

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Historic Move Planned

Nebraska National Guard relocating state museum to Seward armory

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard's museum will soon have a new home in the state's "4th of July City."

During a Feb. 10 news conference attended by approximately 40 members of the local Seward, Neb., community, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac and Seward Mayor Josh Eickmeyer announced that the Nebraska Army National Guard's armory in Seward will become the home of the Nebraska National Guard's museum. The current museum, which has been housed in the State Arsenal building on the old Nebraska State Fair Grounds since the late 1970s, is being vacated to make way for the University of Nebraska's Innovation Campus, which is currently underway.

According to Bohac, the museum, which has essentially been closed since the State Fair moved to Grand Island in 2010, is a valuable tool in building and maintaining awareness of



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Museum's New Home: The Nebraska Army National Guard's armory in Seward, Neb., which was built in 1956, will soon become the home of the Nebraska National Guard's museum, which is moving from the old State Fair Grounds in Lincoln, Neb.

the Nebraska National Guard and its important state and federal missions.

"We consider the museum a valuable piece and a valuable way for us to be able to tell our story... a story that began here in Nebraska as a territorial militia in the 1850s and continues today with Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen continuing to play significant roles in our ability to respond to state and Homeland Defense emergencies, as well as contributing to our nation's defense," said Bohac.

"The museum is going to help us conduct significant community

outreach activities as we reintroduce ourselves to our neighbors and communities after more than a decade of war," he added. "So, we're excited to come here."

According to Col. Byron Diamond, Nebraska Army National Guard state logistics officer who also serves as the vice president of the Nebraska National Guard Historical Association, a non-profit group that manages the museum's activities, the move to Seward will actually take place in several phases beginning in March.

See MUSEUM on 4.

Fago, Dahlman tapped for senior Nebraska National Guard posts

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Two long-time Nebraska National Guard officers have assumed senior roles within the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard.

Brig. Gen. Jon Fago has assumed the role of the assistant adjutant general, Air, for the Nebraska Air National Guard while Brig. Gen. Richard Dahlman is the new assistant adjutant general, Army, for the Nebraska Army National Guard. Dahlman additionally assumed full-time duties as the deputy adjutant general for the Nebraska Military Department, which includes both the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Both officers were selected for their posts by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general.

According to Bohac, both officers have served admirably throughout their careers and will bring numerous skills to their new positions.

"Brigadier General Fago was a natural selection for the position of assistant adjutant general of the Nebraska Air National Guard," said Bohac. "His experience as the chief of staff, Nebraska Joint Force Headquarters, and his recent dual-hat tour as the Air National Guard assistant to the director of



Fago



Dahlman

Operations at Air Mobility Command and with United States Strategic Command as an airborne

See LEADERSHIP on 6.

Horses, military: A family affair

By Staff Sgt. Mary Thach
Staff Writer

Dirt flies, cheers and whistles echo, and the announcer's voice rings throughout the arena.

She can't eat, she can't sit still. She can't even think. All she can do is shake in her saddle as she feels the pounding of her heart and the steady deep breathing of the 1,500-pound horse beneath her. She waits for the announcer to call her name.

"You can do this, you've got this," she whispers to herself as she tightens her grip on the reins and pushes her cowboy hat down hard on her head. The announcer calls her name and the unfamiliar steed lunges forward. The pair glides around barrels strategically placed in the arena as fast as lightning. After her run was over, she knew the ride went well, but was it enough to win?

Staff Sgt. Abby Ford, a Lewellen, Neb., native and a member of the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron, in Lincoln, Neb., grew up with her mother and step-father riding horses. Ford even rode horses while her mother was pregnant with her, but riding horses goes back generations.

Her grandmother, June Holeman, a legendary 70-year-old barrel racer, was raised on a ranch 20 miles east of Broken Bow, Neb., and rode a horse to and from



Courtesy Photo

Full Tilt: Staff Sgt. Abby Ford competes during a recent barrel race. Ford, a logistician with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, grew up riding horses and recently won a national barrel racing championship at the Professional Armed Forces Rodeo Association's World Finals, Nov. 30 - Dec. 1, in Midland, Texas.

school every day. She grew up competing in horse shows and to this day, competes in more than 60 barrel races annually. She passed the tradition of competitive horse-

See FORD on 14.

National Guard Bureau chief says Guard readiness higher than ever

By Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
American Forces Press Service

The chief of the National Guard Bureau discussed a myriad of topics with journalists, Jan. 9, emphasizing that the Guard is now trained and equipped at a level higher than he's seen in nearly half a decade.

Army Gen. Frank J. Grass touched on the Guard's future, its homeland mission, the Army and Air Force's role within their federal mission and enduring partnerships abroad.

"For 377 years now, we've been rolling out of the gates of our armories whenever the governors call, in some cases even before the governor's call," he said.

"Just in the last 16 months since I've been here, Hurricane Sandy was the first event," Grass said. "Twelve thousand Guardsmen rolled out of the gate, out of 22 states total."

Guardsmen from other states, he said, seamlessly rolled in to assist New York, New Jersey and West Virginia during snow events.

"And that is who your Guard is, how it's been always been," he said. "And again, we

don't want to break that."

Grass said he's asked all the time about the National Guard's federal mission - why does the National Guard need fighter jets, tanks and helicopters? He said his response is they don't always need tanks, Apaches and fighter jets, but the National Guard needs whatever the Army and Air Force need in their reserve.

"Our first mission—and our two missions are equal—is our mission to support the federal reserve of... the United States Air Force and the United States Army," he said.

"So however the Army looks or however the Air Force looks, we've got to be interchangeable," Grass said. "We'll never be identical to them. We're not going to be and not try to be."

They will never be identical to the Guard either, he said, because of that homeland mission where "we roll out the gate."

Grass said the bureau has to be complementary to each service so that when one needs an additional capability, the National Guard is ready to move. That means being similarly organized, trained and equipped.

"I can honestly tell you today, our readi-

See GRASS on 5.



Grass

Inside



Museum... not the only history moving

See story and photos on 3.



Husker cheerleader applying efforts to being Guard Soldier

See story and photos on 13.

Index

- News Briefs 2
- Family News 10
- We Salute 11
- Editorials 12
- Sports 13-14

NEWS DIGEST

■ Defense Secretary to appoint senior general to head ethical behavior strengthening initiative

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel recently announced his intention to appoint a senior general officer to oversee the effort to strengthen ethical behavior in the Defense Department.

“Competence and character are not mutually exclusive,” the secretary told reporters at a Feb. 7 Pentagon news conference. “They are woven together – they must be. And an uncompromising culture of accountability must exist at every level of command.”

Hagel promised to move quickly to assign to his senior staff a general officer who will report directly to him on issues related to ethics, character and leadership and will work directly with service secretaries and the service chiefs. “This officer will coordinate the actions of our services on this issue, work every day with our services, and we will meet weekly so I can receive reports from DoD senior leadership... on the progress we are making,” he said.

The secretary said the effort will be an “absolute top priority” for the department.

Hagel said Americans are grateful for all the men and women who serve the nation with honor and diligence. “I’m proud to serve with them,” he said. “They have earned the respect and admiration of the American people and our allies and partners all over the world.”

The secretary meets weekly with the service secretaries, and the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the last meeting they discussed the problem, which has included instances of cheating on proficiency exams by both Air Force officers charged with overseeing long range nuclear missiles, as well as Navy personnel at a nuclear reactor training unit. “We are going to continue to address it and we are going to fix it,” Hagel stated.

“Ethics and character are absolute values that we cannot take for granted,” he said. “They must be constantly reinforced. It is the responsibility of all of us who ask for the trust and confidence of the American people to assure these values are imbued in all our people and we all live up to them. Ethics and character are the foundation of an institution and a society. They must be constantly emphasized at every level of command and in training, curriculum and all phases of DoD, in both the officers and enlisted corps.”

■ VA launches online tool to calculate Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, help choose schools

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Veterans Affairs Department recently launched a new online tool to make it easier for veterans, service members and family members to calculate their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and learn more about VA’s approved colleges, universities and other education and training programs across the country.

“We are pleased that Post-9/11 veterans are taking advantage of this significant benefit program,” said Allison A. Hickey, un-

dersecretary of veterans affairs for benefits. “The new GI Bill Comparison Tool will help future beneficiaries as they make decisions about what education or training program best fits their needs.”

The GI Bill Comparison Tool provides key information about college affordability and brings together information from more than 17 different online sources and three federal agencies, including the number of students receiving VA education benefits at each school. It is one item in a series of resources VA is launching in response to President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13607, which directs agencies to implement and promote “Principles of Excellence” for education institutions that interact with veterans, service members and their families, and to ensure beneficiaries have the information they need to make educated choices about VA education benefits and approved programs, VA officials said.

Recently, VA also instituted a GI Bill online complaint system, designed to collect feedback from veterans, service members and their families who are experiencing problems with educational institutions receiving funding from federal military and veterans educational benefits programs, including benefits programs provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Defense Department’s military tuition assistance program.

The executive order, signed April 27, 2012, directs federal agencies to provide meaningful cost and quality information on schools, prevent deceptive recruiting practices and provide high-quality academic and student support services.

VA works closely with partner institutions to ensure the GI Bill beneficiaries’ needs are met, officials said, noting that more than 5,000 education institutions have agreed to the Principles of Excellence.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a comprehensive education benefit created by Congress in 2008. In general, veterans and service members who have served on active duty for 90 or more days since Sept. 10, 2001, are eligible. Since 2009, VA has distributed more than \$30 billion in the form of tuition and other education-related payments to more than 1 million veterans, service members and their families, as well as to the universities, colleges and trade schools they attend.

■ MilitaryOneSource once again offering free tax service

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – If it hasn’t arrived yet, your 2013 W-2 wage and tax statement likely is on its way, and with it the countdown toward the April 15 tax filing deadline.

As preparations begin for the upcoming tax season, military families are being offered a free service to ensure they can meet that deadline from anywhere they may be stationed around the world.

MilitaryOneSource, partnering with H&R Block, is offering all active duty,

Guard and reserve forces help in preparing their taxes and in filing their federal and state returns, in addition to the variety of



Photo by Josh Cowan

Quite a View: Charles Angus, a factory maintenance mechanic from Racine, Wisc., climbs to the top of the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters’ 80-foot-tall flagpole, Feb. 1, to repair a truck cover that had been damaged in a recent windstorm.

Whatever you do, don’t look down

The few people who trekked out the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., on Feb. 1 were treated to a unique sight.

Charles Angus, a factory maintenance mechanic from Racine, Wisc., who climbs and repairs flagpoles as a side job, climbed to the top of the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters’ 80-foot-tall flagpole and repaired a truck cover that had been damaged in a recent windstorm.

According to Josh Cowan a Nebraska Military Department facilities construction manager, Angus has been climbing flag poles for more than 40 years in 22 states. Cowan said the Feb. 1 repair took about an hour and fifteen minutes to complete. That’s pretty remarkable considering that the temperatures were hovering in the mid-20s, with a strong north wind causing difficult wind chills.

Cowan said after the job was done, Angus told him the three screws that hold the truck cover were one-quarter-inch Phillips-headed that had been installed in the factory. When the wind slammed through the air base, those screws failed.

So Angus replaced them with three hex-head steel bolts with blue locktites, which will take care of the problem of future failure risks, while also giving building managers the ability to still be able remove the truck head if they ever need to.

“One hour and 15 minutes later, the pole was better than new,” said Cowan.

other financial planning services it already provides free of charge.

“No matter where you are, when you call 800-342-9647 or go to (the MilitaryOneSource website), you can access the programs and services,” Tony Jackson, a military community and family policy analyst for the service told American Forces Press Service.

The program is designed to address the unique tax requirements and issues affecting military personnel and their families, Jackson said.

With many still likely dealing with holiday credit card bills, the April tax deadline may seem far off. But with many military families having to file multiple state tax returns in addition to federal taxes, beginning the work now on gathering tax-related documents can prevent headaches later.

“Now is the time to prepare, to gather your documents and your questions,”

Jackson said, “and (you can) to speak to a tax consultant at no cost at MilitaryOneSource.”

Additional paperwork at tax time for those living outside their home state that may have rental property or may be subject

to taxes where they are currently deployed is a common additional burden, he noted. MilitaryOneSource will provide help filing a federal tax return, as well as up to three state returns, at no charge.

Jackson said some 224,000 federal and state tax returns were prepared for military families last year.

“Nobody ever gets turned away,” he said.

The program’s tax experts are able to help military families navigate changes in tax laws that may have a particular impact on or benefit for members of the military — as well as any tax implications related to military benefits, he added.

“They are nationally certified financial planners, so they are definitely qualified to assist families and service members,” regardless of the topic, Jackson said.

Reserve component members are eligible for the free service regardless of their activation status, as are veterans within 180 days of being discharged, retired or separated.

The Defense Department established MilitaryOneSource in 2002 to provide comprehensive information on military life free of charge to military families.

Obama: Sexual assault in military a “profound injustice”

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – President Barack Obama recently addressed what he called the “profound injustice” of sexual assaults in the military.

During a White House Council on Women and Girls event in the East Room, the president reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to preventing sexual violence in America.

With Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and other Cabinet members on hand, the president noted the effects of sexual violence on American society, including the military.

“When a member of our military is assaulted by the very people he or she trusted and serves with, or when they leave the military, voluntarily or involuntarily, because they were raped, that’s a profound injustice that no one who volunteers to defend America should ever have to endure,” he said.

As commander in chief, the president said, he has made it

“When a member of our military is assaulted by the very people he or she trusted and serves with, or when they leave the military, voluntarily or involuntarily, because they were raped, that’s a profound injustice that no one who volunteers to defend America should ever have to endure.”

— Barack Obama
President

clear that military leadership must deal aggressively with sexual assault in the armed forces.

“It has been going on too long, and we have an obligation to protect the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect us,” he said. “And Secretary Hagel and (Joint Chiefs Chairman Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey) have already taken steps to reduce violence and support those who have been harmed. But I’ve made it clear I expect significant progress in the year ahead. These crimes have no place in the greatest military on Earth.”

Earlier in the day, Obama said, he met with Vice President Joe Biden, Hagel, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Attorney General Eric Holder, and other members of his staff to discuss the way forward.

“I want to make sure we’re doing everything we can to spare another American the trauma of sexual assault,” the president said.

Prairie Soldier

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Letters, articles, notices of events, photographs and art are welcome, but may be edited for clarity or brevity. Publication of any submission is at the discretion of the editor. Submissions can also be emailed to kevin.j.hynes.mil@mail.mil. All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information.

The views and opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the Military Department of Nebraska or the U.S. Department of Defense.

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It's History

Photos by Sgt. Heidi McClintock

One Last Flight: Members of the 1075th Transportation Company and 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion hold support straps as a crane loads an AH-1 Cobra onto a lowboy trailer. The helicopter is one of three that were transported from the Nebraska National Guard Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln, Neb., to AASF No. 2 in Grand Island, Neb., on Nov. 20, where they will be a part of a historical display.

Retired Nebraska National Guard helicopters transported to new home for historical display

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photojournalist

Soldiers from the Columbus-based 1075th Transportation Company moved three helicopters from the Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln, Neb., to the AASF No. 2 in Grand Island, Neb., Nov. 19-21.

The helicopters transported to Grand Island included one UH-1 Iroquois, one AH-1 Cobra and one OH-58 Koiwa. The helicopters will be displayed in Grand Island as part of a historical display.

"This is giving the Soldiers the chance to haul something," said Master Sgt. Dean Reicks, 734th Transportation Battalion operations non-commissioned officer. "A lot of the times we just do training and haul air, which isn't realistic training. This is a little more than the normal load they would haul."

"These Soldiers were excited about being able to have this opportunity and a part in the mission," added Reicks.

Before the Soldiers could load the helicopters, they had to receive training over the lowboy trailers they would be using.

"These trailers aren't organic to us," said Reicks. "We worked with the warehouse to get training on how to use them. This wouldn't have happened if we didn't have a total group effort."

Not only did the transportation Soldiers receive training on the trailers themselves, but also on how to properly maneuver their truck and trailer through secured areas.

"They learned their capabilities on what they can haul and how to haul something like this," said Reicks. "It also tests their abilities to drive in restricted areas. We had



Job Well Done: Members of the 1075th Transportation Company, pose in front of an AH-1 Cobra Nov. 20, after loading it on a lowboy trailer to move it from the Nebraska National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln, Neb., to AASF No. 2 in Grand Island, Neb.



Lined Up: Sgt. Justin Budd, a motor transport operator with the 1075th Transportation Company, ensures an AH-1 Cobra's tail is in line with a lowboy trailer, Nov. 20.

to have rehearsals getting on and off the air base before we actually loaded the helicopters. We wanted

to make sure we could get out of the gate."

Reicks said he was pleased by how much training and knowledge the Soldiers received from the mission and hopes that more transportation Soldiers have a chance to be involved in real missions like these.

"I've never strapped a helicopter down before this mission," said Sgt. Justin Budd, a motor transport operator with the 1075th Trans. Co. "It's nice to know different ways to load and strap down the helicopters now."

According to the Soldiers, this was one of the most valuable missions they had ever hauled, both in price value and value of what they learned overall.

"I think this is the most important thing I've ever hauled before," said Budd. "For the younger enlisted, it's a really great opportunity to be a part of a mission like this. They can learn so much from hauling a load like these helicopters."



Warning: A "Wide Load" sign sits ready to head down the road after members of the 1075th Transportation Company loaded an AH-1 Cobra on a lowboy trailer Nov. 20, and prepared to move it from the Nebraska National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln, Neb., to AASF No. 2 in Grand Island, Neb.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Final Touches: Sgt. David Munoz, a parachute packer with the Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply) puts the finishing touches on a parachute he packed, Feb. 26. Soldiers like Munoz are responsible for packing and maintaining hundreds of personnel and cargo parachutes used by Nebraska Army National Guard units.



Careful Watch: Staff Sgt. Keith Cox, a section chief with Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply) supervises Sgt. David Munoz as he packs a personnel parachute, Feb. 26, in Seward, Neb. The Nebraska Army National Guard parachute rigging unit will soon see big changes in both location and mission as the unit transitions into a heavy airdrop supply unit and moves to a new facility at the Mead Training Site.

Big changes in works for Nebraska Army National Guard rigger detachment

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard's airborne rigger unit is about to get a lot bigger.

They're also about to get a new home.

Currently based out of Seward, Neb., the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply), will soon be moving from their current armory to a new facility at the Mead Training Site. According to Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, along with making room for the Nebraska National Guard's museum to be relocated to Seward, the Soldiers' move will also enable

the unit to work out of new facility located much closer to the state's primary drop zone.

"Those Soldiers will be able to conduct their training in a facility that's truly designed for what they do," said Bohac. "This has been a great location for them, but times are changing."

Changes are definitely in the works, too. According to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Beraldi, an airdrop systems technician with the parachute rigging unit, by the end of the year the unit will essentially double in the size, both in the number of Soldiers assigned to it, as well as the number of parachutes it is responsible for maintaining.

The unit is currently assigned

around 40 Soldiers trained to pack and maintain both personnel and cargo parachutes.

"We're essentially reorganizing from a light airdrop supply detachment, to a heavy airdrop supply unit," said Beraldi.

As part of that change, Beraldi said that the unit will soon be receiving hundreds of additional parachutes ranging from the smaller ones that Soldiers use to conduct personal parachute missions, to cargo parachutes that will be far larger and able to support far bigger payloads than the ones the unit is currently assigned.

"From a rigging standpoint, this change is going to be huge," said Beraldi.

MUSEUM continued from page 1.

According to the plan, members of the Guard's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster, will begin moving to their new facility at the Mead Training Site in March. This move will allow the unit's Soldiers, who are responsible for rigging parachutes for personnel and cargo drops, to be located much closer to the current "drop" zones near the Mead Training Site as well as take advantage of a soon-to-be-constructed parachute rigging facility.

Following this move, renovation will begin on the Seward facility to prepare it to receive and store the Guard's vehicles, displays and historical artifacts that are currently located at the State Arsenal Museum.

Once that is completed, the museum's artifacts will go into storage at Seward while the main floor is rehabbed and modernized. Diamond said that is expected to be done sometime around June 2015, which would allow for a ribbon cutting ceremony of some type to coincide with the community's annual 4th of July celebration, which is widely considered the largest in the state.

In announcing the move, Bohac said that the ties between the National Guard and Seward's annual celebration create the potential for a perfect partnership.

"I think it's fitting coming to the city of Seward, the '4th of July City' of Nebraska. When we think about the National Guard and the (role that the National Guard had in winning the Revolutionary War.) in our minds we couldn't have a more perfect partnership," he said.

Seward's mayor echoed those thoughts.

"We are also very excited to have this museum here in Seward," said Eickmeier. "We are a community known for our 4th of July celebration and we have a wonderful volunteer spirit in the community. So, we also think this is a wonderful fit and will be a great source of pride."

"We're looking forward to working with the National Guard to move this forward."

According to Gerry Meyer, the Nebraska National Guard Historical Association president, the board is looking forward to the move and bringing the museum back to life.

"This is a great day," said Meyer, who also serves as a lieutenant colonel in the Nebraska Army National Guard. "The collection in Lincoln is quite extensive."

Meyer said that in particular, the board is looking forward to building the ties with the community that will be essential in making sure that the museum move is done correctly and on-time. "As the mayor said, that volun-



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Telling The Nebraska National Guard's Story: An exhibit detailing what life was like for members of the Nebraska militia during the 1800s is one of a number of exhibits that detail the Nebraska National Guard's rise from a territorial militia into an important part of the United States' Total Force that currently reside in the Nebraska National Guard's museum in the State Arsenal Building, which is located on the old State Fairgrounds, in Lincoln, Neb.

teer spirit is going to be needed."

Meyer added that the association's vision is to have a museum that members of the Nebraska National Guard and the entire state can be proud of.

"It's going to be a great museum," he said. "It's a really large collection, very extensive. And it's one that people are going to want to get off the interstate to see."

According to National Guard officials, once completed, the museum will also provide office and work space for the Nebraska National Guard's state historian, Army National Guard recruiters and potentially one or two small Nebraska Army National Guard detachments.



Moving Soon: An M-4 "Sherman" tank stands in front of the Nebraska National Guard's current museum located in the arsenal building at the old State Fair Grounds in Lincoln, Neb. The museum, which has been in place since the late 1970s, will soon be moving to its new home in Seward, Neb. The arsenal, which was built in 1913, is being vacated to make way for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's new innovation campus.

Air Guard flight surgeon publishes second novel

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's state air surgeon dipped his toes into the literary pool for a second time in three years when he self-published a prequel book to a murder-mystery he wrote and produced in 2011.

Titled, "Congo Mission," the book by Dr. (Col.) Scott McPherson explores the past of his main character, a local family physician named Dr. Jack Sharp, during his stint as a young missionary in equatorial Africa. According to McPherson, the story takes place roughly 20 years prior to his first book, "A Step Ahead of Death," in which Sharp discovers a body during a walk that ultimately embroils him in an international incident.

"That story takes place about 2006," said McPherson, who, like his main character is a local family physician in Lincoln, Neb. "However 'Congo Mission' goes back 20 years to a time when Jack was a young doctor. In 1988 he feels called to be a missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo, also known then as Zaire."

"Part of the story chronicles the lifestyle of being a missionary in a remote jungle and part of it involves a nefarious character who has his heart set upon enriching himself with diamonds," said McPherson. "There is a definite connection to 'A Step Ahead of Death,' but reading 'Congo Mission' first shouldn't spoil the story for the reader."

Like McPherson's first book, the Nebraska Air National Guard colonel said he pulled from his own personal experiences while writing "Congo Mission."

"My family and I spent about a year as short-term missionaries in Zaire in 1988 (and) 1989. The life is harsh and it is difficult to adapt to the culture and climate," McPherson said. "I have always wanted to tell the story of working in this austere location, but never had the right approach."

"After writing 'A Step Ahead of Death,' I realized my character fit perfectly into the whole scenario."

There are some definite differences between McPherson's

experiences and those of his main character, however.

"I tend to write about things I know, though international crime is not something in which I can purport to have experience," he said.

According to McPherson, in writing his second book, he essentially repeated the process he developed in his first, usually writing in the morning before heading to his practice in Lincoln. He actually began writing his current work while his first was still in production, he said, adding that it took him roughly a year to complete his manuscript and then another six months to review his work and make revisions.

He said that he also incorporated some of the lessons he picked up in his inaugural work in his second book.

"Knowing what is involved in editing and formatting the final product makes it easier to do it right the first time," he said. "I learned the hard way on my first novel to keep a list of character names and characteristics. When I have been writing for months on a novel, I have been known to change the name of a character in later chapters or change their personalities because I forget what they were like when first introduced."

"I have learned more about how to write a conversation and how to develop a character," said McPherson. "Jack is 20 years younger than in the first novel, but I, the writer, am older. It was important to keep in mind what his actual age was in this book, compared to the first."

There was one significant change between the books, however. When McPherson published his first book, he signed on with a traditional publishing company. That contract gave the company "first right of refusal" for McPherson's second book, he said, meaning that he was required to submit the manuscript

and synopses to them before he could consider other publishers.

"This I did," said McPherson. "And then I waited and waited some more."

McPherson said he gave the company almost a year, yet never received and feedback from them. "This was frustrating and sad-denying," he said. "I expected some feedback."

So he started looking into his options. Not wanting to take another year to find a new publishing company and then go through the process, McPherson said he decided to self-publish the novel.

"Self-publishing is fast becoming the method of choice for many writers," he said. "Nevertheless, this method poses new challenges that I did not face in my first book. I had more choices and decisions to make on my own."

"The cost was greater, as well," he added.

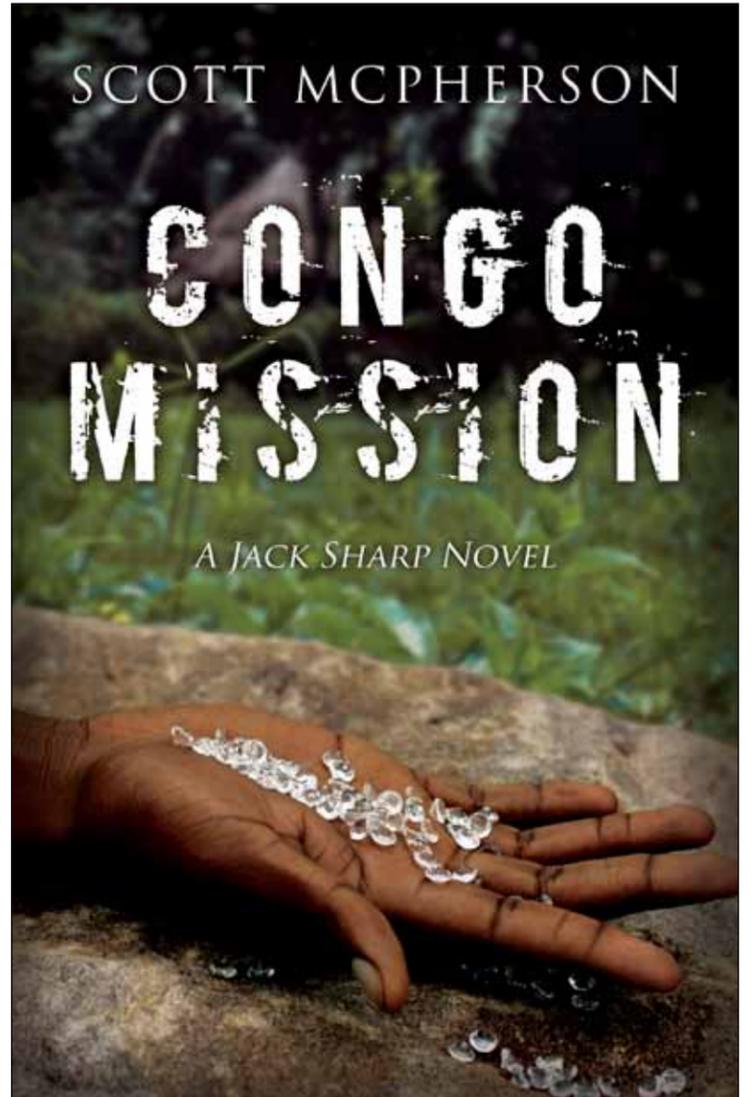
According to McPherson, the paperback version of the book became available in November at www.createspace.com, www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com, which also have Kindle and Nook versions available for downloading. McPherson said the book is also available at www.smashwords.com, which he describes as a "unique site" where any format of the book can be downloaded. It is also currently in stock at Inidigo Bridge Bookstore and can be ordered at a local Barnes and Noble.

McPherson said that learning the ins and outs of self-publishing has been an interesting process. "I don't have a publisher to fall back on, nor do they limit me," he said. "I am considering looking for an agent for future books, someone to come alongside and help me push this book beyond the local market. Promotion and advertising are expensive and time-consuming. I need to do my best to be judicious about where I put my efforts."

And those efforts definitely include future books. McPherson said that he has already completed a third book, which he describes as a sequel to "A Step Ahead of Death." He also has others in mind as well, all of which he said will draw upon the experiences he's had as a doc-



McPherson



Newly Published: Titled, "Congo Mission," the book by Dr. (Col.) Scott McPherson explores the past of his main character, a local family physician named Dr. Jack Sharp, during his stint as a young missionary in equatorial Africa.

tor, missionary and member of the military.

"I gained a feeling of significant accomplishment," said McPherson about completing his second novel. "Writing one novel was big. Getting it published was amazing, but now I have a series that allows me to do even more with my characters."

McPherson said "Congo Mission" set the stage for those additions. "Congo Mission" tells the story I

always wanted to get out about short-term missions in Africa," he said. "In addition, this novel sets that stage for additional books that will allow me to tell a new story, Jack in the military."

"My current project has the younger Jack going back into the Air Force," added McPherson. "He could have adventures in many places...some where I have deployed, perhaps."

Changes to military retirement weighed

By Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
American Forces Press Service

The vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently urged senators to "grandfather" any changes Congress makes to the military retirement system.

The term refers to allowing changes to affect only service members who join the military on or after the effective date.

Testifying at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing alongside Acting Deputy Defense Secretary Christine H. Fox, Navy Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr. discussed changes from the Bipartisan Budget Act to the military retirement system, slowing growth in Defense Department manpower costs and keeping faith with America's troops and veterans.

"When I came into service as a young, aspiring fighter pilot, I didn't think I was very smart -- I didn't really know or understand what promises were being made to me," Winnefeld said. "But I did feel like I was going to get 30 days of leave, I was going to be able to have my own personal health care covered, and that I was going to be able to retire at 20 years."

Current and retired service members have those expectations, he said, so grandfathering any changes made through legislation would prevent a sense that they are not receiving what they were promised.

The Bipartisan Budget Act, passed Jan. 15, and slated to take effect in December, caps the annual cost of living adjustment for working-age military retirees at 1 percent below inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. The inflation adjustment would return to its full amount when a veteran reaches age 62. The omnibus bill

exempts disabled veterans and survivors, medically retired personnel and Survivor Benefit Plan annuitants.

"The inclusion of the 'CPI-minus-one' provision has clearly led to considerable and understandable anxiety among those who are currently retired or who are planning for retirement," Winnefeld said. "I want to make it clear that [Joint Chiefs Chairman Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey] and I, and the service chiefs and senior enlisted leaders, support grandfathering any changes to our military retirement structure."

The vice chairman also clarified that the Pentagon isn't seeking to cut service members' pay, but noted military compensation continues to rise "at a time when our entire budget is under great pressure."

"We are not advocating a cut in pay," Winnefeld said. "We are trying to slow the growth of military compensation. The trajectory we have been on over the last decade, though necessary to address a deficit we were in, is not sustainable."

Contrary to what some are reporting, he said, none of these proposals would reduce the take-home pay of anyone in uniform.

"This means investing prudently to maintain the highest quality all-volunteer force, while simultaneously getting the best value for the capability, capacity and readiness that we need to win decisively in combat," said Winnefeld. "In the end, we believe the most important way we keep faith with the fantastic young men and women who volunteer to defend our nation is to only send them into combat with the best possible training and equipment we can provide. Controlling compensation growth in a tough budget environment will help us do just that."

GRASS continued from page 1.

ness is higher than it's ever been in the Army and Air National Guard," he said.

"And we are organized, trained and equipped at a level higher than I've ever seen in my 44 years of service," Grass said. "That's because of a lot of great investment by the nation throughout the war."

"The real challenge is how do you balance that now, in this fiscal environment, and not lose that edge, not lose that equipment," he said.

The general noted each of the National Guard's missions is "very unique" whether it's an Air National Guard unit deploying overseas within 72 hours or Army engineers rescuing flood victims and repairing and re-opening roads "in record time."

Grass pointed to the "unique" constitutional structure of the National Guard, which enables it to support the civilian government and support the president when called upon.

"We've created some opportunities in the future that will continue to grow in the homeland response that are unique from what we had [in the past]," he said.

"It's hinged in a concept called the dual status commander," Grass said. "We pre-train and pre-certify a National Guard one-star [general] who then can command and control active Guard reserve forces."

The general said this idea came about during Colorado flooding when the state's adjutant general, Air Force Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards, requested the establishment of a dual status command, through Grass and U.S. Northern Command's Army Gen. Charles H. Jacoby Jr.

General Jacoby provided the staff for the Title 10 federal side of the mission, Grass said, and Colorado stood up their normal, Title 32 state mission. "And this one commander commanded all of those 23 helicopters and gave them direction," he said. Grass noted this dual status command

required approval from Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, but it is now done "pretty routinely" for crises and planned events.

The general also noted the Guard is focused on partnership -- both assisting homeland communities and internationally through the State Partnership Program, where 65 states partner with 71 countries, teaming up a state with a country for a military-to-military relationship.

"This started after the fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries," he said. "We aligned many of those countries with states 20 years ago."

"In fact, a number of them have just celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2013," Grass said. "We're continuing to add. I think in 2014, we'll probably add four more partnerships."

Grass said there are more than 700 State Partnership Program events a year for a total annual cost of about \$12 million -- which jumps to just less than \$20 million with added "training dollars."

"And believe it or not," he said, "that's the one account nobody wants to mess with because it gives you so much great engagement."

Some of those 71 countries, Grass said, have deployed with the U.S. on 89 rotations to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We're building capacity and capability for the future that will be able to help NATO," he said.

"So partnerships are what we focus on," he said, "and part of that partnership event occurs inside the Pentagon every day."

"Being a member of the Joint Chiefs, I have access now to organizations that I probably never would have had as a three-star [general] and as just a chief, and not a member of the Joint Chiefs," Grass said. "I get called into all the sessions as a member of the Joint Chiefs."

New Guard Soldier plays halftime of Army bowl game

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photojournalist

Melissa Rahorst is not your average high school student.

Rahorst, a senior at Norris High School near Firth, Neb., has a huge role in her high school music department where she plays alto sax in the pep band, jazz band, marching band, concert band and sings in show choir and choir. She is also in her high school's honor ensembles, small groups, musicals, one act and performs solos, while also being involved in soccer and weightlifting.

The newest thing she's added to the long list of groups she belongs to is the Nebraska Army National Guard. She enlisted as an internment/resettlement specialist for the Nebraska Army National Guard in October 2013.

But just a few weeks before enlisting in the Nebraska Army National Guard, Rahorst found out she was selected to be a member of the 2014 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band.

According to Rahorst she had to audition at the end of her junior year for this opportunity.

"First, I had to send in an audition tape so I sent in one of me marching and playing an excerpt they gave me and then the other part of the audition tape was my solo," said Rahorst. "I played a piece I have been working on for a long time."

"The third part was an interview," added Rahorst.

Once all the tapes were done,



Helping Hand: Pvt. Melissa Rahorst, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program, stands next to 1st Lt. Scott Kelly, an active duty Soldier who helped coordinate the 2014 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band on Jan. 4, in San Antonio, Tex. Rahorst was selected in October 2013 to be a member of the marching band for the 2014 U.S. All American Bowl.

Rahorst said she felt very confident with her audition.

"After I did my audition I thought I did really, really good so I thought I might have a chance," she said. "But I knew there were a lot of people that auditioned."

After a few months of waiting, Rahorst got the email she was waiting for.



Courtesy Photos

Tools of the Trade: Pvt. Melissa Rahorst, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program, shows off her U.S. Army All-American marching band practice gear and her alto saxophone before performing during the halftime show of the the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio, Tex., Jan. 4. Rahorst is a senior at Norris High School who will ship out for basic training 10 days after she graduates in May.

"Finding out I was selected was fantastic," said Rahorst. "I was crazy excited when my director told me to check my email."

According to Rahorst, having a few months of training from the recruit sustainment program under her belt before the halftime

performance during the U.S. Army All-American Bowl at the Alamo-dome in San Antonio, Tex., Jan. 4, was very rewarding.

"Since I was already in the National Guard and I was the only person in the National Guard for the U.S. Army All-American Marching Band, I got to have a lot more personal experiences with the Soldiers there," said Rahorst. "I got to practice my ranks and one of the lieutenants helped me practice saluting."

Rahorst admits she learned so much from just this one experience.

"It was good to meet people from all different walks of life," said Rahorst. "I learned a lot about respecting other people both through military and civilian lives."

According to Rahorst, meeting Soldiers and getting to have one-on-one experiences with them impacted her a lot.

"I made a lot of life decisions and life changing things just from this one experience," said Rahorst. "I know I want to make a career out of the Army."

After graduating high school in May, Rahorst is scheduled to ship out for basic training only 10 days later.

Once she completes basic training and advanced individual training, Rahorst plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where she hopes to major in Performance in saxophone. She said she is also planning to join the ROTC program as well.

One day, she added, she would like to be active duty, but her ultimate goal is to attend the airborne, air assault and Ranger schools.

LEADERSHIP continued from page 1.

emergency action officer will ensure that the Nebraska Air National Guard has a well-informed, connected advocate in multiple venues."

"Brigadier General Dahlman brings a diverse set of experiences to the position of the assistant adjutant general of the Nebraska Army National Guard that will serve the Soldiers and organization well," said Bohac. "He is an experienced commander and staff officer who will help lead the organization into the future as we deal with shrinking Department of Defense budgets and realignment of active component and reserve component force structure and missions."

"I have had the privilege of serving with General Dahlman in several different capacities and he is the right leader for this time for the Nebraska Army National Guard," added Bohac. "I am also excited that General Dahlman has agreed to serve as the deputy adjutant general of the Nebraska Military Department. He will provide exceptional day-to-day leadership of the department and help ensure we are prepared to help protect and defend the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of this state whenever called upon by Governor Heineman."

As the assistant adjutant general, Air, Fago will serve as the principle advisor to the adjutant general on a broad range of matters concerning the United States Air Force and the Air National Guard. As the state's senior Air National Guard leader, Fago will provide advice on complex and sensitive issues in the areas of logistics, command and control, communications, manpower and personnel, strength management and other support functions related to mission operations. He also formulates and develops short-range and long-range plans and programs for the Nebraska Air National Guard.

Prior to assuming the position in December 2013, Fago served as the Nebraska Air National Guard chief of staff in Lincoln, Neb. He was also dual-hatted as the Air National Guard assistant to the director of Operations at Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., while also serving as an airborne emergency action officer for United States Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

A native of West Point, Neb., Fago began his career with an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in Aeronautical Engineering in 1979 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. Fago attended undergraduate pilot training at Reese Air Force Base, Texas, and completed initial KC-135A training at Castle Air Force Base, Calif.

Fago was then assigned to the 28th Air Refueling Squadron, 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D. In 1985, General Fago was board selected as one of the first crewmembers for the KC-10 program. He was assigned as a KC-10 aircraft commander to the 32nd Air Refueling Squadron, 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

In 1988, Fago separated from active duty and joined U.S. Air Force Reserve in the 78th Air Refueling Squadron, 142nd Air Refueling Group, at Barksdale Air Force Base, La. In 1994, he joined the Nebraska Air National Guard as a KC-135R pilot.

During his time with the 155th ARW, Fago served as the chief of training, operations officer, acting squadron commander, commander of the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, commander of the 155th Operations Group and vice commander of the 155th ARW. During this time, Fago was also instrumental in the Pacer Compass Radar And Global Positioning conversion and directing increased operations following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Fago is a veteran of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and numerous other operations that have taken him around the globe. He is a command pilot with more than 5,000 flight hours in a variety of military aircraft including the KC-135A/Q/R and KC-10A.

Dahlman, a graduate of South Sioux City High School, was promoted to the rank of brigadier general during a ceremony Feb. 8, at the Joint Force Headquarters building at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

As the assistant adjutant general, Army, Dahlman will serve as the principle advisor to the adjutant general on a broad range of matters concerning the United States Army and Army National Guard. He advises on complex

and sensitive issues in the areas of logistics, command and control, communications, manpower and personnel, strength management and other support functions related to mission operations. He also formulates and develops short-range and long-range plans and programs.

As the deputy adjutant general, Dahlman will assist the adjutant general in providing day-to-day oversight of the Nebraska Military Department, which includes the Army and Air National Guard, and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. In this capacity, Dahlman will assist the adjutant general in formulating, developing, and coordinating policies, programs and plans affecting the state's uniformed Nebraska Army and Air National Guard members, and state employees assigned to the Nebraska Military Department, to include the staff of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Dahlman began his military career in 1982 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantryman and was stationed with the U.S. Army Presidential Escort.

Dahlman joined the Nebraska Army National Guard's 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) in 1985 before attending Officer Candidate School where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant on June 6, 1987. He served as section leader of the 24th Med. Co. prior to and after attending Rotary Wing Aviator Qualification Course in 1990.

After serving as commander of Detachment 1, 1267th Medical Evacuation Battalion, Dahlman returned to the 24th Med. Co. in 1998 as the aviation unit maintenance platoon leader before taking command of the unit in 2000.

Dahlman attended the Command General Staff College in 2002 and was then assigned as an operations officer for 92nd Troop Command. He was deployed with the 110th Medical Battalion for Operation Iraqi Freedom and later commanded the 110th Med. Bn.

Dahlman recently served as the commander of the Lincoln-based 92nd Troop Command and as the Nebraska Army National Guard's full-time deputy chief of staff for Operations.

Dahlman holds the master aviator badge, army parachutist badge, expert infantryman badge and the expert field medical badge.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

New Star: Richard Dahlman is promoted to the rank of brigadier general by his parents and family during a ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters building at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Feb. 8. Dahlman's promotion came as a result of being appointed the new assistant adjutant general-Army and deputy adjutant general.

Dahlman promoted

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

The Nebraska National Guard added a shining star to its list of general officers at the Joint Force Headquarters building Feb. 8, when Col. Richard H. Dahlman was promoted to the rank brigadier general.

"It's a privilege to stand before you as the adjutant general and preside over, what I consider to be a great day for the Nebraska National Guard, a ceremony where we're going to promote Rick to brigadier general," said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general.

Bohac thanked Dahlman's family for their continuing support of their Soldier's service.

"Thank you for all the support you've given Rick over the years, and for what you're going to give in support of this new role to the Nebraska Army National Guard and the Nebraska National Guard," he said. "We often thank the families for those sacrifices, but I don't think we can say it enough."

Next, Bohac re-administered the oath of office to Dahlman, and then turned the floor over to Nebraska's newest brigadier general.

"General Bohac, first let me (thank you for) the opportunity to continue to serve our great Soldiers, Airmen, state employees and citizens of Nebraska," said Dahlman. "It's truly an honor."

"The strength of our Army is our Soldiers; the strength of our Soldiers is our families; and that's what makes us Army strong," said Dahlman. "I would like to take a moment now and recognize those who give me my strength: my family here with me today."

Dahlman then presented his father, mother, wife Renae, daughter Evelyn; and sons Christian and Adam, with tokens of his sincere gratitude for their years of continued support.

"I look forward to continuing (my) service," said Dahlman. "I don't have a day of regret."

Cavalry under new leadership

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Writer

Col. Brett Anderson, commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade of the Nebraska Army National Guard, presided over a change of command ceremony passing the ceremonial command flag of the 1st Squadron, 134th Cavalry to Lt. Col. Jeffrey Kilgore during the squadron's change of command ceremony at then-Penterman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Nov. 24.



Kilgore

Lt. Col. Brent D. Flachsbart handed over the flag signifying the end of his duty assignment as the squadron commander and the beginning of his new role as acting human resource office manager of the Nebraska National Guard.

"My success was not because of me, but because of you," he said to the 1-134th Cav. Soldiers.

Kilgore comes to the 1-134th Cavalry with diverse military experience, having served as operations officer for the 67th BFSB prior to taking on this role.

He began his military career in 1985 enlisting in the U.S. Coast Guard and received his commission in 1994 after transferring to the Kansas



Photos courtesy of the 1-134th Cavalry

New Leadership: Lt. Col. Jeffrey Kilgore holds the 1-134th Cavalry colors during a change of command ceremony, Nov. 24, at the Penterman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Kilgore assumed command from Lt. Col. Brent Flachsbart.

Army National Guard. He joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1996 deploying to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Iraq in various duty positions.

His military education includes Officer Candidate School, Armor Officer Basic Course, Combined Arms Service and Staff School, Intermediate Level Education, Military Intelligence Captains and the Advanced

Operations Course. He also has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

In his civilian career, Kilgore is a detective and gang suppression officer for the Omaha Police Department and a member of the OPD SWAT team. He and his wife of 14 years, Victoria, have three children.



Nebraska's 43rd Army Band wins another honor

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Army Band is always performing on the right note, especially after winning their eighth Howard Citation.

The Howard Citation identifies and recognizes both active duty and reserve military concert bands that have demonstrated particularly significant high standards of musical excellence in concert performances under the current conductor of the band. The Howard Citation is the highest honor a military band can receive.

According to 1st Sgt. Diane Lewis, 43rd Army Band first sergeant, military concert bands can only apply for the Howard Citation every three years.

"The 43rd Army Band's first application and award occurred in 1990," said Lewis. "We have won the citation every time we have applied since 1990, which is the span of an entire military career, 24 years."

In order to win, military band directors had to submit an application letter with programs from recent concerts directed by the current conductor, a CD of current studio and concert recordings, and one DVD of three different works from recent performances.

According to Lewis, the three

different works had to include a major concert band composition from the standard repertoire with the camera positioned at the back of the stage focused on the conductor, standard concert band piece with the camera positioned in the audience to show the entire band, and a Sousa march with the camera positioned in either place.

The 43rd Army Band is constantly making sure they are carrying out their mission and focusing on training for their specific military occupation specialty so they can continue to be the best that they can be, said Lewis.

"We are very proud to be the only band in the Army inventory to win this award eight times," said Lewis. "It speaks very highly to the level of musicianship and to the longevity of our upper non-commissioned officer leadership within our unit."

"There are eight Soldiers who have been in the unit for all eight awards," added Lewis. "Myself, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brian Anderson, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Fahrlander, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Freeman, Sgt. 1st Class Laura Hardesty, Sgt. 1st Class Charles Lindbloom, Staff Sgt. Kevin McKinney and Staff Sgt. Teresa Lenz."

"We are honored to be nationally recognized for our efforts to remain one of the strongest military bands in the Army Band inventory."



Photo by Sgt. Jason Drager

Incoming Meets Outgoing: (Left to Right) Lt. Col. Eric Hunsberger, Col. Brett Andersen, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade commander, and Lt. Col. Randall S. Ames stand in formation during a change of command ceremony for the 402nd Military Police Battalion, Jan. 11, at Mead Atlas Readiness Center. Ames relinquished command to Hunsberger.

Police Battalion welcomes new commander

By Sgt. Jason Drager
Staff Writer

Lt. Col. Eric D. Hunsberger took command of the 402nd Military Police Battalion in a ceremony held Jan. 11 at Mead Atlas Readiness Center near Mead, Neb.

Hunsberger replaced Lt. Col. Randall S. Ames as commander after Ames led the 402nd MP Bn. for 16 months. Ames will continue to serve in the Nebraska National Guard as the Human Resource officer with the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"The 402nd will always have a place in my heart," said Ames. "It is a very unique organization."

The Soldiers of the 402nd look at it as their family, said Ames. Hopefully, they continue to have each other's backs, he added.

Lt. Col. Eric D. Hunsberger comes to the 402nd Military Police Battalion from the 192nd Law and Order Detachment, where he served as provost marshal. Before joining the Nebraska National Guard, Hunsberger was enlisted in the New Mexico National Guard. Hunsberger deployed to Iraq in 2011 with the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade where he served as the fire support officer.

"Bottom line is I'm honored and excited to be part of an agency that offers so much, not only to our Title 10 forces, but also to our governor when it comes to working domestic operations," said Hunsberger.

"Giddy-up" is Hunsberger's message to his troops. "My philosophy is people focused. No mission is accomplishable without the troops being synchronized," said Hunsberger.

Hunsberger's awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

"As the new commander, I think my role is to simply access the conditions over the next three to six months," said Hunsberger. "I definitely don't want to be a commander that comes in and changes things. That is not what is best for our agency and community."

With becoming the commander of the 402nd Police Battalion, Hunsberger will also inherit the subordinate units: Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 402nd Military Police Battalion; the 192nd Military Police Detachment; the 195th Forward Support Company; and Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company.

Top Air Guard safety sergeant competes for national award

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

As a member of the military, it's difficult to go any length of time without hearing something about safety. All too often that message falls on deaf ears as just another safety briefing to endure. But Senior Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode, ground and weapons safety manager for the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln, Neb., works constantly to get a very important message to all Airmen. "Complacency kills."

And thanks to Tontegode's tireless efforts to spread his message of safety, he's been recognized at a national level. Tontegode was recently named the Air Force reserve component's nominee for the 2013 Government Employee's Insurance Company Military Service Award, a program sponsored by "GEICO," and a part of the GEICO Military Service Awards program.

According to GEICO's website, the program aims to spotlight the valuable and lasting contributions of enlisted members of the armed forces. The awards honor one enlisted member from each military branch and one from the reserve component.

The awards are given for achievements in three areas: drug and alcohol abuse prevention; fire safety and fire prevention; and traffic safety and accident prevention – the category in which Tontegode was nominated.

According to Tontegode, as the Air Force's reserve component nominee, he will compete against the other service branch's nominees for the national award.

Tontegode said being chosen for the award is humbling, but he realizes it would not be possible without the tremendous efforts of the Airmen he represents.

"I know this award is not really an individual award," said Tontegode, a Lincoln native. "Whenever we get recognized for any safety thing, I understand it's a team effort."

"Without everybody doing the right things, this wouldn't be possible," he added. "Everybody wears their seatbelts, is cog-

nizant of texting and driving, of drinking and driving."

Tontegode has built a safety program within the 155th ARW to emulate. He's got at least one safety representative who serves as his eyes and ears within each squadron on the base truly making the award a base-wide achievement.

"It's a great honor and it's always good to highlight the good things we do here, whether it's a mission we accomplish or a safety award," said Tontegode. It's always good to put us in a national spotlight and show what a good organization we are."

Tontegode works hard to keep safety awareness training light, fresh and current. And focusing on driving safety is incredibly important to almost every member of the unit.

"I hope everybody realizes that driving is generally the most dangerous thing we do every day," said Tontegode. "Whether it's on-duty or off-duty, if somebody gets hurt or killed it affects not only the mission, it affects morale and it affects the entire base so it's a pretty important topic – something we need to continue to stress and remind people."

Tontegode takes his job very seriously, to the point of taking any incidents personally. And he has a very important message to get across to the Airmen of the Nebraska Air National Guard.

"Complacency kills," said Tontegode. "Never think it won't happen to you. Don't take that chance of not wearing that seatbelt that one time. Don't take that chance of drinking too much and driving home. Don't take that chance of texting your buddy and crossing the center line. Complacency kills."

"We can never let our guard down," he added. "Never, ever think it won't happen to you."



Tontegode

Offutt-based Guardsmen compete for national honors

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The work that the men and women of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 170th Group are doing as part of the active Air Force's 55th Wing has often been described as the Air Force's best kept secret.

That secret may not be quite as tightly controlled in the near future as two members of the Nebraska Air Guard are currently competing for Air Force honors for the work that they are doing at Offutt Air Force Base.

According to Col. John Anderson, commander of the 170th Group, Tech. Sgt. Marsha Lane, a member of the unit who works full-time at Offutt as the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 55th Operational Support Squadron's Host Aviation Resource Management (HARM) Office was recently named Air Combat Command's HARM Noncommissioned Officer of the Year while Tommy Butts, a traditional part-time member of the 170th Group who works full-time at Offutt as an aircrew flight equipment technician in the 55th OSS was named Air Combat Command's civilian aircrew flight equipment specialist of the year.

Anderson said that having two members of the unit selected to compete at the Air Force level in their respective specialties speaks volumes about the work that Nebraska Air Guardsmen are doing in support of the 55th Wing.

"It's a testament to the very high level of talent we have in our unit and their ability to successfully integrate and thrive in the mission here at Offutt," said Anderson. "In both cases, they are completely invested (in) mentoring the young Airmen to learn their jobs and be successful and productive member of the Air Force. It carries into everything they do and how they look at their jobs."

Tech. Sgt. Marsha Lane had had a hard day. As the leader of an eight-person team in what has been described as Air Combat Command's most diverse Host Aviation Resource Management Office, responsible for managing more than



Lane

1,800 flight records, Lane was ready to simply relax at home. When her phone rang, Lane assumed it was a telemarketer and told her son to pick up the phone and tell whoever was on the line that she wasn't home.

A few moments later her son handed the phone to her. Her commander was on the line. Lane said she had a moment of apprehension. "Why is my group commander calling me at home?" she recalled thinking.

She didn't have long to wait.

"Marsha, this is Colonel Anderson... I just wanted to tell you that you've won the Air Command and now you're heading to the next level," Lane remembered hearing.

According to Lane, she joined the active Air Force and then spent part of her early career stationed at Offutt Air Force base in airfield management. That job soon took her to several other stops around the world until she decided to leave the Air Force in 1998.

After a five-year break, Lane decided to restart her military career as a member of the Montana Air National Guard. When her husband received orders to Hawaii, Lane and their family followed along where she joined the Hawaii Air National Guard at Hickam Air Force Base, and transitioned into the HARM career field.

Soon, however, it was time for another move, this time back to Offutt Air Force Base. Lane said that as the family prepared for the transfer,

she contacted the Nebraska Air National Guard recruiter to see if there were any openings at the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

"When I first called from Hawaii to talk with the recruiters and ask if I could join the Nebraska unit, they were like, 'Where do you want to work? Do you want to go to Lincoln or do you want Offutt?'" Lane recalled. "I was like, 'What do mean Offutt? I was there before and there is no Guard unit at Offutt.'"

That's when Lane found out about the 170th Group. Lane said what she encountered upon returning to Offutt was simply amazing.

"When I was here before, there was no Total Force integration," she said. "It was just straight-up active duty."

Now, however, Nebraska Air Guardsmen – both full-time and traditional part-time Airmen – were working side-by-side with their active Air Force counterparts in various offices throughout the 55th Wing. Lane said that the force is so integrated that it's impossible to know who is a Guardsman and who is an active Air Force member.

"It's seamless," said Lane. "I've been in units before where they tell us that we're a Total Force integration, but it was still like there was a line drawn in the sand: you're National Guard, you're active duty."

That's not the case at Offutt, though. "We just try to make it seamless," she said. "We make it work."

That spirit has definitely paid dividends, said Lane, adding that the 55th Wing's HARM office has been named the tops in the Air Combat Command's large team category three straight years.

"We have a lot of experience here," said Lane about what she described as the largest and busiest HARM office in all of ACC. "You almost feel like it's the perfect storm."

Lane said that is especially what earning her latest title feels like. "I look at it as not just an award for me, it's really a reflection on our whole office... It's getting our story out about the Total Force integration. There's not a lot of people who realize that the 170th exists at Offutt. This is our way of telling our story, that we are here."



Butts

When it comes to ensuring flight crews have all the equipment they need to perform their mission and, if need be, survive an emergency, Tommy Butts has always taken his job extremely seriously. That's because the equipment that he works with on daily as both a civilian and traditional Nebraska Air National Guardman at Offutt Air Force Base has to work the first time it's used.

"There's no second chances," said Butts, an aircrew flight equipment technician who was recently named the top civilian in his career field in the entire ACC. "It's got to work the first time."

It's a philosophy that Butts, who worked for years in a similar position with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln, constantly reiterates to the active duty Airmen he now works side-by-side with at Offutt.

"When I'm down here working with these young active duty (Airmen), I'm stressing all the time, stuffs got to be done right. There's no bringing it back and saying, 'This didn't work, can you redo it?'" Butts said. "There just isn't. When (our aircrew members) go down, they're in a stressful environment. It needs to be working so that they can come home."

As an aircrew flight equipment technician, Butts and his counterparts are responsible for ensuring that 55th Wing aircrews' flight equipment and survival gear is

kept in a constant state of readiness, which is especially important considering that if one of the wing's aircraft ditches in the ocean or in enemy territory, the equipment could very well mean the difference between life and death.

"It's a pretty important job," he said, adding that the job at Offutt is enormous, considering that he and his fellow aircrew flight equipment specialists are responsible for supporting dozens of separate aircraft and the aircrew that fly aboard them. "And there are a lot of flight crews," he said.

Butts, a native of Palmyra who spent four years in the active Marines before joining the Nebraska Air Guard in Lincoln in 1985, said that job is aided by the fact that the Total Force integration at Offutt is now a way of life.

"As far as the Guard, the civilians and the active duty, we're a pretty seamless organization," he said. "It's interesting because when I walk around in uniform, there's no 'Guardsman' attached to my uniform. They keep telling me that they value my professionalism and my experience."

Butts said he was amazed when he found out he was selected to be the 55th Wing's nominee to the ACC-level competition. That amazement has grown since.

"It blindsided me," said Butts about his reaction to learning that he'd won the ACC competition. "It just came out of the blue. Everybody gathered in the shop one morning and the shop supervisor made the announcement. I was shocked. I was totally shocked."

"I don't feel like I'm going above and beyond," he added. "I just come to work and do the job the way it's supposed to be done and then I look around and try to make a difference."

Butts added he can't even conceive of how he might react if he wins the Air Force competition. "I don't know how I would react, but it would be exciting," he said.

"I'm just not that type of guy. I don't feel like I deserve these types of awards, I just come to work and work," Butts said. "It is exciting to know that they thought of me this much... it's something to feel good about."

Two Nebraska National Guardsmen earn nation's top diversity award

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photojournalist

■ Army National Guard

Out of the entire Army National Guard, Capt. Russell Bartholow, Nebraska recruiting and retention battalion officer, won the 2013 National Guard Bureau Excellence in Diversity Award, Army National Guard individual award.

"It is hard to express what a tremendous honor it is to accept this award on behalf of all in Nebraska working towards excellence in diversity," said Bartholow. "I am just blown away."

First, Bartholow won the Nebraska Army National Guard level for diversity in excellence. Bartholow was recognized at the state level for his exceptional ability to build relationships with students of the University of Nebraska-Kearney as an assistant professor of Military Science and a member of Recruiting and Retention Command. After winning at the state level, his nomination packet was forwarded to the National Guard Bureau for national consideration.

"Receiving the award provides a sense of accomplishment for me as an individual as I strive to be the best Soldier I can be serving in the Nebraska Army National Guard," said Bartholow. "More important is that the award represents outreach and opportunities that have been offered



Bartholow

and accepted by Nebraska men and women in areas that do not typically have access or knowledge of such opportunities."

"Nebraska is a very diverse state," added Bartholow. "It is absolutely fantastic that we are getting recognition for that diversity."

As an assistant professor of Military Science, Bartholow uses the classroom to reach individuals in all of Nebraska's demographics.

According to Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, previous Nebraska adjutant general, Bartholow continually searched for emerging leaders in the community within central Nebraska, which would be a challenge to other individuals, but was achievable for him.

"In my perspective, diversity in the military amounts to a tactically superior fighting force with the ability to critically think through local, national and global issues as a strategic team," said Bartholow. "After all, the National Guard serves on a local and international level."

According to his submission, most of his diversity grew during his deployment to Afghanistan in 2008, where as a lieutenant he led a very diverse group of unique individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Bartholow said he constantly worked to get to know these Soldiers from different areas and found common values inherent in a combat environment. He found each of their strengths, combined them and used them to create a bond among these diverse individuals that they were able to sustain during the deployment.

"I am grateful that here in Nebraska we have leaders that believe in this definition of diversity, especially in the National Guard," said Bartholow. "Those leaders inspire us to making the National Guard the best it can be. Always ready to defend the American way of life in the event of an emergency."

■ Air National Guard

Out of the entire Air National Guard, Nebraska, Master Sgt. Sharon Okra-Goll, equal opportunity non-commissioned officer, won the 2013 National Guard Bureau Excellence in Diversity Award, Air National Guard individual award.

"It's very exciting to win a national award, especially since I work with so many great people," said Okra-Goll. "My initial response was, I do what I do because I'm passionate about people and creating positive environments."

"I feel like its part of my responsibility to encourage positive interaction between everyone, not just specific groups," she added. "Being awarded for something that I'm truly passionate about and enjoy doing is a great way to be recognized. I'm happy to know the things that I believe in are important to so many others."

Okra-Goll first won the Nebraska Air National Guard level for diversity in excellence. She was recognized at the state level for her commitment to the betterment of the organization and extends this commitment to her family and community. She also is an active leader in many aspects of the Nebraska Military Department's diversity initiatives and a key member of the Special Emphasis Program.

After winning the state level, her nomination packet was forwarded for consideration at the National Guard Bureau for national recognition.

"There's always a lot of tough competition, especially when you get to the national level,"



Okra-Goll

said Okra-Goll. "I knew that everyone worked really hard to put forth a solid award package on my behalf, but I never thought I would win."

"It's such an honor, it's hard to express in words the way that I feel," added Okra-Goll. "It's amazing and I feel truly humbled to be considered an NGB Excellence in Diversity Award winner."

Okra-Goll is a member of the Special Emphasis Program group where she is actively engaged in community events and invites other Air Guard members to attend heritage luncheons along with numerous community members. She said she has been lucky to work with leadership who know the importance of diversity.

"Part of my success can be attributed to having the opportunity to work with passionate leaders who lent their support whenever it was needed," said Okra-Goll. "Having a strong support system and committed leadership makes it a lot easier to 'be me' and help others."

"Sometimes, we have to be the voice for those who cannot find their's. I feel like we all have the responsibility to work toward a future that is free of racism, discrimination and hate," added Okra-Goll. "If we, as a nation, moved more toward acceptance and respect for others, it would lead to a richer environment that everyone would flourish in."

When it comes down to it, Okra-Goll said she believes that diversity makes the world go around.

"We cannot hope to reach our potential as a Soldier, Airman, unit, base, state or nation without being able to embrace diversity," said Okra-Goll. "Accepting and embracing diversity is vital part of who I am."

Waiting game

Partial government shutdown postpones annual cooking competition

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photojournalist

Love cooking and baking but dislike the time it takes for the finished product to be on the table?

Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company felt that same way after finding out they won the regional level of the 46th Annual Phillip A. Connelly competition, which took place Aug. 3, at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

The competition required the Soldiers to prepare a multi-course meal while operating in a field environment using a mobile field kitchen. The contest required the unit to prepare seven entrees and feed 100 Soldiers. Connelly competition evaluators used a 1,000 point evaluation list to determine who will represent the region in the upcoming national championships.

Once the Chadron-based Det. 1, 1057th Trans. Co. got the announcement they won the regional level they couldn't be more excited for their Oct. 19 national level competition date.

The team of Soldiers, who refer to themselves as the '1057th Truck Stop,' only had a few weeks to make sure they were on top of their game before competing at the national level.

But due to the partial federal government shutdown that went into effect on Oct. 1, the Soldiers had to add time on their kitchen timer as October drills for the whole state of Nebraska were postponed. The national level of the Phillip A. Connelly competition was postponed as well.

"The unit planned their entire weekend around this event," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Teresa



Good Eats: An evaluator from the regional level of the Phillip A. Connelly Competition shows off the meal Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company made during the competition at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., Aug 3. The unit will compete in April for the national level award of the Connelly Competition.

Domeier, Nebraska's state food program manager at the time. "All coordinations were made with Camp Guernsey in Wyoming on supporting this event from housing the Soldiers to feeding them and Soldiers coordinating with their employers and college professors to miss class."

According to members of the unit they were disappointed when they were told they would not be competing in October.

"They were all ready to go," said Staff Sgt. Howard Taylor III, the food operations sergeant for Det. 1, 1057th Trans. Co. "I told them just to relax and know that everything is going to be taken care of."

After talking with the team of



Photos by Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Hot Stuff: Pfc. Kyle Burton and Pvt. Steven Parker, food service specialists with Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company, cook pork chops during the regional level of the Phillip A. Connelly Competition, Aug. 3, at Camp Guernsey, Wyo. The Soldiers had months off between competitions due to the partial government shutdown.

evaluators from the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence in Fort Lee, Va., the unit picked a new competition date of April 5, which gave the unit plenty of time to work toward their goal of national champions.

"I'm very proud of them for get-

ting to this level and for what they have obtained as a unit to compete in October," said Domeier.

"I feel the unit was really ready for the October competition. Each time they have competed at the state and regional levels they have

improved amazingly. But delaying the competition I feel their skills will get a little rusty."

(Editor's Note: See upcoming editions of the Prairie Soldier for stories over the national level competition)

Looking into "Spring Social" venues

Hello. Whether you're basking in the sun somewhere, or enjoying the cold, snow, ice, wind, and whatever nature brings us in Nebraska, enjoy your retirement. You've earned it.

The Nebraska Military Retiree Council has been meeting and discussing expanding the number of at-large members to a total of six, three Army and three Air Force, to more accurately reflect the makeup of our members. Ballots have been distributed to all members and we encourage you to make your voices heard on this important by-law change.

We're looking into venues for the Spring Social here in Lincoln, and will be sending information out soon. We'd like to work with other areas of the state to have a social gathering as well. Stay tuned for more information as we do more research on feasibility.

The newsletter has been sent out, both electronically and hard copy (for those who don't have email or prefer the paper in hand), along with the by-law change and a nomination form for the Founders Award. Send us your recommendations.

If you want specific information on any retirement issue, please contact us and we'll do the research for you. Our contact numbers are 402-309-7303 or 402-309-7305.

Recently, we received a request from a widow to join the NMRC. Widows of deceased members in good standing automatically become an "honorary member" of the NMRC and dues are not required. Widows may attend all functions and meetings and we encourage everyone to keep us informed when members or their spouses pass away.

Thank you for your dedicated service to the National Guard and this great country.

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

DEERS/ID Card Stations

- ♦ G1 - 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524: (402) 309-8167/8168/8169;
- ♦ East Campus Readiness Center, 2000 North 33rd Street, Lincoln, NE 68503: (402) 309-8014.
- ♦ Penterman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln (402) 309-1724/1719;
- ♦ Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600 Room E209: (402) 309-1542;
- ♦ Offutt Air Force Base: (402) 294-5019;
- ♦ Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney: (402) 309-7758/7752;
- ♦ Norfolk Armory 817 S 1st St Norfolk: (402) 309-8908/8900;
- ♦ 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), 220 County Road A, Bldg. 508, Ashland, NE 68003, (402) 309-7809/7628;
- ♦ The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

Remember, you need two forms of ID when you arrive for your appointment.

If you like to rise early to meet fellow retirees and share stories, here's the breakfast site information for those in the immediate areas:

Lincoln:
Army National Guard retirees: **FIRST** Monday of each month, 7:00 a.m., Virginia's Travelers Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway, Lincoln

Air National Guard retirees: **LAST** Monday of each month, 7:00 a.m., Stauffer's Café, 5600 S. 48th St, Lincoln.

North Platte area retirees: **SECOND** Saturday of each month, 8:00 a.m., Airport Inn, North Platte.

From the desk of SFC Bonnie Frazier. My phone number is (402) 309-8162 and email address is bonnie.d.frazier.mil@mail.mil. Staff Sgt. Mandy Hatcher's

phone number is (402) 309-8164 and mandy.r.hatcher.mil@mail.mil. We are located in the Joint Forces Headquarters Building at the Air National Guard base, 2433 NW 24th St, Lincoln, NE 68524. Your Tri-Care manager is Staff Sgt. Travis Garrett. His number is 402-309-1541. Contact him for all your Tri-Care-related questions.

The Tri-Care retiree dental program (TRDP) is accessible at www.trdp.org. We have a new pamphlet concerning the new enhanced TRDP and "How to Enroll". We'll be distributing this pamphlet at the upcoming retiree breakfasts. If you would like to get a copy, please let Bill Nelson know and he will get copies to send to you.

Happy Retirement.



Photo by 1st Lt. Alex Salmon

It's Official: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, joins members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Flight Support Squadron to cut a ribbon officially reopening a renovated dining facility, Jan. 4, on the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Air Guard officially opens remodeled dining facility

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

After enduring more than a year and a half of boxed lunches during scheduled unit training assemblies, members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing finally got a taste of a newly remodeled dining facility at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, along with other 155th ARW officials and members of the Flight Support Squadron, officially opened the renovated facility during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Jan. 4.

Lt. Col. AnnMarie Anthony, commander of the 155th FSS, put the occasion into perspective, saying the dining facility had been in use for more than 20 years prior to the renovation. Anthony added that the 19-month

remodeling project meant 15-20 percent of the base Airmen had never eaten in the dining facility.

"In the meantime, we have served over 10,000 box lunches to the populace, which I know you've all enjoyed immensely," said Anthony with a laugh.

Col. Keith Schell, 155th ARW commander, thanked those involved in the project and said the remodel will help unlock the full potential of the facility.

"It was functional and got the job done, but it wasn't really up to the capabilities of what this building could be," said Schell. "And with this (remodel) it now is. This is a very functional, very great place."

Following a ceremonial ribbon-cutting and cutting of a cake, members of the 155th ARW were finally treated to a hot, catered meal and now can look forward to hot meals prepared by members of the FSS in upcoming UTAs.



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Operation: Hidden Egg 2014!

Saturday, April 5:

*Lincoln Air Base
NW 25th St.
9:00am-10:30am

*Grand Island Armory
3010 E Airport Rd
2:00pm-3:30pm

Sunday, April 6:

*South Omaha Readiness Center
6929 Mercy Rd.
1:00pm-3:30pm

Saturday, April 12:

*Kearney Readiness Center
5710 Airport Road
10:00am-11:30am

Friday, April 18:

*Scottsbluff Readiness Center
2810 1st Ave
11:00am-1:00pm



For more information please contact:

Kelli Czarnick (Contractor)
Kelli.r.czarnick.ctr@mail.mil
Or 402-309-7338

Kristyn Kocsis (Contractor)
Kristyn.e.kocsis.ctr@mail.mil
Or 402-309-7330

Military Kids Ball

Saturday, March 29, 2014

5:00pm-8:00pm

Penterman Armory
2400 NW 24th Street, Lincoln

Schedule of Events
5:00-5:30 Social
5:30-6:30 Dinner/Program
6:30-8:00 Dance/Activities



Civilian: Formal/Semi-Formal
Military: Full Dress Uniform
Encouraged: Civilian Formal
Suitable

Join us for dinner, dancing, and activities for the Whole family! Children *must* be accompanied by an adult and all ages are welcome to attend!! Open to all military families!

Tickets: \$10 Adults; \$5 Children
(Ticket cost includes meal & incidental costs for the event)

To purchase tickets please contact Kelli or Kristyn, or send check (made payable to Headquarters Operations Fund or HQF) by mail to:

Military Kids Ball
Attn: Terri Kates
2433 NW 24th St.
Lincoln, NE 68524



Event POCs:

Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator
Kelli Czarnick (Contractor)
O: 402-309-7338 C: 402-760-5616
kelli.r.czarnick.ctr@mail.mil

Child & Youth Program Coordinator
Kristyn Kocsis (Contractor)
O: 402-309-7330 C: 402-760-5615
kristyn.g.kocsis.ctr@mail.mil

Defense Department focuses on healthy, active lifestyle for kids

By Terri Moon Cronk
American Forces Press Service

With the national rate of childhood obesity increasing, the Defense Department wants to ensure children in military families lead healthy and active lifestyles, the Defense Department's director of the office of family policy and children and youth said.

In a recent interview with American Forces Press Service and the Pentagon Channel, Barbara Thompson said that nationally, 12.5 million children and adolescents from age 2 to 19 are overweight—a figure that's tripled since 1980. Military children are a microcosm of that group, she noted.

Today's generation of children is the first one at risk of dying before their parents, she added. Facing such risks, families should set goals for healthy food choices and more physical activities for their children, Thompson said.

"It's important for children to see the most important models in their lives doing the same things they should do," she said. "It's of critical importance that children start healthy habits at a very early age. The bottom line is [that] obesity is preventable."

DoD's message for young children and adolescents is called 5-2-1, Thompson said. It calls for

five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, two hours or less of "screen time," one hour of moderate to vigorous exercise and zero sweetened drinks, which is a plan that can be used at home and in school. She defined screen time as any activity involving television, computers, video games, movies and other devices that lead to a sedentary lifestyle.

Obesity also can lead to serious diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure, Thompson said. Children without healthy diets and routine exercise start at early ages to build plaque in their arteries, and are at risk for future health issues, she added.

And national security can become an issue when people cannot enter military service because of their weight and health-related diseases, Thompson said.

Resources for setting dietary and exercise goals are abundant for military families, Thompson said. One way to begin children on a path to healthy eating and routine exercise is to have meals as families, she said. Cutting sugar and salt, reducing overall fat and cooking in a healthy manner -- such as steaming certain foods rather than fat-frying them -- also are necessary to a better lifestyle, she noted.

After dinner, families can take walks together and make plans for weekend bike rides and other physi-

cal activities, Thompson suggested.

Health and nutrition help is available from numerous resources, she said, noting that First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" initiative includes a website that provides a variety of healthy recipes and ways to add activity into children's everyday lives.

While school districts have begun to offer healthy food choices, parents should become involved with the Parent-Teacher Association and similar groups if their children's schools do not deliver healthy food choices or provide inadequate exercise time and activities, she said.

The MilitaryOneSource website offers a health and wellness coach program that's good for goal setting for cardiovascular health and nutrition habits, Thompson said.

Child and youth development centers and morale, welfare, and recreation programs on military installations offer emphasis on eating healthy foods and pursuing active lifestyles, she said. Help also is available to advise families on how to shop for groceries and prepare meals in a healthy manner, she said.

"The earlier children ingrain specific [habits], the more they will stay with them -- whether it's brushing their teeth before bed, washing their hands, or [remembering] to drink water and eat fruits and vegetables," Thompson said.

Chili: Serious Business



Photos by Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Above: Command Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, Nebraska command chief master sergeant, samples one of the many entries submitted during an annual chili cookoff at the Penterman Armory on the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Dec. 11. Judging was based on aroma, color, consistency, taste and after-taste.

Right: Decorated aprons were awarded "Grand Champion" Chuck Chase, from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency; "Reserve Champion" Command Sgt. Maj. Wilfred Uhing, of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance); and honorable mention Sgt. 1st Class Barry Urtel, Nebraska National Guard Medical Detachment.



PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Jan K. Behn
John S. Berry
Christopher J. Weskamp

Major
Nicholas G. Nyman
Raymond P. Phillips
Carlos A. VanNurden

Captain
Kyle D. Dellevoet
Charles E. McGreer

Chief Warrant Officer Three
Lloyd T. Morris III

Sergeant Major
Jason C. Grams
Shawn M. Griffith
Barry L. Read

Master Sergeant
Leonard D. Bergantzel
Eric E. Pearson
David G. Waters

Sergeant First Class
Travis J. Ahers
James R. Bussen
Randy A. Garver
Lindsay S. Goodrich
Jonathan L. Hagemann
Gary G. Klapperich
Benjamin P. McDermott
Lucas W. Mitchell

Staff Sergeant
Kelly L. Allsman
Brenton J. Duryea
Jason D. Goodjohn
Amber J. Gralheer
Christopher R. Jansen
Trevor J. Kurtzhals
Jesus Magana Jr.
Jason C. Papke
Aaron M. Rockford
Kyann M. Sheets
Matthew M. Stern
Justin P. Tramp
Ray C. Underwood
Patrick E. Wyrick

Sergeant
Dustin L. Barry
Brittany A. Battaglia
Patrick R. Beerbohm
Natasha J. Betts
Michael S. Boesen
Loran R. Boettcher
David J. Buller
Patric P. Farrens Jr.
Emilee G. Frankhauser
Lyndon W. Griner
Benjamin A. Heimes
Travis R. Hofmann
Ronald E. Horne II
Aaron M. Kaufman
Alyssa R. Largis
Ira S. McKillip
Kalor A. Moore
Adam M. Pitts
Matthew A. Poppe
Eric D. Randolph
Carmen M. Ruiz
Justin L. B. Saner
Zachary W. Spurgeon
Charles W. Stierwalt
Chase B. Sund
Matthew T. Tenoria
Kaio J. Uhing

Specialist

Jacqueline P. Alvarez
Jesse W. Anderbery
Dustin W. Bandt
Shavin N. Barnhart
Brady A. Barton
Chantel J. Beazer
Brandon J. Bell
Jeovani A. Bermudez-Garcia
Dillayn R. Binder
Kyle J. Bonk
Jerrick D. Bowers
Jake C. Bruss
Dylan M. Bryant
Oualala Coulibaly
Dylan P. Cruz
Bryce T. Davis
Kory K. Dearie
Cassuis L. Dinkel
Alexis S. Dossantos
Robert H. Guess Jr.
Robert A. Hoy
Justin F. Kotas
Stephan P. Laboy
Ryan E. Lawrence
Joey R. Maack
Justin H. McGlothlin
Cesar A. Mendozaabuol
Brandon L. Niemoth
Brandon M. Olsen
Mitchell J. Patzel Jr.
Edgar A. Pelayo
Gabriel E. Penaherrera
Maneul V. Perez
Stefan J. Peterson
Talon N. Pinkal
Rachelle L. Plock
Luke D. Potts
Dillon J. Prater
Joseph B. Quail
James A. Rashilla
Kevin D. Robertson
Zachary R. Smathers
Charleston S. Svitak
Troy D. Thielke
Alexander J. Wear
Levi J. White
Shane A. Wimberley

Private First Class

Anthony J. Ahlman
Alec W. Britten
Kyle S. Coffey
Thomas J. Curry
Seth M. Hendrickson
Nathaniel J. Kahn
Anthony T. Kennelly
Guhner L. Kepler
Patrick W. Luebbert
Elyse B. Lyons
Robin A. Nagle
Winston A. Norris
Jonathon L. Oehm
Dewey J. Page
Stefan J. Peterson
Arturo J. Romero
Douglas H. Shaw
Tucker J. Spellman
Tory L. Sukut
Casey R. Thompson
Michael F. Wallace
Stephen T. Wendeln

Private Two

Caleb W. L. Andersen
Alex Y. Connor
Austin R. Fischer
Josue S. Flores
Jacob I. Kendrick
Guhner L. Kepler
Brandon J. Lustrea
Mohamed A. Musa

Air National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
John R. Massey
Joyce C. Tow

Major
Travis L. Degen

Captain
April E. Partin
Troy E. Stauffer

First Lieutenant
Erica M. Wilson
Thomas M. Wilson

Chief Master Sergeant
Gregory L. Malina

Senior Master Sergeant
Joseph P. Woodshank

Master Sergeant
Jaime Barlow

Blane C. Buckley
James L. Daberkow
Gerald A. Dorn
Ronald D. Enriquez Jr.
Jason J. Johnson
David C. Parker

Technical Sergeant

Rene A. Arriola
Michael J. Barbur
Jeffrey J. Bellamy
Kyle D. Fastenau
Ryan W. Garbers
Michael W. Gibson II
Jason D. Johnsen
Jeffrey R. Quick
Brett A. Ziemann

Staff Sergeant
Matthew A. Crane
Cheva Jumnongnart
Kody L. Kelly
Eric J. Koranda

Matthew R. Lorence
Eric D. Miksch
Donavan J. Mitchell
Jared N. Robertson
Mary E. Thach
Kyle R. Wenske

Senior Airman

Danielle E. Boger
Craig C. Boyle
Dylan M. Burke
Daniel N. Ellis
Victor A. J. Habib
Taiheem R. Pleasant
Rachel J. Quigley
Richard L. Vath
Michael A. Young
Jonathon A. Zgainer

Airman First Class
Reiny J. Dickhaut
Sean A. Pozehl
Katherine T. Welsh

Airman

Sarah A. Harre
Morgan R. Hurley

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Maj. Ryan F. Kramer
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael T. Harrell
1st Sgt. Steven T. Harris
Sgt. 1st Class Lisa M. Almquist
Sgt. 1st Class Rodney P. Bussinger
Sgt. 1st Class Kevin D. Smith
Sgt. 1st Class James R. Young
Staff Sgt. Adam A. Fritzler
Staff Sgt. Roger D. Svanda
Staff Sgt. Michael S. Weichman
Sgt. John E. Donnelly
Sgt. Scot R. Gerten
Spc. Tyler J. Lauer

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Legion of Merit
Chief Warrant Officer 5 John F. Regan
Command Sgt. Maj. Boyd L. Navratil

Bronze Star Medal

Maj. Thomas W. Golden
Maj. Kevin M. Hurtt
Capt. Brandon S. Burton
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steven J. Stienike

Purple Heart

Spc. Travis J. Dittmer

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Randall S. Ames
Lt. Col. Steven P. Petersen
Lt. Col. Craig W. Strong
Maj. Kyle R. Matoush
Maj. Brett A. Scholting
Maj. Shane P. Varejcka
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Zachary S. Hartmann
Chief Warrant Officer 3 KC Sohl
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeffrey R. Thomas
Command Sgt. Maj. Boyd L. Navratil
Master Sgt. Larry W. Martin Jr.
Master Sgt. James H. McKeenan
Sgt. 1st Class Michelle L. Bade
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn M. Burton
Sgt. 1st Class Byron J. Davis

Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. John S. Berry
Lt. Col. Eric D. Hunsberger
Maj. Charles D. McWilliams
Maj. Reuben D. Rieke Jr.
Maj. Jeanne M. Stokes
Maj. Michael S. Wilson
Capt. Cory N. Huskey
Capt. Adam R. Kreilek
Capt. Nathaniel C. Krcilek
Capt. Stephen A. Marquez
Capt. Matthew C. Misfeldt
Capt. Jeremy K. Smith
Capt. Sean M. Thurmer
1st Lt. Michael A. Kilgore
1st Lt. Sean C. Polson
Warrant Officer Heath C. Blackwell
Sgt. 1st Class Andrew J. Hytrek
Sgt. 1st Class Landen C. Koopman
Sgt. 1st Class Amanda K. Robinson
Sgt. 1st Class Katherine K. Smith
Sgt. 1st Class Douglas D. Stephens

Sgt. 1st Class Jon J. Wren
Staff Sgt. Lillie D. Chambers
Staff Sgt. Jennifer L. Feldt
Staff Sgt. Patrick C. Rauch
Staff Sgt. John M. Scholes
Staff Sgt. Ty S. Tucker
Sgt. Richard J. Shearer III
Sgt. Andrew G. Jarvis
Sgt. Kody J. Marshall
Sgt. Riley J. Ohde
Sgt. Shawn S. Scherer
Sgt. Jacqueline M. Timmerman
Sgt. Daniel J. Townsend II
Sgt. Tony V. Vodicka
Spc. James A. Barron
Spc. Bradley K. Bieck

Army Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Philip G. Houser
Capt. Sean M. Thurmer
1st Lt. Brian R. Riekenberg
2nd Lt. Ryan W. Cho
2nd Lt. Emmalena A. Kelly
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mark D. Roland
Master Sgt. Jesse R. Biltoft
Master Sgt. Noel A. Ford
Sgt. 1st Class Austin J. Behnk
Sgt. 1st Class Christine L. Gonzales
Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan L. Hagemann
Sgt. 1st Class Michael W. Hoover
Sgt. 1st Class Chad E. Sample
Sgt. 1st Class Cody A. Trindle
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn E. Vater
Staff Sgt. Kyla M. Boersma
Staff Sgt. Cassandra M. Day
Staff Sgt. James M. Dubbs
Staff Sgt. Adam D. Dueland
Staff Sgt. Luke E. Katz
Staff Sgt. Nicholas A. Kemp
Staff Sgt. Michael J. Siemer
Sgt. Mitchell L. Adkins
Sgt. Andrew J. Becerra
Sgt. Michelle L. Berry
Sgt. Zachary L. Cary
Sgt. Nathaniel L. Chitwood
Sgt. Joshua D. Cowsky
Sgt. Glenn J. Cox
Sgt. Jason S. Dillon
Sgt. Savannah R. Erickson
Sgt. Tessa J. Harding
Sgt. Matthew t. Hawke
Sgt. Benjamin A. Heimes
Sgt. Craig D. Hoppes

Sgt. Patrick J. Kelly
Sgt. Joshua J. Kushen
Sgt. Maxwell Q. Nyce
Sgt. James E. Scott III
Sgt. Colton J. Stepp
Sgt. Keith W. Tinnell
Sgt. Eric L. Wilford
Spc. Jared D. Archer
Spc. James A. Barron
Spc. Caleb J. Boender
Spc. Jordan E. Consolver
Spc. Travis J. Dittmer
Spc. Christopher E. Johnson
Spc. Taylor D. Nekuda
Spc. Bernard J. Nicola

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

Lt. Col. Craig W. Strong
Maj. Matthew S. York
Capt. Jason D. Barber
Capt. Matthew D. Bartling
Capt. Cory N. Huskey
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chad M. Bruce
Sgt. 1st Class David M. Nanfito
Sgt. 1st Class Gregory F. Smith-Burns
Staff Sgt. Lillie D. Chambers
Staff Sgt. Nicholas J. Driggs
Staff Sgt. Wade O. Kopetzky

Combat Infantry Badge

Staff Sgt. Patrick C. Rauch

Combat Action Badge

Sgt. Shawn S. Scherer
Spc. James A. Barron
Spc. Travis J. Dittmer

Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Hartman

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chad M. Bruce
Sgt. 1st Class Jason P. Sharp
Staff Sgt. Bret A. Liermann
Sgt. Zachary A. Freauf
Sgt. Joshua J. Kushen
Sgt. Kimberly M. Smith

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Maj. Charles D. McWilliams

Maj. Brett E. Petit
Maj. Thomas L. Traylor
Capt. Cory N. Huskey
Capt. Jocelyn J. Kuta
Capt. Christopher D. Lopes
Capt. David M. Stoltenberg
Capt. Tony J. Woodruff
1st Lt. Aloma J. Moncrief
1st Lt. Veronica L. Wolf
2nd Lt. Emmalena A. Kelly
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cory D. Languis
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brent A. Brozovsky
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeffery D. Klinger
1st Sgt. Ryan E. Sullivan
Master Sgt. Jesse R. Biltoft
Master Sgt. John A. Snoozy
Sgt. 1st Class Joseph C. Haag
Sgt. 1st Class Donald K. Kemper
Sgt. 1st Class Landen C. Koopman
Sgt. 1st Class Keith P. McDermott
Sgt. 1st Class Lucas J. Smith
Staff Sgt. Lillie D. Chambers
Staff Sgt. Megan G. Dannelly
Staff Sgt. Stephen P. Dorcey
Staff Sgt. Lillie D. Geyer
Staff Sgt. Tanner K. Hippen
Staff Sgt. Gregg V. Hochderffer
Staff Sgt. Damian A. Kelly
Staff Sgt. Chad R. Lemmer
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey L. Meyers
Staff Sgt. William P. Nolan
Staff Sgt. Patrick S. Sitter
Sgt. Mario A. Chavez
Sgt. Tessa J. Harding
Sgt. Erica D. Hartman
Sgt. Christopher K. Lohman II
Sgt. Brandon A. Pedersen
Sgt. Joseph R. Pollock
Sgt. Jesse J. Sladky
Spc. Chantel J. Beazer
Spc. Taylor R. Beck
Spc. James G. Berger
Spc. Tanner J. Bramman
Spc. Andrew C. Broers
Spc. Casey S. Harris
Spc. Seth W. Linnemeyer
Spc. Daniel O. Rosenau
Spc. Erve Sagbo
Spc. Schuyler D. Schoenhofner
Spc. James A. Struss Jr.
Spc. Prissylla Weeks
Pfc. Aaron R. Winberg

Nebraska Air Guard names Outstanding Airmen of the Year

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard recently named its four Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2013.

The Airmen, who will now represent the Nebraska Air National Guard in national competitions, were selected by a board of senior enlisted Nebraska Air National Guard leaders in January. They were nominated for the prestigious annual award by their respective units.

"This year's competition was extremely close and I speak for all the judges, in every level of competition, when I say that we had a truly remarkable group of Airmen from which to choose," said Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, state command chief master sergeant.

Selected as Outstanding Airmen were:

• **Airman Category:** Staff Sgt. Patrick Turner, 155th Civil Engineer Squadron;

• **Noncommissioned Officer Category:** Tech. Sgt. Anthony Whitfield, 170th Group;

• **Senior Noncommissioned Officer Category:** Master Sgt. Adam Dytrych, 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron;

• **First Sergeant Category:** Senior Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Airman Category

Staff Sgt. Patrick Turner is fire emergency services crew chief with the Lincoln-based 155th Civil Engineer Squadron. While serving in this capacity, Turner deployed to both Southern Command and Central Command

areas of operation.

In addition to the demands of two deployments, Turner completed Airmen Leadership School and added several certifications to his resume becoming a force multiplier.

Turner is an active member of his community of Crete, Neb., as a volunteer emergency medical technician for youth basketball camps, a volunteer class retreat leader, and assistant football coach for YMCA youth flag football league.

Noncommissioned Officer Category
Tech. Sgt. Anthony Whitfield is an operations intelligence analyst assigned to the 170th Operations Support Squadron, at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

In 2013, Whitfield provided war fighters with critical intelligence products demonstrating seamless integration between active duty and Air National Guard Airmen while deployed to Al Dhafra Airbase in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. In garrison with the 170th Group, he provides members of the 55th Wing a unique combination of expertise and continuity, making him a "cornerstone"



Whitfield



Turner

of all 55th ISS and 170th OSS intelligence training activities.

Whitfield completed his Community College of the Air Force Associates Degree, setting the example for enlisted Airmen. Whitfield is also an active member of his community volunteering with the local Boy Scouts troop. He spearheaded a recycling drive, organized a food pantry drive and increased safety as a unit motorcycle safety representative.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer Category

Master Sgt. Adam A. Dytrych is an air transportation craftsman assigned to the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Dytrych demonstrated exceptional leadership while deployed to Bagram Airfield and in garrison as the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron Air Transportation section chief. His innovation and creativity resulted in several process improvements during his deployment to U.S. Central Command's area of operations and epitomizes the concept of "Adaptable Airmen." Dytrych completed his Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education course, Air Power Course at Air University, and Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy by correspondence, all while pursuing a Master's degree from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.



Dytrych

Dytrych is an active member of his community volunteering time and donated food to the Lincoln Food Bank, coaching youth football and baseball, and staying involved with the Air Force Sergeants Association and Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S.

First Sergeant Category

Senior Master Sgt. Jason L. Schroeder is the First Sergeant for the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard.

During this period, Schroeder demonstrated exceptional leadership as the 155th Air Refueling Wing and 155th Operations Group First Sergeant.

His dedication to the Airmen of the Nebraska Air National Guard is demonstrated by his outstanding support of his assigned Airmen, first sergeants assigned in other Groups and Squadrons and to other Airmen support and morale building groups and organizations throughout the state.

Schroeder completed his Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education course via correspondence in only two months while pursuing a Master's degree in management at Doane College in Lincoln, Neb.

Schroeder is active as treasurer for the First Sergeant's Council, vice president of the Top Three Council, and Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Princeton, Neb.



Schroeder

Street Talk

“What are you doing to better your community?”



Senior Airman Joseph Naumann
155th Communications Flight

“I volunteer at the Light House. It’s an after school care program for kids whose parents won’t be home to keep them safe and out of trouble...I’m like their older brother at times. I’m part of a family.”

Sgt. John Lehn
402nd Military Police Battalion

“I would like to start a weapons safety program.”



Sgt. Alyssa Largis
402nd Military Police Battalion

“I want to volunteer at my daughter’s gymnastics classes.”

Senior Airman Alonzo Blount
155th Services Flight

“I work for a company where we do Relay for Life raising money for that. We did the diabetes walk last fall and we gather clothing for homeless shelters.”



Staff Sgt. Anita Lovell
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron

“I am promoting mental and behavioral health services in the community. The Nebraska Counseling Association is a program that is trying to build awareness. There are services out there serving all populations.”

Maj. Sean O’Neill
67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

“I would like to volunteer more at my church.”



Always ready, always there

As the National Guard begins its 378th year of operations I think it’s important to thank you, the Airmen of the Nebraska Air National Guard, for always answering your state and nation’s call.

Especially in the current economic climate, our viability as a military organization rests solely in your ability to respond wherever and whenever called. The security, flexibility and value you provide your country are often underestimated.

I cannot tell you how many times each year I correct the record regarding our “availability” or perceived lack thereof.

Although the common myth is that the National Guard is always two years away from a particular tasking, to a unit I’m unaware of a single refusal to deploy on short notice, using volunteers, like the 155th Air Refueling Wing did during Operation Odyssey Dawn.

It is precisely this type of operation that has transformed the Air National Guard from the “strategic reserve force” of the past into the “full operational partner” of the present. I see our role continuing to evolve over time until we return to the “first responder” role our militia predecessors filled.

As this evolution takes place, we should pay heed to the words of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld: “As you know, you go to war with the Army you have-not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time.”

The logical extension of that statement is, “You don’t go to war with the Army you want, you go with the Army you trained.”

Exactly for this reason, during the December senior enlisted call I briefed an “Enlisted Career Management Process” designed by Nebraska Air National Guard chiefs and senior enlisted leaders to enhance development opportunities for our technical sergeants through

Another Voice

Command Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster



chief master sergeants. The goals of this process are rudimentary and include:

- Standardizing development expectations at each rank level;
- Providing performance feedback to enlisted members;
- Providing commanders regarding development and promotion potential of enlisted members;
- Aligning personal goals, organizational needs and development opportunities.

The forms, instructions and briefings are available upon request.

It is a common goal of Chief Master Sgt. Nancy Vondrasek, 155th ARW command chief, and I that our Airmen enjoy every available opportunity for professional development and have visibility on every higher level assignment we see.

As you may have already read, the implementation of Enlisted Performance Reports has been delayed. This delay resulted from a desire to address shortcomings of the current system and forms before the Air National Guard trained on those procedures. I view this delay as a win-win for the Air National Guard.

While I understand the critical importance of consistent performance feedback, I think rolling out the old procedures would have constituted a “false start” and would have been more disruptive than beneficial.

Additionally, the new process is being designed from the ground-up to take into account the needs of the Air National Guard’s Airmen and correct some previously identified deficiencies with the forms and processes.

Exceptional Promotion Program (EPP) – With the New Year comes an opportunity to promote two NEANG senior non-commissioned officers to one grade over their current authorized grade based on their performance. There are a few caveats (must have

at least 17 years of service, not currently double slotted or over grade, drill status Guardsmen only) but generally this program is underutilized in Nebraska.

Particularly with the master sergeant to senior master sergeant promotion, the three year time limit seems to be a disincentive to our high performing master sergeants.

I would suggest that leaving after three years is only one possible outcome from this program. Additionally, members promoted using EPP procedures could also be moved into a rank-compatible billet in their current organization or transfer to a position in another organization.

As I write this, the State’s Outstanding Airman of the Year (OAY) packages are arriving from the 155th ARW, 170th Group and Joint Force Headquarters. I look forward to interviewing the candidates in January and putting our best Airmen forward for the national level competition. (See story on page 11.)

OAY is always a good reminder of our level of engagement and commitment to excellence. It is humbling to interview our OAY candidates and it has been my experience that the high quality of Airman who don’t make the state boards says every bit as much about our force as those who do.

Looking back on 2013 and forward to 2014 I see some challenges answered and some new challenges and opportunities ahead. That we continually face new challenges remains unchanged in our 377-year history and I am confident that we will remain “Always Ready, Always There!”

Looking back: Am I really this old?

Am I really this old? This question was definitely on my mind last month as I accompanied my eldest son, Patrick, on a visit to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to check out the Reserve Officer Training Corps programs.

Standing along the wall as Patrick and several other of his friends sat listening raptly as first Army and then Air Force ROTC officials explained the benefits and expectations of their respective programs, I couldn’t help but think that it seemed like it had been just last week that I was sitting in these very chairs pondering my options for the future.

I also couldn’t help wondering if, knowing all that I do now, if that would’ve affected the decisions that I ultimately made then.

Probably one of the benefits of my life in the military is that I’ve gotten to share my experiences – both directly and indirectly – with my wife and our kids. None of them have ever known a time when I wasn’t a member of the military. So, drill weekends, annual trainings, overseas missions, and sudden calls to return back to work have always been a part of our lives.

By the time Patrick came around, I’d already been in the military more than 11 years. He’s spent his entire life around the National Guard in one shape or form, attending family events, unit send-offs and welcome homes, etc., since before he could walk.

Also, by-and-large, Patrick – as well as his three siblings – has really never known a time when the United States and its military weren’t at war.

My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes



during state emergencies, and most importantly in the benefits that being a member of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard have given to me and those like me.

Still, when it’s your son or daughter who is considering joining, it changes the equation somewhat. Is this truly an organization that you want them to join? Have we as current members done enough to make this an organization that will allow them to fully explore, develop and then utilize their God-given talents and interests? Is this really the life that we want for their future?

In a large sense I think I now better understand the types of anxiety I put my parents through when I was faced with a similar decision nearly 28 years ago because these really are the important questions that all of us should be asking ourselves.

Have we truly done enough to make this a National Guard worthy of being handed off to the next generation, which in a large sense is really the second 9/11 generation?

As I stood against the wall listening to those briefings and pondered these questions, I realized that yes, I would gladly welcome Patrick and his friends into our ranks if they choose – and it truly must be their choice – to join us.

That’s because I still believe that the National Guard is a great organization that can, in most cases, add immeasurably to our lives and to our understanding of our roles as citizens.

It also renewed in me a sense that my work is still far from over if I do indeed want this to be an organization worthy of his membership.



Go Big Red: Pfc. Megan Brooks, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln cheerleader and member of the Nebraska Army National Guard, cheers during the Husker football game versus the Iowa Hawkeyes at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 29. Brooks joined the Nebraska Army National Guard for all the opportunities it can provide for her.



Photos by Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Game Day to Guard Drill

■ Husker cheerleader trades sidelines for Army training

By Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Staff Photojournalist

Pfc. Megan Brooks is not your average college senior.

Brooks, a full-time college student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will graduate in August 2014 with a Family Science degree from UNL's College of Education and Human Sciences.

Besides being a college student, Brooks has her closet and schedule full as she works part-time at Trader Joe's, a specialty retail grocery store in Lincoln, Neb., is a captain of the 2013-14 UNL Cheer Squad and recently enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"After learning about the Guard, I realized it was absolutely perfect for me," said Brooks.

Brooks then went to the recruiting office of Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Strack, a Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention noncommissioned officer.

"She came into my office with a friend and seemed to already be sold on the Nebraska Army National Guard prior to meeting with me," said Strack. "The information her friend, 1st Lt. Brandon Meyer, had given her had her hooked."

"She was always very mentally and physically tough so (Brooks) joining didn't surprise me," said Lyndsay Lierman, a former UNL cheer squad member. "I guess I never would have expected it from her."

Strack agreed that he didn't think a cheerleader like Brooks would enlist.

"When I first heard that she

was a UNL cheerleader I honestly didn't know if she would enlist," said Strack. "You don't typically run into cheerleaders that want to join the military, let alone ones that are captains on an NCAA collegiate team."

"After meeting her, she was so excited about the opportunities and benefits the National Guard had to offer," said Strack.

"I had only one question," added Strack. "When will she join?"

Strack could tell that she was a very motivated young lady who had her own personal goals that the National Guard could assist with.

"She knows what she wants and would not let anything stop her from achieving them, lucky for me and the Guard we could help her attain her goals," said Strack.

According to Brooks, who is the only fourth year cheerleader on the team, she liked the idea of structure and the discipline aspect of the Guard, but decided to join for many reasons.

"It was first brought to my attention because I was talking about how school is a big financial

burden," said Brooks. "And when it got brought up to me it was kind of too good to be true."

She also liked the idea of starting something new.

"It's almost like a fresh start," said Brooks. "It's something I get to start from the beginning as a more mature person."

Another main reason Brooks joined the Nebraska National Guard as a health care specialist was because she likes helping others.

"I thought the exposure of being a medic would carry over and give me experience," said Brooks, as she is planning on going to nursing school after returning home from training.

"I just like helping," added Brooks. "I have my family science degree, so if nursing falls through somehow, I can get my masters in family work and there's an option to work with military families."

After enlisting in August 2013, Brooks has been attending Recruit Sustainment Program, a program

of the Army National Guard that introduces new recruits to the fundamentals of the U.S. Army.

According to Brooks, she couldn't believe how many similarities there were between what she's learned about the Guard and her cheer squad.

"For (cheerleading) tryouts, we are required to run two miles and they tell us under 18 (minutes), but preferably under 17 minutes," said Brooks. "Because of the Guard, I have new goals."

"(The Guard) is definitely something that makes you push yourself more," added Brooks. "We do push-ups, sit-ups and everything in our cheer workouts so now I'm really ready for the (physical fitness test)."

"Physical fitness-wise, she is outstanding," said Strack. "She is a motivator and helps everyone do better with her cheering. She has passed all her Army Physical Fitness Test with flying colors."

In addition to RSP, Brooks took a military science class at UNL during the fall semester to help her get a little bit ahead of some of her peers.

"I look forward to developing leadership skills," said Brooks.

She said as a captain of her cheer squad she has to announce different commands and in the few short months of being in the Guard has helped her enormously.

"You have to be confident," said Brooks. "I think that's one of the things I've learned a lot."

"I've also learned you have to go

above and beyond to actually get noticed," added Brooks.

"With RSP and her motivation for training, obviously she is busy cheering on the Huskers but said she will drill on Saturday, go cheer on the Big Red and then come back to drill," said Strack. "Not wanting to miss anything will help her be successful in her career."

According to Brooks' teammates, they really look up to her and support her joining a new team.

"She does a lot of training on her own, so I know she is very physically ready," said Lierman.

As Brooks gets closer to putting down her pom poms and ready for push-ups as her basic training ship date is approaching, she knows that joining the Guard has been and will continue to be a great decision in her life even though she will not be able to receive her diploma as she will be in basic training.

"Megan has a lot of doors open to her. Currently she is a regular enlisted Soldier, however she is looking at Officer Candidate School and different medical schools that the Guard has to offer," said Strack. "She will make a great addition to the Nebraska National Guard and plans to help mentor and motivate younger Soldiers for many years to come."

"I want to go through Officer Candidate School," said Brooks talking about her future. "And the rest will figure itself out as I go because I know I have so many options in the Guard."

"(The Guard) is definitely something that makes you push yourself more... We do push-ups, sit-ups and everything in our cheer workouts so now I'm really ready for the (physical fitness test)."

— Pfc. Megan Brooks

Nebraska National Guard marathoners test themselves during Houston race

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

As the Lincoln National Guard Marathon in May draws closer, two Nebraska National Guardsmen traveled to Houston to compete in the Chevron Houston Marathon on Jan. 19, one of Houston's biggest events of the year.

Sgt. 1st Class Tarissa Batenhorst, a human resources sergeant for the Kearney-based 734th Transportation Battalion, and Capt. Robb Campbell, of Detachment 2, Company A, 35th Infantry Division, both members of the National Guard's elite All Guard Marathon team, used the opportunity to test their skills prior to the Lincoln race.

Batenhorst and Campbell were joined by approximately 15 other members of the All Guard Team. According to Batenhorst, the conditions were ideal.

"The weather was perfect and the course itself was nice and flat," she said. "Texas is a really military-friendly state so the crowd was amazing. It was supported well so the conditions were great. I had a great race, it felt good."

Batenhorst showed her mid-season form finishing the half marathon in 1 hour, 42 minutes, 36 seconds. Campbell completed the full marathon in 3:27:57.

But competing for the All Guard Marathon team is not only about running. Members of the team don their uniforms and work a variety of public events. For this marathon, the runners helped hand out medals



Inspirational Finish: Members of the National Guard's elite All Guard Marathon Team welcome a young, physically-challenged boy to the finish line with medals as he completes the 5-kilometer race of the Chevron Houston Marathon on Jan. 18.

at the finish line of the 5-kilometer race on Saturday, Jan. 18.

Batenhorst said handing out medals was inspiring to see the runners finish because she is usually on the other side of that transaction. The Guard runners were especially inspired by a young, physically-challenged boy who completed the race in a modified wheelchair.

"It was really neat," said Batenhorst. "It was kind of humbling in a way. You can still be inspired by all the different types of people who are out running."

Batenhorst said she looks forward to the team camaraderie for every race and uses marathons as

a goal to keep physically fit and show a strong community tie with the National Guard.

"With us being in the military, I think we're held to a higher standard...fitness is just one aspect of that," said Batenhorst.

"If I don't have some type of goal, I'm going to get bored and that's probably why a lot of people lose interest in working out," she added. "You've got to give yourself a goal in sight to keep you motivated."

"At the end of the day that's what it's about. I want to stay healthy and stay in shape...and if that's good enough to get me on a team where I can travel - bonus!"



Courtesy Photos

Proud Finishers: Capt. Robb Campbell, of Detachment 2, Company A, 35th Infantry Division and Sgt. 1st Class Tarissa Batenhorst, a human resources sergeant for the Kearney-based 734th Transportation Battalion, pose with their finishers medals after the Chevron Houston Marathon, Jan. 19, in Houston. Both runners are members of the National Guard's elite All Guard Marathon team and travel throughout the nation running marathons while working within the race community raising awareness for the National Guard.

FORD continued from page 1.

back riding down to her daughter, Teresa McCormick, Ford's mother, who in turn passed it to Ford.

"Usually kids grow up riding bikes," said Ford. "I grew up riding horses."

Ford said even as an infant she was riding in her mother's lap. By age three, she had her own Shetland pony. McCormick's reasoning for giving her daughter a pony her own size was to instill confidence and teach responsibility. Ford learned how to lead, ride and care for her pony by brushing, feeding and watering him.

As she grew in age, size and talent, so did the horses she rode and the events in which she competed. By age eight, Ford was riding a full-sized horse named Rocky, who is now 33-years-old and "easing into his retirement," she said.

Ford said horseback riding relieves pent up stress and having a horse is like having a gigantic dog.

Growing up, Ford was thoroughly involved in 4-H and competed in high school rodeos. McCormick said she focused on getting Ford well-rounded by building a solid foundation in horsemanship.

Ford competed heavily in barrel racing and pole-bending, an event similar to barrel racing but weaving around stationary poles rather than barrels. She said growing up in a competitive rodeo culture and horseback riding is a part of who she is as a person.

Ford joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in May 2007, following in the footsteps of her father, Mike Ford, a retired Army Ranger, and her step-mother, Noel, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Ford had to put her riding days on hold, especially in 2012 when she deployed to Kuwait and Afghanistan. Growing up on a ranch, horses were available to ride at any time, so being deployed and having no access to horses proved to Ford that riding was a part of her life she was not ready to give up.

When she got home she was determined to resume this integral part of her life.

"You don't realize what you have until you leave," said Ford. "I joined

the military and went five years without riding horses."

In 2013, Ford competed at the Professional Armed Forces Rodeo Association's World Finals barrel race, Nov. 30 - Dec. 1, in Midland, Texas.

The PAFRA is a newer association for military members, past and present, who participate in rodeo events. They can bring their accumulated points from other sanctioned competitions to World Finals and compete.

Holeman allowed Ford to borrow "Hopes Money Boy," her top-dollar performance horse, for the PAFRA World Finals, because Ford did not have a trained horse of her own at the time.

Holeman said Money Boy is like an "overly hyperactive child," but Ford has a special bond with the horse and handles him well.

"It takes a talented person to be able to crawl onto that level of horse...and be successful," said McCormick. "She had only ridden that horse once before, and she could feel he was a good horse. She has pure talent and ability."

"I wish I had her hands and head, she can get him to do anything," said Holeman. "I can't get him to cooperate."

Ford said she and Money Boy struggled to work together initially, but by the end of her third and final run at the World Finals, they developed a bond.

Ford waited with Money Boy at the PAFRA World Finals wondering if they had done enough to win. When results were finally posted, the pair had run fast enough to win.

Winning at the World Finals was extremely special for Ford and her family. Her mother's family provided the training, discipline, and support she needed in horsemanship to advance to higher levels in competitions, and her father's family paved the way for her to join the Nebraska Air National Guard.

"The association and event is all about the military, acknowledging all of the uniformed services before performances," said McCormick. "It was a tear jerking and emotional rodeo because they honor those serving overseas and those who



Flyin' Dirt: Staff Sgt. Abby Ford rides "Hopes Money Boy," during a barrel-racing competition. Ford, a logistician with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, grew up riding horses and recently won a national barrel racing championship at the Professional Armed Forces Rodeo Association's World Finals on the horse she borrowed from her grandmother.

made the ultimate sacrifice for us to have the freedom to have rodeo."

McCormick and Holeman said they were proud of Ford.

"I lucked out having such a talented young woman as my daughter," said McCormick.

Ford plans to follow in her grandmother's footsteps and ride and compete until her body fails her. And now with a PAFRA title under her belt, she represents the legacy of her grandmother and continues to live up to the family name.

"I wouldn't have ever done any of this without all of my family. I've got my mom and grandma for the horses, I've got my dad, step-mom and aunts for my military push," said Ford.

"Thanks to my entire family, they have made me how I am and put me in the position I am. I couldn't have asked for better experiences and opportunities. They are very supportive of me being in the military."



Courtesy Photos

Family Passion: Staff Sgt. Abby Ford (right) sits atop "Hopes Money Boy," her grandmother's barrel racing horse, while her mother, Teresa McCormick, holds the reins of her horse and her grandmother's, June Holeman. Ford, a 155th Air Refueling Wing logistician, inherited her love of horse riding from her grandmother and mother, but was inspired to join the military by her father.