, the day's session was meant to give them a little piece of mind and let them know they are not alone if they run into problems.

"What I'd like to get across is...that they are not alone, the families are not alone and that while the service member is gone, that families have resources they can use in times of difficulty," said Redl. "I want to empower and educate them so that they can face the challenges of a deployment."

The commitment of the YRRP was made even clearer by Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general, when he spoke to the Airmen.

"My obligation as the adjutant general is to ensure that no one walks out of here today, either a deploying Airman or a family member, without a comfortable feeling that we've got your back here at home while you're overseas," said Lyons.

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Air National Guard to fulfill its commitment to the missions of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, domestic improvement and, most important of all, defense of America."

In earning the award, its first since 2007, the 155th Air Refueling Wing was commended for a number of accomplishments including:

- ♦ 800-plus members of the 900-member unit filled Operation Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom air expeditionary force taskings to over 40 locations worldwide.

- ♦ Flew 5,700-plus hours on operational training, 1,200 hours of which were combat or combat-support missions for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Additionally, 155th Air Refueling Wing volunteer crews flew 225 combat hours to and from Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, supporting high-risk medical evacuation missions.

- ♦ Transported more than 270 Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen to and from Louisiana during the Hurricane Gustav relief

effort.

- ♦ Supported numerous national combat and homeland security exercises.

- ♦ Participated in the "Beyond the Horizon" humanitarian mission to Honduras in 2008, providing medical and dental support to local Honduran citizens.

- ♦ Maintained 100 percent or greater personnel end strength for the entire period.

The 155th Air Refueling Wing was also lauded for its performance during recent Air National Guard

evaluations and U.S. Air Force operational readiness inspections, and its work in helping other KC-135R Stratotanker units upgrade to modernized navigation systems. Also noted were the unit's family support and energy conservation programs, and its level of community involvement.

The unit was also recognized for its flying and ground safety efforts, having recently surpassed more than 115,000 hours of Class A mishap-free flying.

According to Col. Rick Evans,

commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, the unit is honored to be able to add another award to its already long and distinguished record of achievements and outstanding service to state and nation.

In his announcement to the unit, Evans noted that "while this is a team award it is enabled by the pride, dedication and purposeful service of each unit member." He added that "the 155th has once again lived up to its motto of 'Ready and Able,' proving that it is among the very best units in the entire U.S. Air Force."

On the Clock

Typical day in Iraq starts at noon, extends into next morning for Nebraska truck drivers

By Staff Sgt. Ryan Jeffries
1195th Transportation Company

Editor Note: The following is an article that Staff Sgt. Ryan Jeffries, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1195th Transportation Company, recently wrote for the Kearney Hub Newspaper. It is being reprinted with his permission.

Everyone has their own version of what they think military life is like: early mornings, formation runs, parades and the like.

For the Soldiers of the 1195th Transportation Company, military life has a different flavor.

Due to operational security requirements, I am not allowed to go into detail about our mission destinations or specific actions on mission. However, this is what a typical day looks like for us.

Typically, my day starts around noon. I shower, shave, grab a bite to eat and arrive at our company operations center by 2 p.m. There, I get final details on that night's mission and set to making preparations.

I verify my route, current intelligence threat assessment, number of trucks I am escorting, manifest all my personnel, prepare my mission briefing and conduct a risk assessment, all by 3 p.m. when the rest of the Soldiers assigned to my convoy arrive.

I deliver a quick briefing and the Soldiers begin preparing the MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protective) vehicles for the mission. This includes preventative maintenance checks, mounting the machine gun and checking ammunition, voice and digital communications checks, and stocking the coolers with enough Monster Energy Drinks to keep the entire U.S. Army awake for a week.

Once our pre-mission preparations are completed, I brief the squadron commander on the mis-

sion. By this time it's about 5:30 p.m. and the whole convoy heads to the dining facility for a good meal (if it's Tuesday, we are equally split between the Taco Bar and Stir Fry).

By 7 p.m. we are headed to the briefing tent for the sand table rehearsal. This is a detailed mission brief that I conduct not only for my men (Convoy Escort Teams,) but also for those being escorted.

We escort a broad array of commodities that are carried by palletized loading system vehicles, heavy equipment transports, Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), Iraqi Trucking Company (ITC) and Public Warehouse Company (PWC). Attendance at the sand table rehearsal is mandatory for everyone with the exception of local and third country nationals.

Sgt. Jason Delancey, Kearney, insists that it's bad luck if his hair is not styled to stand straight up during the briefing.

Once the briefing is finished, we gather around the chaplain for a quick prayer before we get on the trucks. We load up and head to the convoy staging area, where, with the assistance of my assistant convoy commander, we account for all the trucks and get them into our predetermined order of march.

It's now about 10 p.m. and time for one last inspection of personnel to ensure they have their "full battle rattle," better known as personal protective equipment.

I give one last briefing, ensuring everyone understands the mission and also to pass along any information on significant threats or changes to the route that may have popped up in the last few hours.

Then I give the command "Mount Up!"

Heading to the gate, I run every possible scenario through my head and what my reaction and subsequent action must be for each.

I say another quick prayer and we are off.

We make our "drop and swaps"



Photo by Spc. Favian Andalbo

Iraq Inspection: Staff Sgt. Ryan Jeffries (right) conducts a pre-combat inspection of Sgt. Justin Harmin's equipment prior to a convoy mission in Iraq. The two Soldiers are members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1195th Transportation Company.

and head back to the Victory Base Complex, arriving somewhere around 5 a.m.

I conduct an after-action review (things we can improve on, and things that worked well) over the radio, followed by "comedy channel," usually led by Sgt. Jordan Miettinen of Grand Island. This proves to be a good opportunity for the Soldiers to let off steam and usually has everyone laughing hysterically by the time we reach the fuel point.

We then refuel the trucks and return to the motor pool, turn in weapons, and head to our beds. The time is now 7 a.m.

This is a pretty typical account of a pretty typical day.

Each convoy commander conducts his business a little bit differently, but the end result is still the same. Each Soldier has his own

pre-mission rituals. Spc. Owen Kruger of Kearney prefers to relax and smoke a cigar, while Sgt. 1st Class Lucas Gerdes, also of Kearney, just prefers a little quiet time.

We don't get "days off," we only have days without a mission. These days are used for maintenance on the vehicles and weapon systems, as well as concurrent training. We routinely conduct Combat Lifesaver refresher training, which includes administering an IV to a fellow soldier. We also do a lot of self-recovery training, ensuring that we are able to quickly hook up an MRAP to be towed if damaged or disabled.

Many of the Soldiers have developed an addiction to physical fitness training and many others have developed a HALO (video game) addiction.

Some have developed both.

How each Soldier spends their free time is different, but all of them understand how important a little personal time can be.

As our tour draws to a close, the focus has turned to the RIP/TOA (Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority) process. We want to ensure that we turn over a high quality product to our relief. We are busy tweaking our methods and developing a training plan that will result in a painless battle hand-off.

In addition, Soldiers are slowly, but surely, mailing non-essential gear and personal items home to make the final pack-out much easier on all involved.

The Soldiers of the 1195th are justifiably proud of a job well done to this point and are looking forward to completing this tour of duty and returning to "The Good Life!"

Pre-Deployment Reenlistments



Photo courtesy of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

Guardsmen Reenlist Into Pike Brigade: Capt. Robert Rodgers reenlists eight members of the Lincoln-based Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, back into his unit, Dec. 19, as the unit continues to prepare for an upcoming deployment to Iraq this summer.



Photo by Sgt. Andrew Tarr

Reenlisting For Continued Service: 16 members of the 1167th Brigade Support Company reenlist into the maintenance company, Dec. 16, during a group formation. The Soldiers were the first of 36 eligible unit members who reenlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard as their unit continues preparations for a deployment to Iraq this summer.

LAKOTA continued from page 1.

that the Fort Belvoir, Md.-based Army Guard helicopter unit has been flying the new aircraft since last March.

"Overall, it's a great helicopter," said Escherich.

The LUH-72A Lakota is a new light helicopter that is being fielded by the Army and the Army National Guard, the majority of which are going to the Guard. The Lakota is a commercial aircraft that is being built for the military with slight modifications to conduct general support tasks in non-combat environments such as civil search and rescue, evacuation, counter-drug and limited civil command and operations through Homeland Security.

According to Nebraska Army Guard aviation officials, the state is scheduled to receive its first of four LUH-72A Lakota medevac helicopters in 2011. Four additional LUH-72A Lakotas should arrive in 2012.

Prior to receiving the first three of six medevac helicopters, Escherich said his unit was one of the last Army Guard units still flying the venerable UH-1 Huey helicopter. He said the upgrade to the Lakota is significant.

For example, Escherich said, the Lakota's engines are extremely fuel efficient, which allows the aircraft to fly quieter and longer than other helicopters currently being operated by the Army and Army National Guard.

"We can commonly get close to a 400 nautical mile range on one full fuel load, which is about 229 gallons, or we can fly about three-and-a-half hours," he said. "(That's) about an hour more than

most Army aircraft."

The helicopter also features a modernized engine management system, a state-of-the-art avionics package that allows the crew to fly on autopilot, advanced flight controls, and a modern radio suite of eight separate radios, which allows the crew to monitor frequencies, cross-over frequencies and work more effectively with civilian authorities.

Escherich said that as the Guard fields more and more LUH-72As into the organization, it will enable the Army to better maximize its current aviation assets.

"It allows the UH-60s in the inventory to continue in the warfight," he said. "This is a way strategically for the Army to gain more airframes to cover down on some of the (continental United States) missions... while keeping a sufficient inventory in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places where we're fighting this contingency operation, formerly known as the War on Terrorism."

Escherich said that the flight to South Dakota enabled the D.C. Army Guard air crew the opportunity to gain valuable training flying in a different type of environment than they're typically used to.

"It's a lot different than operating over a metropolitan area like Washington, D.C.," said Escherich about the week he and the other members of his crew spent plotting routes between Rapid City, Camp Guernsey, Wyo., and Custer State Park in preparation for next summer's 2010 Golden Coyote exercise.

Airmen spend holidays overseas

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek
Staff Writer

1 55th Air Refueling Wing Airmen recently deployed in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, providing Airmen for two separate rotations. The deployments, approximately 39 and 37 days long, sent more than 100 Nebraska Air Guard members to the Central Command Area of Responsibility.

The Combined Air and Space Operations Center, Southwest Asia, has become the cornerstone of tanker operations in the region and is currently the largest tanker operation in the world. The tankers deployed there fly 25-35 sorties per 24-hour period and offload more than 1 million pounds of fuel per day to coalition aircraft providing close air support to the warfighters on the ground.

Lt. Col. Jeff Briere, 155th ARW chief of safety, recently deployed there as one of four directors of operations the 155th ARW provided. He returned with nothing but praise for the job the deployed members are doing.

"I have never met a more motivated, proud and capable bunch of folks. I met people that were on their sixth, seventh or eighth tour in



Carrying America With Them: Lt. Col. Jeff Briere (left) and an active duty Air Force KC-135R Stratotanker pilot, pose for a photograph with their American flag during a refueling mission over Afghanistan.

country," he said. "Everyone had an extremely positive attitude and was a joy to work with."

Briere said being busy with the increased operations tempo, with 12-hour work shifts and 12-hour missions being commonplace, actually helped the time pass quicker. Outlets like the Services branch and MWR office also did their best to provide great meals and

lots of entertainment activities ranging from celebrity visits (FOX NFL commentators and Kid Rock) and concerts (Hip Kitty) to sumo contests and karaoke, said Briere.

"Everyone was counting the days until they get to return to their families, but we still focused on accomplishing the mission," he said.

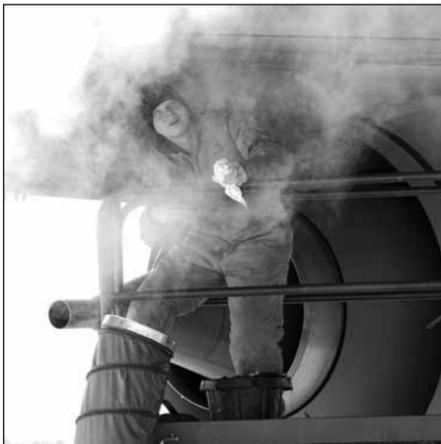
While deployed, Briere interacted with all of the aircrew and support personnel from both the reserves and active duty on a daily basis. He met people from Kadena Air Base, Japan; Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England; MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.; McConnell Air Force Base, Kan.; Forbes Air National Guard Base, Kan.; Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.; Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.; and Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash. He said that the tour lengths varied from 30, 60, 90, 120, to 365-days in length.

"My experience was that the active duty folks there absolutely appreciated every National Guard member and Reservist that was in theater," Breire said. "They clearly knew that for every one of us there, it meant one of their folks got to stay home and spend the holidays with their families."

"Since we were all volunteers, it was nice that our contribution was so appreciated."



Keeping The Aircraft Clear Of Ice: Tech. Sgt. James Daberkow, a crew chief with the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, operates the AirPlus de-icing system while removing ice from a KC-135R Stratotanker's wing, Jan. 9. Nebraska Air National Guard officials say that keeping the base ready to respond during winter months takes a complete team approach.



Cold Weather Maintenance: Senior Airman Zach Dougherty, a hydraulic mechanic with the 155th Maintenance Squadron, endures freezing temperatures while replacing the return filter on a KC-135R refueling tanker, Jan. 9.

scoop snow," Castle said.

"There are also some harnesses and ropes we don't normally use so we can walk out on the wings," he added. "Also plastic shovels and push brooms are big. The brooms are a lot easier to use than shovels though and then there are the deicing trucks"

Wood said the deicing trucks use air to blow loose snow off and then use a glycol and water mixture, which is environmentally safe.

"It's not a cut and dried process because you have to monitor the weather, so it's a chess game," he said. "Once you start a process of clearing a jet and prepping it, you're committed because if you stop, whatever has melted will turn to ice."

Wood said snow is easier to deal with than ice because the deicing fluid is expensive and maintainers must use a lot to get even a little bit of ice off.

"The person operating the machine has to think 'How much do I need to get the job done?' and we're always up against time constraints," Wood said. "Put it on too soon and things can freeze up again, especially if it's cold like it has been."

SNOW OPERATIONS

continued from page 1.

between the maintainers and other components of the base such as the civil engineers.

Senior Master Sgt. Nicholas Wood, production superintendent, is one of those in charge of making sure the mission gets completed.

"If we can make the flying schedule, we try and remove snow from the front of the jet and launch it from the ramp. Otherwise we clear from behind, move the jets back, clear the stalls, then return the jets to their normal parking spots," Wood said. "It's a real chess game when we try and determine the most efficient way to get things done."

"It's much easier to fly off the ramp than moving them around, so I always have to ask myself what's going to be the easiest for our people so they're exposed to the elements the shortest amount of time. But the plane still has to get ready to fly," he added.

"You have to get all the snow off it, all the ice off the wings and fuselage. So that means people have to get up and push it off with brooms (and) shovels, blow it off with the deicing truck, (and) then (they) have to make sure all the normal maintenance is good."

"It's a lot of work to get the jets off in the wintertime."

The tools and machines used to get the snow cleared are just a few components of the snow removal. The most vital part is the people who brave the elements to complete the job. People like Senior Airman Christopher Castle, a crew chief.

Castle described the difficulties of dealing with the elements and the tools — sometimes as simple as a push broom — they use to prepare the jets.

"Normally, we're just able to preflight the jet and go," he said. "When ice and snow are involved, we have to deal with towing aircraft more to allow (the civil engineers) to clear snow or get jets in the hangar to thaw out over night so they're ready to go the next day."

"We also have to make sure personnel are getting time to switch out so they can stay warm and stay safe, so it slows the process down a lot."

Castle said maintenance supervisors have been great about getting cold weather gear, even if it means driving to Offutt Air Force Base, to make sure they have the right equipment to accomplish the mission.

Wood said when it gets to 18 below wind chill, squadron leaders have to monitor people working outside so they're not exposed for long periods of time.

"31 below is our stop point," he said.

Recent snowstorms have also made it difficult.

"Recently the snow was blowing like crazy and it was 27 below, but the guys were still out working, getting the jets ready to fly," Wood said. "We try and have extra people assigned to a job so we can work 30 minutes, warm up for 30 and keep the job rolling rotating people so work doesn't stop."

Castle added: "If you have the proper cold gear on you don't want to quit though because it's a lot better to keep going."

The maintainers described the equipment used to clear snow and ice from the jets: "Heaters are big help, getting them in the balance bays and on the tires keeping them deiced. We also use maintenance stands we don't normally use so we can get out and

Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers help FEMA specialists assess snowstorm damage to state

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

When record amounts of blowing snow crippled much of Nebraska in December, many cities and rural communities fought hard to simply dig out and open roads closed by drifts.

With drifts sometimes as tall as the vehicle doing the digging, the work was slow and difficult.

And when many city and county officials were forced to rent equipment and pay operators overtime from an already stretched — or exhausted — snow removal budget, they asked for help. Faced with the immense task, Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman declared an emergency, which prompted the Federal Emergency Management Agency into action.

One of FEMA's first steps is to visit with city and county officials from areas most severely affected by the storm and perform Preliminary Damage Assessments. The PDA is meant to determine if local governments have incurred enough additional costs to warrant emergency declaration financial assistance from the federal government.

FEMA officials said employees normally only have access to two-wheel-drive cars. With roads still impassable in some places in Nebraska, FEMA asked for help from the Nebraska National Guard to get where they needed to go to perform their PDAs.

"It dealt with the weather and the conditions of the road," said Lynn Allison a FEMA project specialist. "They can't get to them with just cars, and that's what we have, so they asked the National Guard for help getting where they're going."

Five teams, consisting of two FEMA project specialists and one Nebraska National Guard Soldier, used government four-wheel-drive vehicles to visit 47 counties affected by the storms. They drove more than 4,300 miles, Jan. 11-15, to perform the PDAs.

The Guard's help was appreciated by the FEMA employees.

"Oh, it's a great help," said Allison. "Because of snow drifts there's no way we could get through there and we're on a timeline...and need to get these PDAs finished so we can get together and see if we can get it declared."

Not only did the vehicles help, the Nebraska Soldiers' local knowledge also came in handy.

"It makes our job a lot easier," said Allison. "(With) them driving us around we're pretty sure we're going to get there, for one thing... and secondly, the majority of the time the National Guard folks know where they're going, which is a big help."

The Soldiers were happy to take the time to help the FEMA employees get where they needed to go. Sgt. Michael Hicks, a truck driver with the 1195th Transportation Company in Kearney, Neb., was one of the National Guard's Soldiers who assisted.

Working with the FEMA representatives was a great way to utilize the skills and equipment the Nebraska National Guard can provide, said Hicks.

"I'm glad to even be in a position to help," said Hicks. "It's a pretty good deal... to help any way I can."

Now that PDAs are complete, FEMA will take all of the information they gathered and determine if the additional cost was great enough to warrant federal assistance. If the cost is great enough, the emergency declaration will escalate all the way to President Obama for his signature, and the state and local governments will finally receive the financial help they need to rebound from the record-breaking storms.

Without the help of the Nebraska National Guard, FEMA may not have been able to accomplish their mission and that is a fact not lost on FEMA employees.

"I just appreciate the Guard helping," said Allison. "It's nice to have them there and have them available...it makes our job a lot easier and I appreciate them helping us."

"It's a real chess game when we try and determine the most efficient way to get things done."

— Master Sgt. Nick Wood
155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Castle added that sometimes the weather can be a help in removing the snow and ice from the jets.

"Once you get the snow and ice off, the jet warms up pretty quick with the aluminum and sun combination. You'll see steam rolling off the jets even when its below freezing," he said.

With the added work comes added safety concerns, which is why the maintainers use extra safety equipment, such as harnesses and ropes, when walking on the wings.

"The wing is flat in spots and angled in others and can be pretty slick, but you just use that much more caution even though you're hooked up. It's like standing on a wet slide sometimes or a frozen lake, you know it's slick before you even go out," Castle said.

Wood said that maintenance continues because of the danger of additional ice buildup in areas that have already been cleared.

"One thing you have to watch more closely is that there are more leaks. It's just like your car, you always find more wrong when the weather is bad," he said.

At the end of the day, the maintainers, civil engineers and operations personnel do everything possible to ensure the mission can be safely completed, said Wood.

"The people who've been out here have worked really, really hard. We try not let the weather get to us and sometimes we have to bow out to it, but they've done a great job getting jets ready for (operations) to fly them even through the harsh conditions we've had recently."

Operation Snow Plow

Air Guardsmen team together to keep base functioning during Christmas blizzard

By Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube
Staff Writer

Sammy Cahn penned it, several artists sang about it, however after a record of more than 24 inches of snow fell in Lincoln, Neb., in December, no one is asking for it anymore.

Snow blew into every nook and cranny that it could find, even under the heavy hangar doors at the Nebraska Air National Guard Base, home of the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Then came the bitter cold temperatures... and even more wind.

Keeping the Nebraska National Guard air base up and running despite the difficult winter conditions quickly became a base-wide team effort.

Snow removal crews worked extra hours and through the holidays to keep the base streets and aircraft ramp cleared.

"During the December unit training assembly, the (155th) Civil Engineer (Squadron's) traditional Guardsmen had worked to clear snow from an earlier storm, so that helped," said Robert Doetker, a former member of the 155th Air Refueling Wing who is now working for the Nebraska Air National Guard as a temporary state employee.

Doetker said on Christmas Eve day, when everyone else was released at noon, the snow removal crew kept working, clearing the base streets and sidewalks.

That work extended long into the Christmas holiday.

"On Christmas day, Senior Master Sgt. Craig Anderson, the civil engineer facility manager, Dan Ptacek, a grounds worker, and I came in to keep the road to the base open and the large parking lot clean so the University of Nebraska football team could leave for San Diego," said Doetker.

The snow removal crew worked extra hours and through the holidays to keep the base streets and aircraft parking ramp cleared.

Cleaning the snow from the aircraft parking ramp proved to be quite another undertaking, said Doetker.

While members of the 155 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron used walk behind snowblowers or a bobcat to clear the snow from around the unit's KC-135R Stratotankers, the civil engineer members were cleaning the snow from the ramp.

According to Doetker, the ideal way of cleaning the ramp is to move all the snow from behind the aircraft, push the aircraft back into the cleaned area and then clean the snow from the rest of the ramp.

"We used both large snowblowers, two dump trucks and boss blades and a payload loader to move the snow from the ramp," said Doetker.

Doetker estimated they moved more than 300 dump truck loads of snow from the ramp. He said the crews had to contend with three different kinds of snow.

"We had the light powder, the blowing snow that packed, and packed snow from a previous storm," said Doetker. "Each type of snow moves differently, so when it piles up the way it did, it became quite a task to clear."



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Clearing A Path: Master Sgt. Kevin Daehling, driving an OshKosh snowblower, cleans snow from West Furnas St. at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Jan. 13. Nebraska Air Guard civil engineers had to put in hours of extra time keeping the base's roads and flight line clear after Lincoln, Neb., received a record of more than 24 inches of snowfall in the month of December.



Team Effort: Members of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron pose on top of a 10-foot tall pile of snow that was moved from the Air National Guard aircraft ramp. The civil engineers were responsible for keeping the base streets, sidewalks and parking lots cleared of snow during the recent record snowfall.

Almost every member of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron pitched in to help move the snow. Some of the members received an hour of training on a piece of snow removal equipment and then were put to work.

"We used 18 different kinds of equipment, from the large snowblowers and plows, to walk behind snowblowers and many shovels," said Doetker.

blower kept blowing a seal, so they fired up a snowblower that was to be retired just to keep two of the large snowblowers clearing snow.

The snow removal operation was a complete team effort according to Doetker.

If a piece of equipment broke, vehicle maintenance employees would fix the equipment without asking any questions. The



Pushing Snow: Master Sgt. Sarah Bredthauer uses an OshKosh blade to push snow along West Furnas street at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Jan. 13. Bredthauer was pushing the snow into piles so a snowblower could clear the snow away.

vehicle maintenance supervisor also allowed the snow removal equipment to be stored inside so the hydraulics would stay warm, keeping the seals in good shape.

"I believe this was the main reason we didn't have equipment break down any more than we did," said Doetker.

The base populace also proved to be extremely understanding, said Doetker, adding that the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron work control center didn't receive many trouble calls, said Doetker.

They base populace knew the snow removal was the top priority, he added.

Unit members also cleaned the snow from around entry doors of the different buildings so that a tractor with a blade could come in and clean away the rest of the snow from around the buildings.

Units such as Aerospace Ground Equipment and Base Fuels also cleaned the snow from their respective areas so the civil engineers could concentrate on the other major areas of the base.

HUMVEES continued from page 1.

ambulance has, Humvee ambulances have many advantages over their civilian counterpart when it comes to inclement weather.

"The main advantage that they have is they are four-wheel-drive," said Staff Sgt. Bryan Campbell, supply sergeant for 92nd Troop Command.

"They are not low profile, like the civilian ambulances...and since they are a Humvee they also have the power behind them to be able to go through bigger drifts."

Campbell was one of the first Soldiers to make it to the 110th MMB's headquarters at the Penteman Armory in Lincoln.

Arriving at approximately 7 p.m., he quickly prepared two Humvee ambulances, a Chevy Suburban and a back-up regular Humvee. Soon after, the first shift of ambulance drivers arrived at Penteman, were briefed on their mission and then sent to their respective fire stations - one to respond to emergencies north of O Street and the other to respond

south of O Street.

Sgt. Timothy Beckmann, property book office noncommissioned officer for the 110th MMB, was one driver who was able to make it in. Beckmann said he was enjoying his Christmas evening with a few family members at his house in Lincoln and was playing with his son when he was called to see if he could make it to work.

Beckmann said he and another driver were stationed at a fire station south of O Street and took turns responding to emergency calls throughout the night.

"We responded to every medical call," said Beckmann. "The Lincoln Fire and Rescue ambulance would get as close as they could and if at that time they decided that they could not go any farther we would be on our way. We would pick up the Lincoln Fire and Rescue paramedics in our ambulance and go to the scene."

"They coordinated a place to meet wherever that ambulance was... that's where we would meet

them and their paramedics would jump in the back of our ambulance and then we would go," he added.

Beckmann said he and his partner responded to 12 emergency calls from 9 p.m., Dec. 25, to 11 a.m., Dec. 26, with the Humvee ambulance.

He was very impressed with its capabilities.

"It gave me the chance to see exactly what the Humvee would do," he said. "There were some drifts we had to go through and to myself I was thinking 'I hope we make it,' but we had to go and it made it through."

Beckmann added there was only one time the Humvee ambulance needed to wait for a snowplow to get through a drift on the way to a call in Hickman, Neb.

Once Beckmann's shift ended there were additional ambulance drivers ready to take over and continue if Lincoln Fire and Rescue still needed them.

More impressive than the success of the mission was the attitude

shown by every Soldier involved.

"Nobody actually complained," said Campbell. "It is a holiday and most people have that day off and now you're asked to come in and work in blizzard-like conditions and the attitudes (were) not that of, 'I've gotten taken away from Christmas'...it was a 'Merry Christmas' with a smile on their face."

When he first received a phone call to show up for work, Beckmann said he was actually excited.

"My initial reaction was I was pumped up," he said. "I was ready to go, a little hesitant to tell my family what I was about to do, but they were very supportive."

Morgan said the 22 Soldiers who ended up sacrificing their holiday time to help in the operation should be proud.

"I think this is what you sign up for when you sign up in the Guard," said Morgan. "When we can give back to the community, I think that's really when we can be really proud."

"The Guard has the unique dual roles with state and federal

responsibilities, so I think for us to be able to respond at the state level in a timely manner like we did and serve our community, I think we had a lot of visibility," said Beckmann. "Working with the Lincoln Fire and Rescue, they have a lot of respect for what we do and we have a lot of respect for what they do. So to come together and for it to work as well as it did it was very rewarding."

Although Campbell said he was slightly envious of the drivers who actually got out and helped people while he manned the phones, he knows these types of operations are why many people sign up for the National Guard.

"A lot of the drivers felt very (grateful) that they were able to get out there and help," said Campbell. "That's kind of the reason we signed up to be in the Guard...not only can we serve our country, but better yet, we can serve our community here at home."

"Just to be able to get there and show people, 'Hey we're here, we do care,' it means a lot to us."

Blizzard no match for determined Nebraska priest

■ Three years after traveling in Humvees, helicopters to celebrate Christmas Mass with service members in Iraq, Nebraska Army Guard chaplain uses borrowed snowmobile to visit Nebraska parishoners isolated by holiday snowstorm

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Kane admits he's had a few unique Christmas experiences over the years.

For example, there was the time back when Kane was in the seminary and he attended Christmas Eve Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome as it was celebrated by the late Pope John Paul II.

And then there was 2006 when Kane celebrated Christmas Mass 10 times in 31 hours for U.S. service members, traveling in armored Humvees and helicopters with a bodyguard of American Soldiers carrying M-16 rifles to keep the Nebraska Army National Guard chaplain safe as he moved from one forward operations base to another throughout the Al Anbar Province in western Iraq.

Kane said Christmas 2009 has now joined those other two experiences as ones he'll likely never forget.

As pastor at St. George Catholic Church in Morse Bluff, Neb., and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Cedar Hill, Neb., Kane was able to celebrate the scheduled 6 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass in Morse Bluff before a massive blizzard struck with all its fury. Kane said he tried to drive to Cedar Hill for the midnight Mass, but was forced to turn back less than a mile from the church.

The snowdrifts had simply grown too big to pass through safely.

The next morning, Christmas Day, Kane again celebrated Christmas Mass in Morse Bluff for the few parishioners who were able to make it. About 15 people attended.

Kane said he knew it was a big disappointment for the many parishioners who were stranded at home because of the continuing snowstorm that had filled area roads with mountainous snowdrifts that made traveling perilous at best.

"There were understandably a lot of people who couldn't get to Mass on Christmas and that's a pretty big deal," said Kane.

Following Mass, Kane, who also serves as the chaplain for the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade in Lincoln, Neb., said he called some members of his family who live in Nebraska to tell them that he was stranded in Morse Bluff and wouldn't be able to make it to their planned family Christmas gathering.

He had barely hung up the phone when he received another call, this time from a parishioner who was stranded at home.

"(He) wanted to know if I wanted to spend some time with them at their house since they had a snowmobile, they could come and pick me up," said Kane.

Kane said the Walker family's son, Jake, a North Bend High School senior who attends the church's religious education class, soon arrived riding the family snowmobile.

"I'd never been on a snowmobile before, so he gave me a ride around Morse Bluff and out in the country," said Kane, laughing as he recalled how the two riders zipped over the drift-clogged streets "hanging on for dear life" while they enjoyed a unique Christmas day activity.

Kane said Jake Walker soon began showing him the finer points of riding a snowmo-



Photos courtesy of Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Kane

Christmas Visitor: Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Kane poses for a photograph with Nadine Racek, Dec. 25, after visiting the Morse Bluff, Neb., woman and her daughter on Christmas Day. In civilian life Kane is the pastor of St. George Catholic Church in Morse Bluff, Neb., and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Cedar Hill, Neb.

bile, like how to accelerate and navigate over the snow without becoming stuck. He then gave the priest the opportunity to drive the snowmobile solo.

A short while later, after driving out to the Walker's home, Jake informed Kane he was ready to park the snowmobile and go inside for the rest of the afternoon.

Kane, however, had suddenly conceived a unique idea.

"I got it into my head that maybe it would be fun to go and visit some people who would enjoy having me bring Communion on Christmas day; who weren't able to get to Mass," said Kane.

Jake Walker gave Kane a few more pointers and then Kane was off, heading back to his home in Morse Bluff to pick up the container he uses to carry Communion to shut-ins, his religious stole and the tiny prayer book he carried with him while in Iraq.

Kane said his first stop was at a retired women's house in Morse Bluff.

"She was very surprised to see me... but happy," said Kane. "We spent a little time visiting and she received Communion and we read some of the Christmas narrative from the Gospels."

Having navigated around Morse Bluff, Kane said he was now ready to try something a little more challenging. Turning the snowmobile southward, he followed Highway 79 out of town. Traveling about five or six miles, Kane turned into the driveway of Nadine Racek and her daughter Jerrine. Kane laughed as he remembered how the two women looked quizzically out of their windows, trying to figure out who had traveled out on the "impassable" roads to visit them.

"They heard the sound of the snowmobile coming and they're looking out the window to try and figure out who it is," he recalled. "I was all bundled up (with) goggles on. You couldn't tell who I was."

Finally, after stepping into the house and removing some of his protective clothing, including the goggles he wore in Iraq, the ladies realized their visitor was Father Kane.

"They invited me and of course I'm covered with snow and the frost and everything else," he said. "I didn't want to track into the house, so we stood in the kitchen and said



Masked Rider: Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Kane wears a pair of goggles he used in Iraq as he stands near the snowmobile he borrowed on Christmas Day to visit parishioners stranded by a massive blizzard. Kane is the chaplain for the Nebraska Army Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

our prayers and visited."

They also took time to munch on some of Nadine Racek's famed and award-winning kolaches and pose for a photograph that would gain Kane quite a bit of notoriety later. Then, after a 15-minute visit, Kane decided it was time to venture back out into the storm.

"I decided to get more adventuresome and head west," said Kane. "I got further down Highway 79 and the drifts got so big that I started to think, 'Maybe I shouldn't keep going.'"

Riding through the blizzard, Kane said he was struck by how similar this Christmas day mission was to the one he performed in Iraq several years earlier.

"Instead of battling sand and dust, it was snow and ice and navigating on a snowmobile," he said. "The only difference was this time I didn't have a bodyguard with an M-16 watching out for me as I went."

That doesn't mean that someone wasn't watching out for Kane, though. Along the way, the priest received a text message from Drew Walker, Jake's father.

"It was funny because (he) sent me a text message on my phone because I had been gone for an hour, just making sure that I was still okay," said Kane, who responded: "Yep. Everything is going well."

"I got a few more miles down the road and I was afraid I was going to get stuck... so I turned around and went back to their house," said Kane, adding that he spent the rest of the day with the Walker family.

"There's six in their family, so they weren't able to come to Mass either. So I had my Mass kit with me - which I also used when I was deployed - and I had dinner at their house and then around 11:30 at night Christmas day had Mass for them in their living room... just the six of them and me."

Following Mass, Kane was given another snowmobile ride back home to his house in Morse Bluff.

A few days later he was approached by a reporter who wanted to know more about Kane's Christmas ride. It seems that Nadine Racek had sent the photo of Kane and her to a local newspaper, which then ran an article

about how Kane had traveled by snowmobile to reach people isolated by the blizzard.

Kane said the article created a quite a buzz.

"People have written me letters, e-mails from all over," said Kane, adding that he's also been stopped on the street by people he doesn't know, but who saw the article in the newspaper.

He said it's been an interesting phenomenon that has taught him much about the value of religious faith.

"My hope was to visit more families that day," said Kane, adding that he knew how important Christmas Mass is to many people and how difficult being unable to attend that mass can be. "I think they recognize in a deeper sense the role that faith plays in their lives. And what I hoped to do by taking some time to visit was trying to show that I recognize the love of faith that they have and just trying to bring a little bit of Christmas joy where they weren't expecting it."

"The thing that I thought was nice was, in the midst of a lot of people's cancelled plans and other things, this gave them a glimmer of joy or excitement that might otherwise been a disappointing Christmas," Kane added. "And even though I wasn't able to visit very many people, I think being able to read the story about it, it's almost as if after that story went out I got to visit a lot more people."

Kane said he also gained something from the expedition.

"I think that one of the great things about being a priest is - and this goes not only to being in the National Guard, but also in my parish and in the school - the opportunity that I have to share in peoples' family and to share in their joy and to become part of peoples' families and part of peoples' lives. (It's) a special thing," he said.

"And when we get to share in events like this Christmas, it helps to be more familiar with them and be with them during times of difficulty where they see that we care about them in good times and we're there for them when there are struggles," Kane added. "So, for me it was very fulfilling to be able to do that."

Winter maintenance crucial in battle to keep Guard vehicles ready

By Pfc. Justin Zdan

Staff Writer

Military equipment is a versatile asset, but winter conditions can have an extreme affect on military vehicles.

That is why National Guard maintenance crews take specific precautions to prevent unnecessary damages or malfunctions during the winter months. These cold-weather procedures determine whether the vehicle starts, overheats, or even has the ability to maneuver.

"The biggest thing is making sure your antifreeze is set at the correct freezing point," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher G. Cox, a technician with the 1st

Unit Training and Equipment Site (UTES) in Hastings, Neb. "A lot of people don't realize that and it makes a big difference."

The most commonly used protection level of antifreeze is rated 30 below, he said.

Drivers should also make sure snow isn't packed in the grill of the vehicle, which can keep air from cooling the radiator, causing the engine to overheat.

In addition to monitoring coolant, batteries have to be checked frequently. If the fluid level is low, the charge will be low. And that can cause someone to crank the engine too long and burn out the starter. A battery charger that has a trickle charge can be used to keep the battery ready to go.

Cox said military vehicles will

be getting solar panels to help keep batteries charged.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Craig W. Niemeyer, also a technician with UTES, said batteries should be fully charged so the fluid inside doesn't freeze.

Diesel will also freeze if not using a winter-blend, especially in heavy trucks with metal tanks, said Niemeyer. Diesel engines can still have problems starting. Sometimes the vehicles have to be pulled inside for a day before they'll start.

Cox said he's been seeing a lot of windshield washer fluid freezing this year with the extreme cold. The cold temperatures this season have remained below zero and can be a big problem for diesel engines.

The snow on the ground and the wind this year seem to amplify the

cold, which has been the cause of the fuel freezing, said Cox.

Snow causes problems for tires and traction as well said Niemeyer. Have snow chains available when necessary, he said.

The Air National Guard is also battling cold weather.

"If snow is coming we try to keep our vehicles in the hangar. If not, we cover the wheels to keep the snow off the struts," said Staff Sgt. Kasey L. Korth, an in-flight crew chief with the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

A lot of the snow is getting in the bay and packed in the wheel wells, said Korth. Heaters are being put on the wheels in an effort to prevent the brake lines from freezing, which pop aircraft wheels, he said.

At the Penterman armory,

winter emergency operations during the holiday storm brought the M-997 Humvee ambulances indoors.

"We started parking some of the vehicles inside," said Staff Sgt. Bryan J. Campbell, supply sergeant with the 92nd Troop Command.

"This allowed us to eliminate the wasted time cleaning them off."

It also allowed a controlled environment to perform proper preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS), Campbell said.

Vehicles are more likely to start if they're kept indoors during cold weather months. The rear heater can take awhile to kick on in the cold.

Keeping Track: Spc. Tammie Hine-line, a chemical operations specialist with the 754th Chemical Company in Omaha, counts the number push-ups Anthony Sander, a senior at Rising City High School, completes during "Guard for a Day" at the Nebraska National Guard Armory in Fremont, Neb., Jan. 24. Guard for a Day allows young people to walk in the boots of Soldiers for a day. The activities included letting students experience Soldier physical fitness testing.



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Guard For A Day

Army Guard recruiters show off organization to high school students during day-long event in Fremont

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Most high school students struggle to think past their next Friday night's plans while other focus on nothing more than simply getting their driver's license

Dillon Hicks is not most high school students.

A 15-year-old sophomore at David City Public High School, Hicks has already made a major decision about his future.

"I'm not sure what I want to do for an occupation, but I'm joining the Guard," said Hicks.

Hicks and approximately 45 other young people, mostly high school students, descended upon the Nebraska Army National Guard armory in Fremont, Neb., Jan. 24, to participate in a "Guard for a Day" event where they were learned more about the equipment and training Soldiers use to perform their military jobs.

"Guard for a Days" are meant to show young people the opportunities that the Nebraska National Guard has to offer, said Sgt. Maj. Brian Folts, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command.

"We hope it influences them into wanting to become a Soldier in the Nebraska Army National Guard," said Folts.

"However, even if it just gives someone a better understanding of what the Guard does and what we're about, then I think we win there, too," he added.

The participants came from several cities in southeastern Nebraska including Fremont, Omaha and David City.

While at the armory – which typically serves as the home for Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) – the

students were able to cycle through several real-world training sessions with the Soldiers.

These stations included such things as:

- ♦ a station giving instruction on the disassembly, maintenance and reassembly of a .50 caliber and M2 machine gun;
- ♦ a station showing Humvee equipment and maintenance;
- ♦ a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear response station;
- ♦ a combat life saver station where participants were able to practice injecting an intravenous needle into a rubber hand;
- ♦ and a station that showed what Soldiers go through for physical fitness training.

The Soldiers and participants were also given instruction on hand-to-hand combat from members of an Omaha-area mixed martial arts gym. The MMA instructors showed the participants different ground fighting techniques, how to throw punches and kicks, and how to practice by sparring.

Finally, one of the most popular stations was a shooting range in the armory basement where participants used Airsoft guns with plastic pellets to go through room clearing procedures.

Participants formed two-person teams and advanced on a target with the assistance of the Soldiers.

To further immerse the participants in the experience, they were then given a chance don night vision goggles in pitch black darkness and run through the scenario again.

Many of the students said they were happy for the chance to get some hands-on information about what the Guard is all about versus just hearing about it from recruiters.

"I personally think it's boring just to sit there and listen to people and listen to what they do instead

of being able to do hands-on stuff," said Bobbi Keithley, a 15-year-old sophomore from Omaha North High School. "We get the recruiters coming up to North (High School)... and they explain it, but not really all that well. So you kind of have iffy questions."

"Coming up here, you get a better perspective seeing what they do and how they do it," she added.

"They can show you instead of just showing you on a piece of paper. You get your hands on it," said Jesse Smith, a senior at Omaha North High School.

"I'm a hands-on learner. All of kids my age are... (We) like to get involved, talk to people and get their input on stuff, so I think it's a great thing to have," Smith said.

In addition to getting their hands on some of the equipment the Guard uses, the participants had an opportunity to speak one-on-one with the Soldiers, many of whom are only a few years removed from high school.

"While it's good to have someone like me talking to them, it's good to get someone a little closer to their age category – their peer group," said Folts. "They get the opportunity to talk to somebody besides their recruiter."

"These participants get the opportunity to talk to Joe-average Soldier and get their perspective on different things," added Folts. "That can be a very good perspective because they always shoot exactly straight and...show a different perspective than what a recruiter may have and that's often time to our benefit. And I think that gives credibility, too."

Along with educating participants on opportunities that exist in the Guard, organizers aim to instill what it means to serve in the Nebraska National Guard.

"I think it gives us a great



Military First Aid: Sgt. Sean Delancy, a senior medic with the 1-134th Cavalry, demonstrates how to insert an intravenous needle into a rubber hand for Blair-native Mike Wilson during "Guard for a Day" at the Nebraska National Guard Armory in Fremont, Neb., Jan. 24.

example...to give people insight into what we do, what we can do for them, what they can do for us and what serving your country means," said Folts. "I think one of the most important things that we get across to the kids is the service to the country and their community because that's the unique thing we have with the Guard... service to your local community."

Serving the country and community was an idea not lost on the participants.

"It's kind of an honor," said Keithley. "I get to see what they have to go through every day to keep the country safe."

Hicks said he has worked to learn as much about the Guard as he can on the internet. Being a part of Guard for a Day has only strengthened his desire to join the Guard and become the fifth generation of his family to serve in the military.

"I've been hearing a lot about the Guard and I figured this would be a good way to learn more," said Hicks. "It makes we want to join even more."

The opportunities the Guard can provide is the deciding factor for

Hicks, but what it means to serve in the military was also very important.

"It's the whole country thing... serving your country," he said. "Then they pay for all of your schooling, so if I decide to do something they'll pay for it."

Hicks took time to learn more about the Guard from the Soldiers he interacted with. He said he appreciated the bond the Soldiers have.

"I just like talking with all the guys," said Hicks. "You just get three or four of the Guardsmen together and just talk about basic training and what they do on their weekends and stuff – it just sounds like fun."

"The brother-ship here," he added. "They all seem like they're great friends and that's a good thing."

Organizers say they hope the day's activities show the participants that with the Guard they have the chance to be a part of something much bigger than themselves.

"I would hope that they take away that serving your country is important," said Folts. "There's something bigger than us as individuals and we need to be part of that and it's great. You get a good feeling from doing your part."

Army Guard recruiting, retention force haul in national awards

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska Army National Guard recruiting and retention specialists continued their string of success when they were awarded a number of national awards during a recent ceremony held in Washington, D.C.

The Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command returned home with five crystal goblet trophies for its continued success in strength maintenance.

"I think the biggest thing this shows is that we work as a team," said Lt. Col. James Murphy, commander of the Nebraska Army Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command.

For the record, Nebraska received two trophies for Achievement of Accession Mission (Small State) as well as the following awards:

- ♦ Achievement of Officer Strength Mission (Small State);
- ♦ Achievement of Retention Mission (Small State);
- ♦ Achievement of Recruit Sustainment Program Mission (Small State).

Murphy said the awards were based upon a state-wide effort to enlist and retain highly

qualified Soldiers in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

According to Murphy, Nebraska recruiters enlisted approximately 320 new Soldiers into the organization during the first six months of Fiscal Year 2009, the fastest recruiting start on record.

However, during the last half of the fiscal year National Guard Bureau officials, in order to adhere to the Congressionally-mandated ceiling on overall Army Guard strength numbers, initiated a number of nationwide restrictions designed to limit the amount of recruits that could enlist.

That restriction, said Murphy, had a major effect on Nebraska's final numbers.

"If you look at the numbers, if (National Guard Bureau) had not restricted us, we would've had the best year that Nebraska has ever had by far," said Murphy.

"It didn't just affect us at the end of last year, either," he added. "It also affected us the first couple months of (this) year. So, we're just getting back into the battle rhythm and the level of production we were at last year. I expect the next few months to be really good."

Along with the organizational awards, a number of other Nebraska Army Guard

officials received national or regional hardware as well.

Sgt. 1st Class Dale Alexander, Wayne, was selected as a Chiefs 54 recipient as the top Nebraska Army National Guard recruiter, retired Master Sgt. Barb Saighman and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Benorden were selected as the nation's top Military Entrance Processing Station staff, and Sgt. 1st Class Gail Petersen was named the top marketing sergeant for Recruiting and Retention Area Council Five.

According to Petersen, the amount of awards the state received shows the level of teamwork and commitment the entire staff have made to ensure that Nebraska attracts the best Army National Guard recruits possible.

"We were able to do this as a recruiting and retention force," said Petersen. "And there are several things that have to come together to make that happen that are often overlooked."

For example, Petersen said that the state's recruiting assistance force has continued to give Guard recruiters excellent referrals.

"The recruiting assistance that we get from unit members... has accelerated and been a force multiplier for us since the (Guard

Recruiting Assistance Program) started," he said. "Having everybody out there realizing that every Soldier is a recruiter has made a huge difference. We wouldn't be able to reach our ultimate goals without that level of support."

And that support has been substantial, said Murphy.

Under the program, GRAP participants have received \$2,000 for every person they refer to recruiters who successfully enlist and complete their initial training. Since the start of GRAP in Nebraska, Guard Soldiers have received nearly \$2 million in GRAP bonuses.

Petersen said along with GRAP, the Nebraska recruiting and retention force was also able to salvage a successful year by changing the way it attracts potential Soldiers.

"From a marketing perspective, we really had to adjust the way that we were going to pursue future Soldiers," said Petersen. "We had to focus our efforts into college markets; into getting as high of quality of recruit that we could."

The result, said Murphy, is a continuing stream of Nebraska Army National Guard recruits whose impact will be felt for many years into the future.

Sergeant spends day filling in for Grand Island principal

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Often, when school children visit the principal, it means they're in trouble.

On Oct. 13 the students at Dodge Elementary School in Grand Island, Neb., actually couldn't wait to see their principal. Furthermore, they couldn't wait to ask question after question.

On that day Staff Sgt. Michael Lichtenfeld, a career counselor for the 1-376th Aviation Security and Support Battalion, was given the chance to be the school's "Principal for a Day" and interact with the kindergarten through fifth-grade students.

Principal for a Day is a program that gives community leaders a unique opportunity to experience first-hand what transpires during a typical day at one of the Grand Island public schools.

"It was kind of an initiative from the central office to get community people involved in the schools," said Stephanie Schulte, principal of Dodge Elementary School. "We get the opportunity to get community people into our school and see what's going on and help people in the community understand the school and vice-versa."

The goal of the nationwide program is for participants to translate their experience into long-term relationships that enhance learning environments and student achievement while allowing students to learn more about the community they live in.

"I think the goal is to help people in the community really know what goes on in schools... and hopefully they will then be out giving some positive promotion, positive (public relations) for the school to people in the community," said Schulte. And for the kids "to find out more about the community and get some more career exposure, that's a huge part of it."

Lichtenfeld was singled out and contacted by the Grand Island public school district based on his career in the Nebraska National Guard and his job that includes counseling Soldiers on career op-

portunities.

A youth basketball coach who is also actively involved with the Boy Scouts, Lichtenfeld said he was excited to have the chance to work with the students, much like he has with young Soldiers.

"I enjoy working with young people," he said. "I enjoy working with younger Soldiers and helping them in their careers... and trying to point them in the right direction."

On his day as principal, Lichtenfeld arrived before school started and met with Schulte and the school's faculty to learn more about the school.

He then observed teachers and students during class. He was also able to speak with three different classes about his experiences as a Nebraska National Guard Soldier.

Lichtenfeld said he wanted to educate the students on the positive aspects of being a Soldier.

"I hoped to let the students and the faculty and the staff know the positive attributes of being a Citizen-Soldier," he said. "The good things that you can get back from being a Soldier... the positive things about developing good leadership traits, responsibility and communication, plus the chance to travel and see the world and learn a wonderful trade. Then, finally, the chance to make some of the best friends you'll ever have in your life."

Schulte said this is the third time Dodge Elementary School has participated in the program, but it's the first time they have had a military person as the Principal for a Day. Schulte added the kids were clearly excited to have a Soldier to talk with.

"I think the kids viewed it differently and were really excited even to hear about the opportunity to



Photo Courtesy of Dodge Elementary School, Grand Island, Neb.

Principal For A Day: Staff Sgt. Michael Lichtenfeld, career counselor for the 1-376th Aviation Security and Support Battalion, poses with two students, Oct. 13, at Dodge Elementary School.

hear a military person talk a little bit," said Schulte. "I think its good exposure for the kids because a lot of them don't have the opportunity to see somebody that's actually in the military."

Approximately 80 percent of the students at Dodge Elementary School come from low-income families, said Schulte. So the chance to listen to Lichtenfeld really allowed the students to see the Nebraska National Guard as an opportunity to fund college, or even have a career.

"There's plenty of wonderful opportunities here in our own state educational-wise and military-wise that can help pay for their school. They can learn a trade and become a productive part of a community," said Lichtenfeld. "There's so many wonderful opportunities in the Nebraska National Guard that it has opened so many doors for me personally in my life that I just want as many people as possible

and showed them that becoming a Soldier is an attainable goal, said Schulte.

"When the kids have talked about careers, military things are getting mentioned more because they see that now as a little more of an achievable possibility," said Schulte. "I heard a lot about that afterwards... kids talking about 'maybe I should be in the National Guard someday.'"

In addition to showing the Guard as a possible future option, Lichtenfeld said he wanted to stress that the decisions students make now and in later years have a serious impact on their future.

"I think it's so important that you try to instill some positive thoughts or positive dreams for them so that when they do grow up... and pick a career... they do something positive with their life," said Lichtenfeld.

Schulte echoed Lichtenfeld and stressed the importance of decisions

to be aware of that."

Speaking with a real-life Soldier, not just seeing one on video games or in the movies, was also an important benefit for the students.

"I think it's also really good for the kids to see... military people not from a game standpoint," said Schulte. "They play a lot of electronic games and to see that military people are real people, they're not TV or game caricatures (was important.)"

"They might have some kind of (preconceived notion) as far as what kind of person it would take to be in the military," said Lichtenfeld. "Then they find out that I'm a normal person."

Having a Soldier speak with the students also gave the kids a heightened interest in the military

they make now.

"The things you do now will influence what career and the career direction you can go," she said. "It's good for them to hear that from some other professionals."

"For the kids' sake, (they) get some visions of some new and different things they can do and be and how what they are doing now has some impact on that," she added.

Lichtenfeld said he was impressed with the organization of the school and was honored to be welcomed into it.

"It was a true honor to get the chance to interact with the young people and I was very impressed with the Grand Island school system," he said. "The thing that really amazed me the most was just how organized it was."

He said that being from a military background where things are by the numbers and organizational skills utilized everyday, he was impressed to see how the school system used the same organizational "by-the-numbers" principles.

Schulte appreciated having a member of the Guard in her school.

"I just think it was a real positive," she said. "I'd like to see us get some more military people in the future involved in this."

Lichtenfeld said not only did it mean a lot to him to participate in Principal for a Day, it meant a lot to the Nebraska National Guard.

"It was a wonderful feeling to be at that level, to open up and be honest and forthcoming about the wonderful attributes about being a Citizen-Soldier," said Lichtenfeld, "and to hopefully give them some ideas and thoughts of what they can do with their lives and the opportunities that are out there - which are endless."

"It meant a lot to me to just have the chance to interact with the younger people and say some real positive things about being a Soldier and about how proud you feel just to wear the uniform," he added. "That was one thing that I wanted to get out there, that there's really good people who wear uniforms, who are good Soldiers, who are responsible, and who care about their communities and they love what they do."

402nd Military Police Battalion welcomes new commander

By Pfc. Justin V. Zdan
Staff Writer

With all the pomp and circumstance that accompanies such events, Lt. Col. Eric J. Teegerstrom assumed command of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion, Dec. 5, in Omaha, Neb.

Teegerstrom replaced Lt. Col. Byron L. Diamond, who is now the deputy chief information officer at Nebraska Joint Force Headquarters.

Teegerstrom, born in Polk County in 1965, was an active duty armor officer before joining the Nebraska Army National Guard in 2000. He deployed from 2005-07 with the Nebraska Army Guard's 1-167th Cavalry to Iraq, serving as the squadron executive officer.

"He's the right person at the right time," said Col. Mike Navrkal, commander of the 92nd Troop Command, shortly after officiating over the change of command ceremony. "With his deployment experience and his experience as a police officer, I think Teegerstrom can be very successful with this organization."

Navrkal said Teegerstrom epitomizes the Army's values of loyalty, duty and honor, characteristics that are also common throughout the 402nd MP Bn.

"I know that the 402nd has a great nucleus of Soldiers," he said. "And I know they're going to continue to do the right thing."

Teegerstrom joins the organization as the battalion continues to prepare for an upcoming deployment.

Teegerstrom said he looks forward to taking the 402nd to the next level.

"I think we'll have an excellent training year and a successful deployment," said Teegerstrom. "I foresee a lot of tough training that's going to lead us to a very successful deployment that everyone in the state is going to be proud of when we get back."

According to Diamond, who served as battalion commander through the organization's initial stand-up and training for the approaching deployment, he's disappointed to leave, but feels confident that Teegerstrom will do an exceptional job.

"(Lieutenant Colonel) Teegerstrom is absolutely the right guy to take this unit on deployment," Diamond said. "Any commander would wish that they would have their time in the sun and be that deployment commander, but if it's not me, then I'm glad it's him."

Diamond enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard in July 1986 as an armored crewman. He attended Nebraska State Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in July 1989.

In his farewell remarks, Diamond advised his Soldiers to seek mentors and commended them for their performance during military occupational specialty transitioning schools where 20 percent graduated with honors.

"It's been an honor and a privilege to serve with everyone in the last 24 months," said Diamond.



Teegerstrom



Diamond

Grand Island-based aviation battalion conducts December change of command ceremony

By Spc. Koan L. Nissen
Staff Writer

Soldiers and family members of the 1-376th Aviation Security and Support Battalion gathered for a change of command ceremony, Dec. 6, at the unit's Grand Island hangar.

With the battalion standing at attention, outgoing commander Lt. Col. George B. Harris passed the unit's colors to incoming commander Maj. Kevin Bricker.

"We've come a long way," said Harris, adding that he hopes he will be remembered for his efforts with the battalion. Actions speak louder than words, said Harris, adding that he hopes his will have as well.

Harris also thanked his wife, Jalene, for her support during his 24 years of military service.

Harris, 49, started his military career on June 19, 1985, when he enlisted into the Arizona National Guard. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant on July 24, 1987. Harris has been assigned as the aviation operations training and standards officer position with the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

Bricker said he felt honored to take over as battalion commander.

"I could not be more excited to lead a group of outstanding Soldiers," said

Bricker.

Bricker, 46, enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard on March 6, 1986. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1989.

After receiving his commission Bricker served in a variety of leadership positions including tank platoon leader in Company B, 1-195th Armor, aviation platoon leader in Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-167th Cavalry, and as commander of Troop F and Troop D, 1-167th Cavalry.

Bricker also served as the 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Support Bn. personnel officer before taking several leadership positions with the 1-167th Cavalry, 92nd Troop command and the 110th Medical Bn.

He most recently served as the battalion executive officer of the 1-376th Aviation Security and Support Bn.

There are numerous challenges facing the 1-376th Aviation Security and Support Bn., said Bricker.

Finding quality Soldiers is of the utmost importance, said Bricker, adding he's confident the unit will continue to enlist good Soldiers to help with the overall mission.

With the unit's upcoming mission to Kosovo coming up, Bricker said he is certain the unit will fill the required slots needed for a successful tour.



Bricker



Harris

Kids Corner

News & Features Affecting Nebraska's Military Children

4th Annual Operation Hidden Egg

Saturday, March 27
Doors open at 1:45 p.m.
National Guard Air Base
Lincoln, Neb.

Special eggs will be hidden and if found, may be exchanged for prizes. Limit one prize per child.

The event is open to children of Nebraska National Guard members and state employees working for the Military Department.



Age groups start time:

- 0-3 years of age (2-2:20 p.m.)
- 4-6 years of age (2:25 p.m.)
- 7+ years of age (2:45 p.m.)

Please RSVP for planning purposes to:
Pam Stemple at pamela.stemple@us.army.mil or (402) 309-7338.

Nebraska military kids can expect big year in 2010

By Pamela Stemple

Nebraska Army National Guard State Child and Youth Program Coordinator

We are planning a fantastic 2010 for the Child and Youth Program here in Nebraska.

Go ahead and give us a try and enjoy all the great things we have planned for the next few months.

We are planning to have our 4th Annual Operation Hidden Egg event at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln. It will be March 27 at 1 p.m. We are planning an Easter egg hunt, games and cookies and juice. So, mark your calendars and make plans to come. RSVP to Pam Stemple at pamela.stemple@us.army.mil. I hope to see you there.

We are partnering with Operation Military Kids and Easter Seals to put on some wonderful summer activities for the kids. We are planning to start the adventure in April with a day camp in Omaha. Be looking for the activity date. Then we will have an activity in Lincoln in May.

We also have some two-day and four-day camps in various areas in Nebraska coming June through August. So, if you live out in the western and northern part

of Nebraska, we are bringing some camps your way.

We will be having things like horseback riding, canoeing, river rafting, archery, swimming, cooking and all kinds of other fun things.

So, be looking for emails coming your way.

We are looking for volunteers to help with events coming up like Yellow Ribbon and all these wonderful summer camps. If you would like to share your time with the youth please let me know. If you have any questions, please contact me at (402) 309-7338 or pamela.stemple@us.army.mil or Jessica at jessica.shottenkirk@us.army.mil.

We have a number of events coming up that I will need your help. I am also looking for Army National Guard teens ages 13-17 to start a teen group for our great state. If you are interested in sharing your experience with other teens and having a lot of fun in the process, let me know who you are and where you are.

I will be collecting your information and setting up some time to come out to your area to meet you and your Army friends. So, be looking for a note from me very soon. I will be in touch.

Army study: Patriotic, active kids suffer less stress during deployments

WASHINGTON (ARNEWS) — Adolescents who believe that America supports the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and that Soldiers are making a difference in the world are less likely to suffer from anxiety and stress when their parent deploys, according to research unveiled Jan. 28.

Army War College researcher Leonard Wong described his 2009 study during a media roundtable at the Pentagon. The study, which was supported by U.S. Army Forces Command, examined the effects of multiple deployments on military adolescents.

The research revealed that strong Army families and increased activity by children also reduced the level of stress, Wong said.

Wong and War College colleague Stephen Gerras conducted a survey of more than 2,000 Soldiers, 700 Army spouses and 550 Army adolescents. They further interviewed more than 100 Army children (ages 11-17) at eight Army installations across the country, asking them a variety of questions based on psychological scales.

Wong said when children were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "The American public supports the war," the results were significant.

"What we saw was not a steep relationship, but a significant relationship, that the more a child agrees with this statement, the lower their stress levels," Wong explained.

He also said their analysis revealed that adolescents, especially teenagers, who were active in sports and came from strong military families, produced significantly lower stress levels as well.

"If we had to pick the one influence that accounts for the most variant in a child's stress level, it is their participation in activities, specifically sports," Wong said. "(Sports) keeps them distracted, takes their mind off the deployment, keeps them busy," he added.

The complete Army study can be found on-line at: www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil.

Air Guard sponsoring teen summits this summer

By Carolann Wunderlin

California National Guard

MOFFETT FEDERAL AIRFIELD, Calif., (NGNEWS) — The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard have received funding for three AFR/ANG Teen Leadership Summits this year.

Guard members can support the program by registering their teens for a summit. Also, each camp needs adult leaders to chaperone the teens.

The AFR/ANG Teen Leadership Summits are open to all 14-18 year old dependent teens of current Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard members.

Applicants will be required to complete the 2010 AFR/ANG Teen Leadership Summit application for the session they wish to attend to include essay questions, Code of Conduct and transportation form.

The application deadline is April 16. Applications and instructions as well as applications for adult volunteers are located at www.georgia4h.org/AFRANGTeenSummit.

Here is more information on each summit:

Classic Summit, June 13-18, Wahsega 4-H Center, Dahlenega, Ga. Attendees will be flown into Atlanta-Hartsfield International Airport.

This summit will focus on devel-

oping an awareness of programs and services available to Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard dependents.

Activities include high/low ropes course, rock climbing, white water rafting, hiking, environmental education and leadership classes.

Survival Summit, July 20-25, Colorado Youth Programs, Boulder, Colo.

Teens must have attended a previous AFR/ANG Teen Leadership Summit to apply for this camp. Attendance is limited to 36 teens. Attendees will fly into the Denver International Airport.

This Summit begins at base camp where teens will have a day

to prepare for the expert-led three day, two night survival experience.

Adventure Summit, Aug. 10-15, Cheley Camps, Estes Park, Colo. Attendees will be flown into Denver International Airport.

In this beautiful and majestic setting, teens will have the opportunity to choose from daily activities such as Rocky Mountain hiking, horseback riding (western), colts (where campers learn what is involved in training horses) backpacking, mountain biking, technical climbing, archery and low ropes challenge course.

Omaha youth mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day by helping out military kids

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Dozens of Omaha children spent a day off from school, Jan. 18, participating in a "Building the Beloved Community" project designed to give encouragement to hundreds of Nebraska military kids affected by upcoming deployments.

The service project, conducted at the Turning Point Academy in Omaha, Neb., was designed to give select area youth the opportunity to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day by participating in a community service activity.

During the morning-long project, the Omaha children helped fill between 250-300 Operation Military Kids backpacks with a variety of toys, notepads and useful articles for Nebraska National Guard kids who will be affected by their parents' deployments later this year.

"It's a great project," said Pam Stemple, child and youth coordinator for the Nebraska Army National Guard whose husband, Col. Phil Stemple, will be leading one of those deployments when the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade mobilizes for duty in Iraq later this year. "I'm very excited. Most of the kids here don't have a relation to someone who is in the Nebraska Army National Guard, so it's really helping them learn about that."

According to Stemple, the Nebraska Na-



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Helping Out Military Kids: Haleigh Henry (left) and other kids pick out items to put in a backpack that will eventually land in the hands of a Nebraska military kid affected by this year's upcoming deployments. Henry was participating in a Martin Luther King Jr. Day community service project, Jan. 18, at the Turning Point Academy in Omaha, Neb.

tional Guard has been involved in a variety of different projects with the American Red Cross in Nebraska, so when local Red Cross officials approached them about participating in the Omaha activity, Nebraska Guard officials quickly accepted.

According to the King Center's Website,

Building the Beloved Community stems from a theme that the late-Reverend King used to speak about as part of his life-time goal of creating a community in which all citizens share in the wealth of the Earth and where conflicts "end with reconciliation of adversaries cooperating together in a spirit of friendship and goodwill."

"Today is not only a day of service," said Rita Dantzler, youth development coordinator for the American Red Cross in Omaha as she kicked off the event at the Turning Point Academy, "it's also a day of celebration... so I'm asking to you to get involved and get excited and get geared up for a wonderful day."

"You're not just our future, you're our today," Dantzler added. "And there are things that you can do to express yourselves, to have a voice in your own community to help build

that concept of the beloved community."

Along with helping fill backpacks, the Omaha children — all of whom were nominated to participate in the event — also signed letters for the Nebraska military kids while also participating in a number of games and activities designed to show them how important communities are to families affected by deployments.

In one activity Stemple gathered a group of children around a 10-foot square plastic tarp and then challenged them to keep a series of balls from falling to the floor.

As the activity progressed, Stemple then pulled child after child from the edge of the tarp — simulating family emergencies — until just two kids were holding an edge of the plastic sheet.

"We need the community," Stemple said repeatedly as it became harder and harder to keep the balls from falling to the floor. "Sometimes it gets tough on Mom or Dad or the family to keep everything together while their Soldier is gone, so we need the community to step in and help out."

Stemple said the game was designed as a way to physically demonstrate how difficult a deployment can be on a family and the ways that the students can help out.

"They learn that things fall apart sometimes when Moms or Dads are gone and it helps the kids realize that they can help in some way the kids of the deployed Soldiers."



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



New active duty dental programs bring several new referral requirements

By Sgt. 1st Class Tracey Eitel
State TRICARE Representative /
Health Benefits Advisor

Active duty service members have a new way to access dental care: the Active Duty Dental Program or ADDP. Administered by United Concordia, the dental program went into effect on Aug. 1.

The coverage includes two major components: Dental Treatment Facility (DTF)-Referred and Remote ADDP.

Active duty service members on continuous active duty orders for more than 30 days who live or work within 50 miles of a military dental treatment facility and who need private sector dental care that the DTF cannot provide are considered DTF-referred.

All non-remote active duty service members *must* receive a referral from their military DTF *prior* to receiving private sector dental care.

The United Concordia ADDP Website provides additional information on the steps an active duty service member needs to take *after* receiving the initial referral from their military DTF.

If a DTF refers the active duty service member to a civilian dentist for additional dental care, the active duty service member should receive an informational flyer and a referral request confirmation page from the DTF to take with them to their dental appointment.

The referral request confirmation page contains the appointment control number that was provided by United Concordia as well as the procedures the active duty service member will receive from the civilian dentist.

The DTF may also send X-rays with the person to the private sector dental appointment.

Those active duty service members on continuous active duty orders for more than 30 days who live and work more than 50 miles from a DTF are covered under the

Remote ADDP.

To initiate care, the remote active duty service member *must* submit an online appointment request form *prior* to scheduling private sector dental care. United Concordia will work directly with the remote active duty service member to make the appointment.

To coordinate routine dental care, the remote active duty service member must get an appointment control number (CAN) by completing the appointment request for. This form is located on the United Concordia ADDP Website at www.addp-ucci.com.

Remote active duty service members seeking specialty care, dental care costing more than \$500 per visit, or treatment plans over \$1,500, will need to get an authorization from United Concordia. United Concordia's network dentists will submit the authorization request for remote active duty service members as the time the initial exam is performed.

Authorization request determination can take up to five business days and *must* be approved before the requested procedures can be performed on the active duty service member.

For more information, check out the ADDP Website at www.addp-ucci.com or e-mail them at addpdcf@ucci.com.

For customer service and appointment scheduling: 1-866-984-2337 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., EST) (Saturday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST.)

Claims can be mailed to: United Concordia Companies, Inc; ADDP Claims, PO Box 69429, Harrisburg, PA, 17106-9429.

■ 'Gray Area' retiree TRICARE update

Currently the term 'Gray Area Retiree' refers to those service members who become eligible for TRICARE entitlements upon turning age 60. That is about to change.

Among several other actions that President Barack Obama took in signing the National Defense Authorization Act, he stipulated that he wanted retired military personnel to become eligible for their TRI-

Meals on the Quick

Quick-to-make meals courtesy of the Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office.

Shrimp Lemon Pepper Linguini

Ingredients

- 1 (8 ounce) package linguine pasta
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 6 cloves garlic, minced
 - 1/2 cup chicken broth
 - 1/4 cup white wine
 - 1 lemon, juiced
 - 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
 - salt to taste
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound fresh shrimp, peeled and deveined
 - 1/4 cup butter
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add linguine, and cook for 9 to 13 minutes or until al dente; drain.
2. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, and saute garlic about 1 minute. Mix in chicken broth, wine, lemon juice, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Reduce heat, and simmer until liquid is reduced by about 1/2.
3. Mix shrimp, butter, parsley, and basil into the saucepan. Cook 2 to 3 minutes, until shrimp is opaque. Stir in the cooked linguine, and continue cooking 2 minutes, until well coated.

Nutritional Information

Servings per recipe: 4.
Amount Per Serving: Calories: 484 | Total Fat: 18.4g | Cholesterol: 204mg
Nutritional Information: Shrimp Lemon Pepper Linguini; Servings Per Recipe: 4;
Amount Per Serving: Calories: 484; Total Fat: 18.4g; Cholesterol: 204mg; Sodium: 496mg;
Total Carbs: 47.6g; Dietary Fiber: 3.7g; Protein: 31.

Recipe by skini, courtesy of allrecipes.com

CARE entitlements without a waiting period prior to turning age 60.

The healthcare plan that is subject to roll out sometime in the mid-summer to early-fall timeframe would entitle retired military personnel with 20 'good years' of service while in the National Guard or Reserve to this benefit.

The "TRICARE for Retired Reserve" would be very similar to the TRS (TRICARE Reserve Select) program utilized by traditional Guard and Reserve members currently, with the exception of the cost share while enrolled in the TRS. 'Gray Area Retiree' personnel would have a 100 percent cost share.

Retirees must ensure that their DEERS information is current. Retirees also need to make sure that retiree information is current and updated in the DEERS system upon retirement.

One other stipulation with this soon-to-be program is that it mimics the current TRS healthcare program. The "Gray Area Retiree" *cannot* be eligible for any type of FEHB (Federal Employee Health Benefits) through their civilian employer. If the retiree is, the retiree has to purchase the FEHB available to them through their employer and will not be eligible for this TRICARE program once it is implemented.

Retired Guard officer working to support survivor families' needs

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Over the course of his Nebraska Army National Guard career, Randy Amundson has held quite a few leadership positions.

Few, however, have ever had the potential of such far-reaching impact that the recently retired Army Guard officer's new job has.

That's because in a sense, Amundson is now a guardian angel, helping families of fallen service members receive the continued support they need and deserve.

Amundson is the Survivor Outreach Service coordinator for Nebraska and the regional coordinator for seven other states. He is responsible for maintaining the link between the family of a fallen service member and the military once a casualty assistance officer completes his or her duties.

According to Amundson, the program was initially started by the Army approximately two years ago based upon a huge gap in support that the military of-

fers to survivors of fallen service members.

Essentially, when a service member dies, families are notified of the death by a notification team. After that, a casualty assistance officer is assigned to the survivors. The CAO is responsible for helping the families take care of their most immediate needs.

However, under the old system, once the CAO's duties were complete, families were essentially left to fend on their own.

"(A Department of Army task force) did an analysis and found that there is this huge hole where we're not taking care of survivor families... that the Army's covenant is not being taken care of," said Amundson.

"There's this huge hole of need that was identified."

Now, once a CAO's duties are complete, the SOS coordinator steps in to provide family with long-term support for as long as the families desire it.

The Army National Guard recently signed onto the program and has steadily been growing its

capabilities, said Amundson, one of the first three coordinators hired nationally in early August.

The Army Reserve is also establishing its own SOS program.

Since taking the position, Amundson said he's been busy scouring for names and addresses of Nebraska survivor families. He's quickly realized that it's a huge mission.

"It's kind of getting off the ground," said Amundson, who along with working with Guard families is also able to provide survivor support to survivor families of other services as well.

"I have built a data base from Nebraska Guard military files of survivors that we know of or have provided casualty officer functions for. I've also been working with the Gold Star Mothers organization and they have a list of their own."

Amundson's data base now contains the names of about 100 survivor spouses and parents who have Nebraska connections.

He has mailed letters to each of those people to let them know about the program and the differ-

ent types of support he can provide.

The feedback has been mixed, he said, adding that he's received responses from about one-third of the letters he's sent out, while one-third have been returned undeliverable and the remaining third simply haven't been responded to.

Ultimately, Amundson said, he hopes to continuously work with families by doing assessments of their needs and getting those that need help the support they deserve.

"Basically, to help continue to help them meet their needs, to – for lack of a better term – keep them connected with the military so that they can continue receiving the benefits that are due to them," said Amundson.

So far, Amundson has helped a number of families. In one case, he's helped the spouse of a fallen service member obtain an ID card for her child so the boy can continue receiving benefits.

He's also worked with that same spouse, who remarried after the death of her husband, to find lawyers to help with the paperwork allowing her new husband have

legal custody of her son.

Amundson has also helped family members still stricken with grief deal with a multitude of emotional and support issues.

He's also received letters back from survivor families who've reported that they're doing well and don't need any additional support. Amundson said that even in these cases, he will still be checking in with them periodically to offer support as their circumstances change.

Amundson said the biggest challenge is simply finding names and addresses for those survivor families he's been unable to reach thus far.

"I need to continue to find and reach out to the survivors," he said, adding that's particularly difficult in the cases of survivor families who have moved since they last met with their assigned casualty assistance officer.

"I need to find out where they've moved to so that I can make contact with them and help them."

For more information, contact Amundson at (402) 309-7939 or at randy.amundson@us.army.mil.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Major
James L. Williams III

Captain
Clayton W. Engelman
Christopher J. Pelchat
Shawn M. Robinson
Juan F. Vidal

First Lieutenant
Nathaniel C. Krciek

Chief Warrant Officer Four
Matthew C. Stewart

Chief Warrant Officer Three
Brent A. Brozovsky
Joseph M. Dolton
Michael T. Harrell

Chief Warrant Officer Two
Chad M. Bruce
Jake A. Edwards
Jennifer D. Fotinos
Carrie L. Hancock
Christopher A. Malin
Britt A. Moser

Sergeant Major
Mark W. Carlson

Master Sergeant
William C. Cary

Sergeant First Class
Jeramey Anderson
Lucas W. Mitchell

Staff Sergeant
Michael D. Belleci
Christy M. Bulman
Robert S. Hutt
Michael H. O'Brien

Sergeant
Nathan A. Dooley
Justin J. Eickmeier
Bo D. Fisher
Cody A. Graff
Nathan A. Higby
Kelly L. Kinzer
Kyle D. Mundorf
Jean M. Pieper
John M. Scholes
Kyle R. Schramm

Michael R. Stone
Justin P. Tramp
Andrew B. Wilkins

Specialist
Jacob W. Anderson
Rodney M. Andrews
Cameron J. Araujo
Trevor A. Baker
Trevor R. Bellows
Mariana G. Calderon
Andrew C. Dale
Nicholas J. Eisele
Mark P. Fischer
Shane M. Gouker
Jonathan D. Hawthorne
Caylun A. Hayes
Clarisa S. Hazen
Brock A. Helgerson
Jason L. Juranek
Andy J. Kallhoff
Phillip M. Kapsa
Anthony J. Keever
Taylor M. Kraft
Matthew C. Langan
Kody J. Marshall
David I. Matson
Jacob A. McCormack
Jared M. Metschke
Jacob R. Nelson
Melody R. Olson
Brooke M. Peters
Andrea E. Pieper
David W. Sautter
Caleb C. Schoneman
Thomas M. Shirey
Tony V. Steinhour
Crystal D. Voshell
Nathan J. Zwickl

Private First Class
Michelle L. Berry
Justin N. Budd
Mariana G. Calderon
Scott W. Chase
Colton J. Courter
Jeremy L. Dinges
Anthony J. Hill
Tyler J. Klabenes
Jacob M. Malcom
Justin M. McBride

Private Two
Brett M. Clark
Benjamin J. Dally
Garrett M. Palmersheim

Robert M. Reichert
Ricky T. Saunsoci
Eric J. Sutton

Air National Guard
Lieutenant Colonel
Elizabeth D. Curtis
Phillip L. Fields Jr.
William H. Melton

Major
Christopher M. Shannon

Captain
Marlene R. Marshall

First Lieutenant
Troy M. Martin

Senior Master Sergeant
Gregory L. Malina

Master Sergeant
Charles D. Aden
Gene L. Ernst

Technical Sergeant
Christopher Deaton
Amy L. Doele
Suzanne E. Glover
Andrew D. Munger
Michael T. Roth
Cassie R. Sabatka
Eric M. Shaw
Jason T. Whalen
Mark A. Young
Megan R. Zuver

Staff Sergeant
Ray R. Anthony
Gage T. Bowder
Sean F. Jimerson
Ashly L. Johnson
Jacob N. Lammers
Joshua B. McDonald
Robert J. Robinette
Jennifer K. Schmid
Diana E. Starbuck

Senior Airman
Rio M. Beranek
Kyle J. Eddy
Tyler J. Kleinschmit
Kurt H. McGhee
Katie J. Paden
Jarod M. Wozniak

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Legion of Merit
Col. Thomas E. Schuurmans

Meritorious Service Medal

Brig. Gen. David C. Petersen
Lt. Col. Byron L. Diamond
Lt. Col. George B. Harris
Lt. Col. Georgia K. Kroese
Lt. Col. Eric J. Teegerstrom
Maj. Thomas R. Mortimer III
Maj. Steven P. Petersen
Master Sgt. David A. Davis
Sgt. Maj. Wilfred J. Uhing
Master Sgt. Gordon K. Harrod
Sgt. 1st Class Bernard P. Andrijeski
Sgt. 1st Class Robert W. Jenkins
Staff Sgt. Christina D. Howe

Army Commendation Medal

Capt. Jeffrey C. Boyden
Capt. Marc D. Anderson
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Douglas A. Shively
1st Sgt. Jonathan B. Brown
Sgt. 1st Class Chad A. Couillard
Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan C. Panipinto
Staff Sgt. Joshua C. Ames
Staff Sgt. Joseph J. Dunlap
Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Marcellio
Staff Sgt. Jason E. Roberts
Sgt. Patti S. Hoegerl
Sgt. Michael L. Noyes
Spc. Brandi R. Burke

Army Achievement Medal

Capt. Michael Ertz
1st Lt. Guinio W. Volpone
2nd Lt. Rob R. Foxworthy
Cadet Erin Hanson
Cadet Justin W. Nickerson
Sgt. 1st Class Nichole D. Kordik
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn M. Kusek
Sgt. 1st Class Chad A. Schroetlin
Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell S. Taylor
Sgt. 1st Class Barry D. Urtel

Staff Sgt. Jeramey Anderson
Staff Sgt. Steven R. Brewer
Staff Sgt. Nicholas A. Driggs
Staff Sgt. Brenda B. Erickson
Staff Sgt. Randy A. Garver
Staff Sgt. Kelli J. Hatzenbuehler
Staff Sgt. Christopher P. Herndon
Staff Sgt. Douglas L. Ringer
Staff Sgt. Maren C. Stewart
Staff Sgt. Ryan E. Thompson
Staff Sgt. Jose R. Torres-Garcia
Staff Sgt. Jake T. Whitaker
Sgt. Joseph R. Beckman
Sgt. Michael G. Cordes
Sgt. Jason B. Douglas
Sgt. Brenton J. Duryea
Sgt. Dylan S. Eckery
Sgt. William J. Frederic
Sgt. Brian T. Griess
Sgt. Tyler M. Miles
Sgt. Justin W. Mueller
Sgt. Michael L. Noyes
Sgt. Dustin A. Seidler
Sgt. Connie L. Smith
Sgt. Joseph L. Strack
Sgt. Ryan D. Wangler
Spc. Brock A. Ackerman
Spc. Joshua R. Bland
Spc. Joshua L. Bollman
Spc. Bo D. Fisher
Spc. Michael A. Hansen
Spc. Jeffrey A. Kane
Spc. Jason L. Kloeppe
Spc. Matthew R. Lamb
Spc. Jason B. Libal
Spc. Casey J. Lindsay
Spc. Christopher Lohman
Spc. Christopher S. Mitchell
Spc. Robert F. Montag III
Spc. Caleb G. Morehead
Spc. Shawn P. Oneil
Spc. Jonathan D. Paisley
Spc. Jason C. Papke
Spc. Gary A. Redden
Spc. Aaron P. Regan

Spc. Shannan J. Theesen
Spc. Derek S. Westring
Pfc. Chad A. Kingham
Pfc. Juan P. Mendez
Pfc. Godofredis Rivera
Pvt. Aamee N. Johnson

Nebraska National Guard

Commendation Medal
Capt. Abraham D. Neth
Capt. Charles D. McWilliams
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie H. Yoder
Sgt. 1st Class Ronald P. Harris
Staff Sgt. Angela S. Fuehrer
Spc. Nathan T. Nebelsick

Nebraska National Guard

Individual Achievement Medal
Capt. Raymond Phillips
Capt. Adam P. Shaw
1st Lt. Eric J. Sattelberg
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Randall D. Schlensig
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Jamison
Sgt. 1st Class John B. Jurgensen
Sgt. 1st Class Scott R. Stanley
Sgt. 1st Class David E. Strohhenn
Staff Sgt. Shawn C. Madden
Staff Sgt. Matthew L. Starkey
Sgt. Christopher M. Brammer
Sgt. Nathaniel L. Chitwood
Sgt. Owen P. Kramer
Sgt. Timothy N. McCaslin
Sgt. Wardell Newsome III
Sgt. Tori L. Towne
Spc. Sean K. Chastain
Spc. Joshua D. Cowsky
Spc. Glenn J. Cox
Spc. Zachary L. Homes
Spc. Christopher T. Martin
Spc. Matthew D. Morrison
Spc. Carlos A. Romoromo
Spc. Brennan A. Rutt
Pvt. Colton J. Stepp
Pvt. Nathan R. Graber

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Col. Michael J. Johnson
Master Sgt. Gordon K. Harrod
Sgt. 1st Class Robert W. Jenkins
Sgt. 1st Class Timothy J. Mohatt
Spc. Catherine A. Czerwinski
Spc. Amber A. McCrory

Air National Guard

Lt. Col. Wanda L. Carter
Chief Master Sgt. Bradley R. Novak
Senior Master Sgt. James J. Koelzer
Tech. Sgt. John A. Frohner

TAPS

Brig. Gen. (Neb.) Steven "Bill" Rein
Master Sgt. Rebecca S. Hastings

Shorttakes

Schuermans honored during January retirement program

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

Colonel Tom Schuurmans was honored by friends and family, Jan. 16, at a retirement celebration at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Lincoln, Neb., after serving more than 30 years in the military.

Schuermans, a native of Tyndall, S.D., recently retired from the Nebraska Army National Guard after serving as the organization's chief of staff for the past three years. He is the youngest son of Maxine and the late Virgil Schuurmans from Tyndall, S.D.

"It has been an honor to serve with the best young men and women in the country. Given the chance I would do it all over again," Schuurmans said during the retirement program.

"In my heart I'm still the young captain flying fast without concern... a career goes by quickly," he added.

Schuermans was born in Tyndall, S.D., and graduated from Tyndall-Tabor High School in 1979. He enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard in March 1979 as a combat engineer assigned to Company D, 153rd Engineer Battalion.

Schuermans was commissioned as a second lieutenant on July 26, 1981, at the South Dakota Military Academy and later transferred to the Nebraska Army National Guard in July 1983.

He served in Desert Storm with the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) as their flight operations officer. He also commanded the unit several years later.



Photo by David Nore

Farewell To The Chief: (From left) Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general, shakes retired Brig. Gen. (Neb.) Tom Schuurmans' hand shortly after presenting him with the Legion of Merit, Jan. 16 in Lincoln, Neb. Schuurmans served as the Nebraska National Guard's director of the joint staff.

Prior to assuming duties as chief of staff in 2006, Schuurmans served in a variety of leadership positions including medical recruiter, state training specialist, marksmanship coordinator, operations and training officer, and executive officer of the Lincoln, Neb., -based 92nd Troop Command. He also served as a supervisory aircraft instructor pilot, director of Army aviation and safety command in the Army Aviation Support Facility, and deputy chief of staff for operations.

More recently Schuurmans commanded the 1st Infantry Brigade (Embedded Training Team), and the Regional Corps Advisory Group of the 203rd Corps supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in

Afghanistan.

Schuermans has earned Master Army Aviator Wings, the Combat Medical Badge and the Combat Action Badge.

His other military awards include two Bronze stars, the Legion of Merit, four Meritorious Service Medals, Air Medal and numerous other military awards.

During the Jan. 16 retirement program Schuurmans was promoted to the rank of brigadier general (Nebraska) by Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general.

Schuermans and his wife Beth have two children, Kaitlin and Race. They currently reside in Lincoln, Neb.

Late Nebraska Army Guard chief of staff honored in February

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A former Nebraska Army National Guard chief of staff was buried with full military honors, Feb. 4, after succumbing to a lengthy battle with cancer.

Brig. Gen. (Neb.) William "Steve" Rein, 60, died Jan. 29 in Lincoln, Neb. He served as the Nebraska Army National Guard chief of staff from July 2004 until his retirement from the Nebraska National Guard in May 2006.



Rein

Rein, who served in uniform for 34 years, was remembered as a dedicated husband, father, grandfather and Soldier who loved sports and friendships.

"Brig. Gen. Steve Rein was a great military leader and considered a friend by most of those he led," said long-time friend and fellow Nebraska Army Guard officer Col. Doug Ladd, who was asked by the Rein family to speak at the funeral. "He didn't talk down to you and he didn't ask of you anything he wasn't willing to do himself. He mentored a lot of military officers during his career; it was just who he was - there to guide and develop those who were receptive to his assistance."

Rein was born on June 13, 1949,

in Scottsbluff, Neb. He graduated from Scottsbluff Senior High School in 1967 and received a bachelors of Science degree in Agricultural Engineering and a masters of Science degree in Biosystems Engineering both from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a masters of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.

Rein enlisted in the Nebraska National Guard in 1972. Following his commissioning, he was assigned to the 1-168th Field Artillery from 1976-1987, serving as a forward observer, fire support team chief, target acquisition platoon leader, battery commander for two batteries and battalion logistics officer.

He became a full-time National Guardsman in 1987 and served as the logistics officer for the 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized); recruiting and induction officer, State Area Command; executive officer, 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized); commander of the 1-168th Quartermaster Petroleum and Supply Battalion; and commander 209th Regimental Training Institute.

Prior to being named chief of staff, Rein served as Joint Director of Personnel for the Joint Forces Headquarters.

Rein is survived by his wife Nancy, son Eric, daughter and son-in-law Heather and Dennis Leschinsky, grandchildren Shelby, Abbie, Brittany, Paul and Erica, father William Rein and other family members.

New leaders, missions

2010 brings changes, challenges

Well, it has certainly been a busy couple of months since the December issue. Several significant events have occurred that I would like to highlight. First is the selection of Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch as the ninth command sergeant major for the entire Army National Guard.

As you know, Command Sergeant Major Burch has always been on the leading edge of innovative ideas and processes that directly translate into improved quality of life and service for our Soldiers and Airmen. Command Sergeant Major Burch's initiatives to streamline our mobilization and demobilization processes, improve our awards programs, family programs and enlisted promotion systems have made us a better organization and improved the service experience for all.

I first came to know Command Sergeant Major Burch during our service together in 2-134th Infantry Battalion in the late 1980s. Since that time I have been the beneficiary of his wise counsel and mentorship.

Like the true professional non-commissioned officer he is, that counsel and mentorship extended to all of our enlisted, NCOs, and officers.

His keen ability to ascertain the effects of our decisions on our enlisted Soldiers, Airmen and families is particularly noteworthy. Command Sergeant Major Burch partnered with Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage to advocate for Soldier and Airmen issues and we are a

better organization for it.

I know I speak for all of us in wishing Command Sergeant Major Burch and his wife Sandy the best of luck in this next important step in their service to our nation.

A second significant event was selecting a replacement for the state command sergeant major.

A key aspect of leadership is to prepare others to replace you. Fortunately, and again in large part due to the development and mentorship focus of Command Sergeant Major Burch, I had a tremendous group of command sergeants major to consider, each representing the professional expertise, experience and values of our professional NCO Corps.

I would like to share a few thoughts with you on our new state command sergeant major.

Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela is the consummate senior noncommissioned officer. He brings a depth and breadth of experience that is unmatched. He has served in NCO leadership positions throughout his career at all levels of command including service supporting units across the state as a first sergeant, battalion command sergeant major and brigade command sergeant major.

Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela has significant deployment and operational experience in both our state and federal mission. Notably he has served in several

The Adjutant General Brigadier General Judd Lyons



I am very impressed with the team approach to meeting the demands placed on us. We will continue our Peer Support Program and reach out to veterans service organizations and other partners across the state to keep our focus on sustaining each other, our families and employers.'

emergency response missions including his service as the command sergeant major for the Nebraska National Guard task force that deployed in support of the Hurricane Gustav relief operations in 2008.

Additionally Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela's federal deployment experiences in Bosnia and Iraq provides him valuable insight into the challenges our traditional service members, their

families and employers face with the increased operational tempo and reliance on the National Guard. He has successfully balanced a civilian and National Guard career and will bring that experience to bear as our state command

sergeant major.

Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela will be an integral part of the command team of the Nebraska National Guard. He will provide counsel to ensure that decisions contemplated consider effects on our entire force, both full-time and traditional members, as well as our families and employers.

He will focus on Soldier and Airman readiness and welfare, efficient utilization of resources, continued engagement in our communities to ensure the Nebraska National Guard's unique aspect of service to our state and nation is known and opportunities to serve with us are realized. He will work to continue our efforts to be reflective of the communities we serve and that our service members have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their abilities.

Please join me in welcoming Command Sergeant Major Valenzuela, his spouse Faye and his entire family to the command team.

A third significant event happened as we received word of our 155th Air Refueling Wing earning their 10th Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. This is an historic achievement for an Air National

Guard unit and is truly a credit to the men and women of the 155th.

The road ahead is rich with challenges and opportunities. We have faced winter storms together through the close relationship between our Emergency Management Agency and our units. We are monitoring the potential for flooding very closely and will respond in fine fashion if required.

Our Joint Force Headquarters staff, 92nd Troop Command and several of its subordinate organizations are deeply engaged in supporting pre-mobilization training support for the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, 192nd Military Police Detachment, 623rd Engineer Company, 402nd Military Police Battalion, and 1-376th Aviation Bn.

We all look forward to the return of our 1195th Transportation Company later this spring as well.

I am very impressed with the team approach to meeting the demands placed on us. We will continue our Peer Support Program and reach out to veterans service organizations and other partners across the state to keep our focus on sustaining each other, our families and employers.

We are going to continue to deploy our unique story of service to state and nation. There is so much to be proud of...share your personal story of service with someone you know, preferably while proudly wearing your uniform...in a classroom or community event would be even better.

As always, I am honored to support you as adjutant general.

Street Talk

"How do you keep in good physical shape during the winter months?"

Nebraska's dedicated National Guardsmen best state has to offer

Well, it's over. After 31 years of service in uniform to our great state and nation, it's time to grow up and decide what's next. Not an easy decision as it will be hard to replace

Another Voice

Brig. Gen. (Neb.) (Ret.)

Tom Schuurmans



must prepare our future leaders better than we ever have before.

Currently there are numerous examples of our fellow Nebraskans doing great things for our Army and Air Force outside the boundaries

everything that I have enjoyed so much for so long.

When I first joined the Nebraska National Guard as a lieutenant, I was told that if I didn't screw up too bad I might make it to major. The general feeling among Army commissioned officer pilots at the time was after captain (maybe major) you would revert to warrant officer and keep flying.

I believed this at the time because I was suffering from Air Guard Syndrome and didn't think that the Guard existed beyond the boundary of the Air National Guard base.

Things were different at the start of the 1980s, but boy was I wrong!

What I found outside aviation was a world of significant challenges much greater than just driving helicopters. It may not have been as much fun, but much more challenging and much more rewarding. It sparked an interest in leadership, knowledge and training at a level I had not experienced before.

This interest would drive me throughout the rest of my career.

I discovered that this organization attracted some of the most amazing people to be members. I believe that we draw a cross-section of all different types of people in Nebraska, but the common denominator is a desire to serve.

Everyone is motivated differently, but there are commonalities as to why they join and why they stay in our Guard.

People initially join for many reasons; patriotism, college benefits, money, retirement, etc. But I believe the primary reason they stay is because of the people they get to serve with, the best Nebraska has to offer.

No one is forced to join or forced to stay, so it speaks loudly when during war, when deployment is all but assured for everyone joining, we were able to grow the Army Guard by over 600 Soldiers from 2006-09 and sustain the Air Guard at 100 percent.

This is truly a professional organization that the best and brightest of this state want to be part of. Being able to impact this recruiting and retention effort is one achievement I'm very proud of.

At the end of the day it is all about people; that is what makes this organization successful.

While quantity is important, quality is paramount. One of the most important duties leaders have is to develop the leaders of tomorrow, to recognize who possesses the skills to make our organization successful. It is very important to coach and mentor these individuals to ensure they compete for the right training and challenging assignments to prepare them for future increases in responsibility.

There are more opportunities today than ever before for our Soldiers to serve in positions of incredible responsibility across the nation and around the world.

To be competitive at this level we

of our state. I believe this is proof positive that we can continue to produce leaders that will have strategic impact on our Armed Forces.

I've had the opportunity to participate in promotion/selection boards in other states as well as National Guard Bureau and witness firsthand that we do it as good as the best out there, better than most.

Key elements are education, assignments, fitness and selfless service.

To stay ahead of your competition, stay ahead on both military and civilian education. Do more than what is required, joint education/qualification is the next discriminator. I would recommend never taking more than a year off from some sort of formal education (military or civilian.)

Always seek the challenging assignments; they stand out. Be confident, but work hard. Stay fit, look the part and never forget that this service is not just about you the individual, but about something bigger than all of us.

It has been an honor to serve with the best young men and women in the country. Given the chance I would do it all over again.

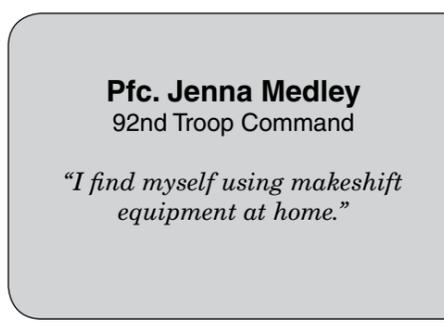
Would I do some things different if given that chance? Absolutely! But I can't imagine a better way to spend 31 years.

People make or break an organization. The people is what I'll miss the most because I'm convinced we have some of the best right here.



**Airman 1st Class
Marty Oborny**
155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

"The cold weather really puts a damper on wanting to stay in shape. So, snow shoveling helps me keep up with it."



Maj. Charles Blankman
Nebraska Medical Detachment

"I get up early and go to the gym."



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On The Clock: Grant Hewitt, Papillion, Neb., takes a shot at beating the top registered time on the Nebraska Army National Guard's new "Pit Crew Challenge" that was unveiled to the public, Jan. 21-24, during the Omaha Car Show held at the Qwest Center. Timing Hewitt is Staff Sgt. Clinton Paul, a member of the 267th Maintenance Company who works frequently with Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters.

■New Nebraska Army Guard recruiting simulator lets people experience thrills of working on pit row

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

There's something about being around a NASCAR race car that gets the adrenaline pumping, the heart pounding, the sweat pouring.

And while hundreds of thousands of fans attend NASCAR races around the country every year, only a very select few ever get to experience what it's like to serve on the pit crew of a NASCAR racing team, rushing out into the heat of the race to service a rumbling car as the driver waits impatiently to get back onto the track.

And, as every NASCAR fan knows, every second counts. The difference between winning and losing can often come down to the skills and speed of the pit crews.

Beginning this year, Nebraskans will begin to get a little taste of what it's like to be part of a pit crew, thanks to a new Nebraska Army National Guard "Pit Crew Challenge" simulator that was unveiled during the Omaha Car Show, Jan. 21-24, at the Qwest Center. Featuring the back quarter of the National Guard's "Car 88" driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr., the Pit Crew Challenge allows everyday people the opportunity to see how fast they can change a NASCAR tire.

According to Master Sgt. Paul Kimble, a recruiting and retention sergeant with the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command, the simulator was obtained recently by Nebraska recruiters, who pooled their "Mission Zone" points together in order to bring the simulator to Nebraska. He said Guard recruiting officials then decided to unveil the simulator at this year's car show before taking it across the state to a wide variety of different activities.

"This just seemed like the perfect venue to show it off," said Kimble, Jan. 22, as he stood in the Qwest Center watching as a pair of Omaha college students attempted to beat each other's time. "It's definitely an attention-grabber."

That it was. Along with the NASCAR shell, the simulator features a digital clock read-out and an electrically-powered impact wrench. Challengers, who are equipped with safety goggles and hearing protection, must successfully loosen each of the simulator's five lug nuts, pull the tire outward approximately two feet and rotate it before placing it back onto the

Pit Crew Challenge



New Simulator: The Nebraska Army National Guard's "Pit Crew Challenge" features a mock-up of the National Guard's "Car 88," a digital timer and equipment designed to test a person's ability to change a tire quickly.

wheel and tightening the lug nuts once again.

For many first-time challengers, it's a lot more difficult than it sounds.

Staff Sgt. Clinton R. Paul is a state mobile event team sergeant and a motor pool sergeant assigned to the Nebraska Army Guard's 267th Support Maintenance Company. During the Qwest Center show, he was also one of several Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers responsible for timing competitors as they attempted to break the 12-second record set by a U.S. Army recruiter earlier in the show.

The trick to doing well? "Not taking your finger off when you go from one lug nut to another," he said. "Just keep (the impact wrench) going, but nice and smooth."

Squatting down in front of the car, a person quickly forgets that it's just a simulation. Palms begin to slicken with sweat. Pulse rates quicken. Nerves become jittery.

And then there's the growing crowd of



National Guard Items: Those people attending the Omaha Car who successfully completed the "Pit Crew Challenge" were able to pick from a number of Guard-themed items.

people, who often stop to watch the action as soon as the impact wrench makes its first high-pitched squealing sound, which adds to the sense of stress.

Grant Hewitt, Papillion, was one of the competitors who stopped by to give the simulator a try. He came away from the challenge after registering a score in the mid 40-second range.

"It looks easy on TV, but it's not in real life," he said. "There are a few tricks that seem to speed the time up, but

you just have to get used to working the gun." "I don't know, it just seems like practice makes perfect," he added before moving off to find a friend who had traveled to the Qwest Center with him.

A few minutes later he was back, his friend in tow, ready to try his luck again while challenging his buddy to beat his time.

After razzing Hewitt about his time, Sam Nocita, also from Papillion, quickly found out how difficult it is to change a NASCAR tire when dozens of people are watching from

"Once that impact wrench starts, it kind of flocks the crowd around and it helps increase the potential of finding a recruit for the National Guard." — Staff Sgt. Clinton Paul

behind and a Guard recruiter is standing nearby with a stopwatch.

"It was fun. It was good," said Nocita after also registering a first-time try in the mid 40-second range. "I didn't know what to expect, so you have to kind of adjust what you are looking for and what you were trying to do as you were doing it. But once you got a feel for the gun and how everything comes off, it was good."

Hewitt agreed after cutting more than 10 seconds off his original time during his second try.

"You get into a groove and I was having fun with it even though I wasn't doing a great job," Hewitt said. "It was still entertaining for me. It gives me a new appreciation for it."

According to Pfc. Amanda Schlund, state marketing assistant, probably the biggest benefit of the new simulator is the noise it generates when a person is competing.

"Basically, when people hear the noise, it attracts a crowd because they want to know what that noise is," said Schlund, who also was helping run people through the challenge.

She said the simulator attracts a diverse crowd. Still, there were some similarities.

"A lot of it is (made up) of the younger crowd, probably around 16 to 24," she said. "They always want to try and beat their friends."

Paul agreed. "A lot of college students who are doing technical schools or learning maintenance in college," he said. "We're seeing a lot of those guys that want to take the Pit Crew Challenge."

Once a person tackles the challenge, they then are able to select a prize from a table of National Guard-themed items like basketballs, t-shirts, 'Car 88' baseball hats, trailer hitches and duffle bags. While a person is looking through the prizes, Nebraska Army Guard recruiters talk to them more about the National Guard, its benefits and the training joining the Guard can offer.

Paul said the Pit Crew Challenge was proving to be a great way to strike up a conversation with a potential recruit.

"I think this is a great value to the Guard. It draws people in, especially at an auto show," he said.

"Once that impact wrench starts, it kind of flocks the crowd around and it helps increase the potential of finding a recruit for the National Guard."