

# BRIDGING THE

# GAP

Through Knowledge, Education, Understanding & Insight

February / March 2008, Issue 8



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The SEP Group provides opportunities for positive exchange among diverse groups through community outreach, education and cultural diversity awareness.

## DIVERSITY: OUR ADVANTAGE

By Colonel Dave Zwart



We have all heard that we need to be a more diverse organization to succeed now and in the future. So when we say “do diversity” what are we asking for and what specifically is diversity? Diversity refers to the differences in age, ethnic heritage, gender, national origin, marital status, physical ability, race, religion, economic status and education.

When did this focus on a diverse workforce become important? World War II proved to be a catalyst for domestic and sociological changes opening up new occupational avenues for women and minorities. In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Act and Affirmative Action programs attempted to overcome the effects of past discrimination against women and minorities. Combined with an ever increasing dependence on a global economy, American corporations began to see that the differences in cultural identities needed to be productively valued; consequently they managed to gain an advantage over competitors. By the 1990s, the field of diversity management was establishing itself in the business world as a tool every successful manager and leader needed to understand and use.

For the National Guard, the 1990s was a time for “right sizing,” changing missions and recruiting and retention challenges. Although diversity was part of our training during this period, the focus seemed limited to filling women and minority recruiting goals as opposed to harnessing the true potential of diversity. All that changed with the events on September 11, 2001 and the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

Today the National Guard is, for most citizens, the very face of America’s GWOT warriors. We do not mobilize units in the National Guard, we mobilize communities. You need only attend a unit send off or welcome home ceremony to understand the National Guard is a community-based military force. It is this community identity that is the strength of the National Guard. However, in order to perpetuate this community support, the National Guard must reflect the diversity found in Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk, Hastings, Scottsbluff and all Nebraska communities. It is this mutual identification, this cultural diversity, which gives the National Guard its support and its advantage over other military organizations for recruiting and retention.

The concept of a community-based military is not revolutionary, at least not now. The National Guard celebrated its 371st birthday in 2007. It is the oldest military organization in the United States. First called the Militia, the National Guard was patterned after the English militia system known by the colonists. The first Militia men had but one goal in mind: to protect their families and homes against attack. There were no fancy uniforms and not even enough muskets to go around. These part-time soldiers successfully banded together to defend the colonies against attack from enemies. While not diverse in the same respect as the vast diversity found in America today, the men serving in the Militia were from every walk of life: the aristocrats, laborers, farmers, lawyers, doctors

Continued on Page 11



## JAPAN'S THREE-DAY NEW YEAR HOLIDAY

By Pam Makovicka

The three-day New Year holiday is a very special time in Japan, a time of solemn prayers and joyous greetings. While New Year's Day is a holiday in many parts of the world, the occasion has a unique significance to the Japanese, who take the opportunity to begin anew many aspects of their lives. Most businesses shut down from January 1 to January 3; families typically gather to spend the days together.

New Year is regarded in Japan as an auspicious occasion. As such, it is filled with traditional

activities which, it is hoped, will result in a more successful year. The people observe the age-old Japanese custom of not carrying over any debts or tasks from the old year to the new. As the end of the year approaches, businessmen busily wind up their affairs of the old year. They try to pay all their obligations by New Year's Eve. Even non-businessmen try to clear the slate by the end of the year.

Homemakers all over the nation work extra hard preparing for the holiday. They must prepare many special foods, clean the house even more rigorously than usual, and make decorations for the holiday season. In Japan the cleaning is called *Susuharai*, or soot-sweeping. Both inside and outside the house, the stains, physical and spiritual, of the past year are rubbed out in order to purify the home and make it fresh for the New Year.

Then, on New Year's Eve, a pine decoration known as *Kadomatsu* is set up on both sides of the front entrance. Some homes have elaborate *Kadomatsu* with bamboo added to the pine, as



well as plum branches. The *Kadomatsu* is thought to welcome good luck into the house. Another equally-important decoration

is the *Shimenawa*, a sacred rope made of straw on which zigzag strips of paper have been hung. This is placed above the front entrance in order to prevent evil spirits from entering the house.

Many special dishes are prepared for the holiday season. Since the holiday itself is a time of rest from housework, the foods are prepared so the housewife is free from her regular chores. An important food at New Year is *Omochi*, steamed rice that has been pounded and formed into cakes.

This is eaten either grilled on a brazier or in a soup, known as *Ozoni*. Vegetable dishes are also popular during the New Year holiday, partly because they are easy to prepare and easy to store. Food shops generally remain closed throughout the holiday period, so it is necessary to stock up on all items.

Offerings are made to the household gods on a small table. The offerings usually consist of *Omochi*, dried persimmons, dried chestnuts, pine seeds, black peas, sardines, herring roe, a crayfish, a seabream, some dried cuttlefish, *Mochibana*, or flowers made of rice and straw, mandarin oranges and many other items varying from district to district.

Preparations for the holiday are all completed by New Year's Eve. By then, all businesses and nearly all stores are closed, and a strange calm settles over both city and countryside. During the three-day holiday period, known as *Shogatsu Sanganichi*, everyone except those who run amusement enterprises or are responsible for essential services,



such as transportation, have a period of vacation. For many people, the year-end holiday actually begins around December 29, when all public offices begin their vacations. Others end their work either on the 30th or early on the 31st. In recent years, more people have been taking advantage of the long holiday to travel to the countryside for skiing and skating, or for relaxing at hot spring resorts.

On New Year's Eve, most people spend time with their families. Sons and daughters who have moved to the city return to their parents' homes in the country, if at all possible. That way the entire family greets the New Year together. Many families pass the evening watching special television programs. Others visit shrines and temples where they pray by the light of bonfires.

The family stays up to hear the *Joya-no-Kane*, or midnight tolling of the temple bells. At the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, the entire nation listens to the tolling of the *Tsuri-Gane*, the great bells or gongs at Japan's Buddhist temples.

*Continued on Page 3*

Bridging the Gap welcomes your submissions of article ideas and written articles.

To have your upcoming event published in Bridging the Gap, please notify us by March 3, 2008 for the April/May 2008 issue.

All submissions will be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit submitted material.

Please send your submission to Mary Schmidt-Rodriguez at [m.schmidtrodiguez@us.army.mil](mailto:m.schmidtrodiguez@us.army.mil)



Japan's New Year Continued from Page 2



While it is bell-shaped, the Tsurigane is struck on the outside by a large wooden hammer suspended by ropes, so it may be thought of as a gong. At Chion-in Temple in Kyoto, many visitors are drawn every New Year's Eve to watch the tolling of one of the largest bells in the world. It weighs 74 tons. The Joya-no-Kane consists of 108 solemn tolls on the temple bells. According to Buddhism, man has 108 sins, and that by hearing the bells toll that number, he can be relieved of all of them.

Thus the New Year begins in Japan. Family members traditionally spend New Year's morning briefly worshipping at home at miniature Buddhist and Shinto altars. People use the day for making resolutions which they intend to keep for the coming year. A well-known Japanese proverb says: "New Year's is the key to unlock the year."

The family exchanges greetings for the holiday. Afterward, parents present children with Otoshi-Dama, New Year's gifts, usually in the form of money placed in special little envelopes. Later, relatives and close friends bring Otoshi-dama when they visit. The sum is larger than the usual allowance and children are free to spend it as they wish. Children look forward to New Year's largely because they know they will receive Otoshi-dama and because they will be able to dress in their most beautiful clothes.

The three-day holiday is a time to visit shrines and temples to make pledges for the coming year and to pray for good luck. The main shrines and temples in Japan are specially decorated for the occasion and are often crowded with worshippers and visitors, all in their finest Kimonos or Western clothes. The scene is at once bustling, solemn and colorful.

The custom of Nenshi, or paying calls on friends and relatives to greet them on the New Year, is very popular. During these visits, Otoso, a thick, sweet rice wine, is often served. Sending Nengajo, or New Year's cards, is a very popular custom especially for distant friends and acquaintances.

The cards are similar, perhaps, to Christmas cards in the West except that they are usually in the form of postcards. The tradition of sending these is very strong, and the mailmen make every effort to deliver all the cards on the morning of New Year's Day itself.

About two weeks before the holiday, post offices begin accepting bundles of Nengajo for New Year's Day. The cards are then sorted and tied in bundles for each household, and readied for delivery. Then on the morning of New Year's Day, mailmen make deliveries to each house. It is a great joy to receive and read greetings from friends near and far.

In addition to its social purposes, O-Shogatsu, or the New Year, is a time of renewal and as such it is marked by numerous ceremonies. By tradition, for example, storekeepers on the second day of the New Year have a ceremony known as Hatsuni, when the first merchandise of the year is delivered and stocked. Another traditional event on January 2, is Kaizome, or the ceremony of the first calligraphic writing drawn with a brush. Yet another tradition is that Hatsu-Yume, or first dream. The commencement of these traditions is celebrated on January 2.

On the third day of the holiday, which is the last day of the official holiday-period, even though some rituals continue for several days, an ancient ritual known as Genshisai is performed at the Imperial Court. The rare dance and music art form known as Gagaku is performed at the Imperial Court on this day.

While the holiday is a time of ritual, it is also a time of relaxation when children enjoy Tako-age, or kite-flying. The blustery winter winds are usually perfect for lifting the large, colorful kites off the ground. For girls, a popular sport at this time is Hane-tsuki, known in the West as battledore and shuttlecock. A century

ago, girls in colorful Kimonos could be seen everywhere playing this game at New Year's, but it is now less popular. Still, the Battledore Market in Tokyo is filled with people during December who come to shop for battledores or just browse among the brightly

painted paddles containing images of Samurai and ladies.

Karuta, a kind of card game, is also popular during the New Year holiday. The players spread out cards on which pictures and poems, or characters and proverbs, or flowers and months, are illustrated. The object of the game is to pick the correct cards first. In one game, a reader reads the first part of a poem while the players search for the card on which the last part is written. Karuta is stimulating, educational and competitive.

On January 4, most people return to work. The holiday has refreshed them and prepared them to tackle the tasks and goals of another year. The belief of respecting the beginning of the year, and the association with the birth of the Nation, are factors that have made Hatsumairi popular and significant in Japan.

For a brief glimpse of the Japanese New Year celebration visit:

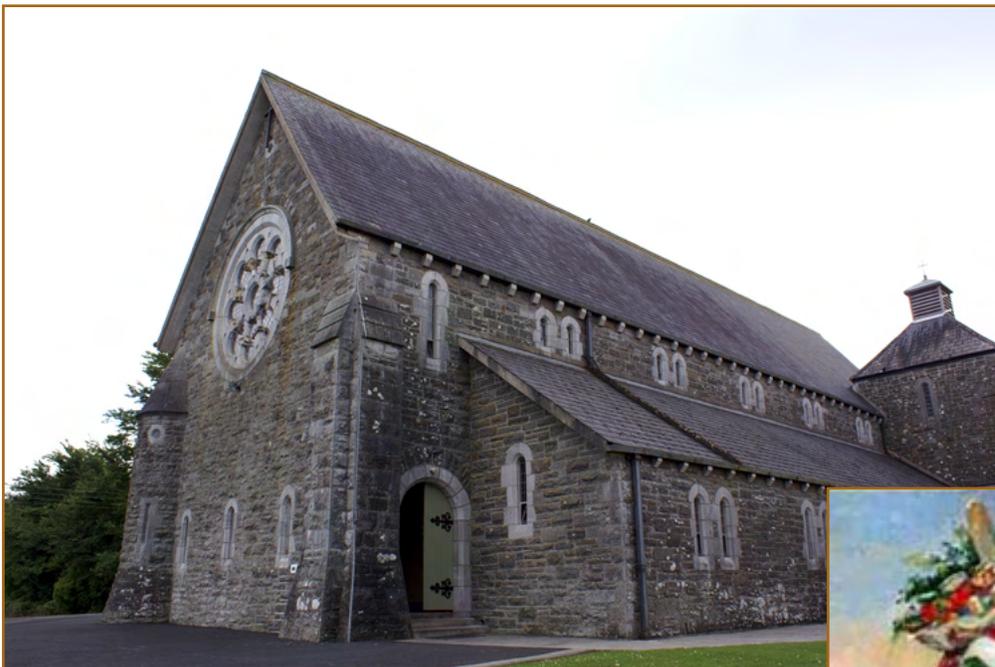
<http://www.robpongi.com/pages/comboJAPANESENEWYEAR.html> 





## CHRISTMAS AND THE IRISH

By SFC Jack Murphy



The Christmas season is a very special time of the year in the United States. First and foremost it is a time for us to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is also a time of festive decorating, visiting with loved ones, baking goodies, attending holiday parties, exchanging gifts, sharing a holiday meal, along with several other holiday traditions.

Christian immigrants from nations around the world brought their Christmas traditions with them to the United States, which helped mold and define the American Christmas celebration. Irish immigrants are among those who have contributed to the many Christmas traditions that Americans celebrate today.

In Ireland, the Christmas season is primarily focused on the holiday's religious meaning and a time for family and friends to gather. Although the country celebrates with gift exchanging,

Christmas trees and other familiar holiday traditions, the majority of the country (exception being the City of Dublin) has not succumbed to retail commercialization and materialism in the same manner as many other modern countries have. This is possibly due to the fact that

Ireland has never been known to be a land of great materialistic wealth. For centuries

Ireland has been a land of oppression, war and famine, thus not having the ability or means to place emphasis on materialism. Although some might find an Irish Christmas quite simple in comparison to how we celebrate Christmas

in our country, be assured that Christmas in Ireland is as meaningful and magical as any place on earth.

In this article I would like to address

some of the Irish Christmas traditions that may not be familiar to Americans. Many Irish Christmas traditions and customs have a root in the time when the Gaelic culture and the religion of Ireland were suppressed. The deep meanings behind these traditions have ensured their survival to modern day Ireland.

The Christmas season begins several weeks prior to the actual holiday in Ireland. Preparations for the celebrations consist of a thorough cleaning of houses, barns and buildings. During this period, floors and furniture are scrubbed, linen is laundered and walls are whitewashed to purify homes for Christmas. Once this "whitewashing" tradition is completed,

the homes are ready to be decorated for the holiday season.

The holly plant is a popular Christmas decoration in Ireland. However, the history of the holly plant's use for decorating began prior to Christianity being introduced to Ireland. Ancient Druids decorated their homes with holly as a kind gesture to tiny fairies who might use it as a hiding place. When Christianity was

introduced to Ireland, the holly plant became accepted as a Christmas tradition. The holly plant flourished during the Christmas season in Ireland and provided the poor in Ireland with a means to decorate their homes for Christmas. The green plants were valued for their beauty during a time when most trees and other plant life had lost their leaves and color. The red berries came to symbolize the blood of Jesus Christ. Placing a ring of holly on doors originated in Ireland and today it remains a common Irish Christmas tradition.

Ancient Celts believed that mistletoe possessed special healing powers. In fact, its presence alone would at times promote



*Ancient Celts  
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mistletoe  
possessed special  
healing powers.*



## WOMEN'S ART: WOMEN'S VISION

### 2008 THEME FOR NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

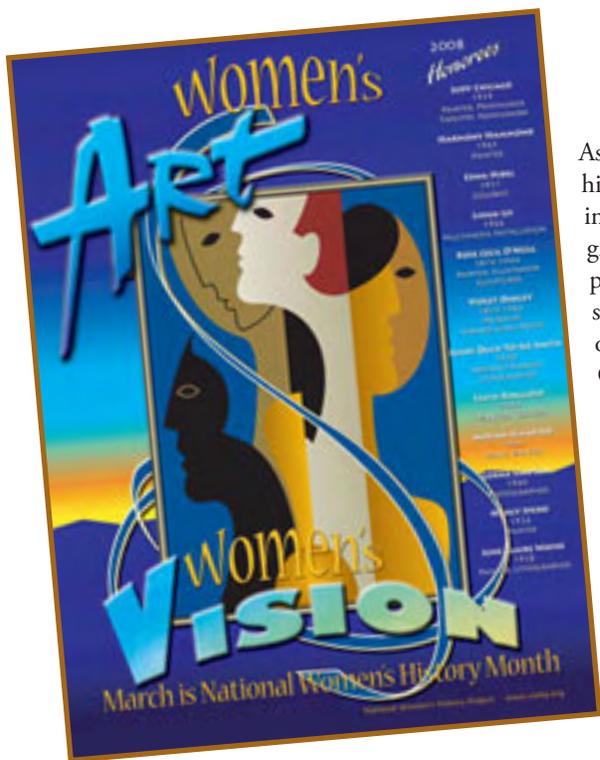
By Pam Makovicka

#### Background of Women's History Month

As recently as the 1970's, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the kindergarten through 12th grade curriculum or in the general public consciousness. To address this situation, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week" celebration in 1978. They chose the week of March 8 to make International Women's Day the focal point of the observance. The activities that were held met with enthusiastic response, and within a few years, dozens of schools planned special programs for Women's History Week.

In 1979, a member of the Commission on the Status of Women was invited to participate in Women's History Institutes at Sarah Lawrence College, attended by national leaders of organizations for women and girls. When they learned about the Women's History Week celebration, the leaders decided to initiate similar celebrations within their own organizations and school districts. They also agreed to support the efforts to secure a Congressional Resolution declaring a "National Women's History Week." Together they succeeded! In 1981, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Representative Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution.

As word spread rapidly across the nation, state departments of education encouraged celebrations of National Women's History Week as an effective means to achieving equity goals within classrooms. Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Oregon, Alaska and other states developed and distributed educational materials to all of their public schools. Organizations sponsored essay contests and other special programs in their local



The 2008 theme for Women's History Month celebrates and recognizes the vision of women artists. This year's honorees represent diverse forms of visual arts including painting, sculpture, weaving, pottery, embroidery, as well as forms from modern media art.

There are numerous Nebraska women artists, including Sarah Wool Moore, an early chair of the University of Nebraska art department, Elizabeth Dolan, whose murals grace the Nebraska State Capitol and other notable public buildings and Gladys Lux, longtime art educator at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Fabric was the medium of choice for some creative Nebraska women in the design of quilts.

Plans for the Nebraska Military Department Women's History Month celebration are scheduled for March 27, 2008. (Mark your calendars). Our featured guest will be Major General Cynthia Kirkland, Adjutant General for the Nevada National Guard. We will also have a Girl Scout Troop providing entertainment.



Elizabeth Dolan

areas. Within a few years, thousands of schools and communities were celebrating National Women's History Week, supported and encouraged by resolutions from governors, city councils, school boards and the U.S. Congress.

In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. Since then, the National Women's History Month Resolution has been approved with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Each year, programs and activities in schools, workplaces and communities have become more extensive as information and program ideas have been developed and shared. The popularity of women's history celebrations has sparked a new interest in uncovering women's forgotten heritage. Under the guidance of the National Women's History Project, educators, workplace program planners, parents and community organizations in thousands of American communities have turned National Women's History Month into a major focal celebration and a springboard for celebrating women's history all year 'round.

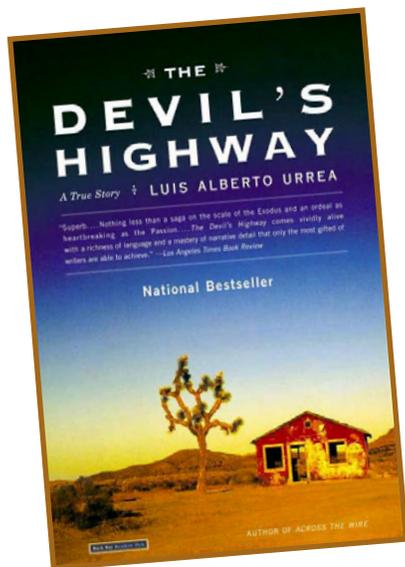
For great educational materials for your children, visit: [http://www.crayola.com/calendar/detail.cfm?event\\_id=215&year=2008](http://www.crayola.com/calendar/detail.cfm?event_id=215&year=2008)



## BOOK REVIEW: DEVIL'S HIGHWAY

*By Buis Alberto Urrea; Published September 2005 by Little, Brown and Company*

*Book Review by COL Roma Amundson*



Would you dare to cross into an unknown Arizona desert with no maps, by foot in the middle of summer with only two gallons of water, a few Pepsi's and candy bars and maybe some tortillas?

That's what is described in *Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea. It is based on a true story that takes place in the Arizona desert near Ajo, Arizona, a dusty little town near where Border Patrol (BP) agents and Guard soldiers work out of a border station supporting Operation Jump Start. Ajo is a little town with a good Mexican restaurant where BP agents and the soldiers often go to eat.

Their work of stopping illegal immigration is complicated by a little known fact – that the undocumented immigrants can be caught multiple times, up to eleven times and returned back to Mexico. Only when an individual is caught twelve times will that person face prosecution in the United States. Therefore, if a person is determined to come into the United States, only the twelfth time is a gamble. Reading Urrea's book, however, will make you aware that any attempt, whether the first or the twelfth time, is a life-or-death gamble for those who dare the desert.

Urrea tells the story of 26 men who dared to cross the Arizona desert from an

isolated spot along the Mexican border. Their intent was to reach the United States to find work and to make a better life for their families who would follow them later. They were told of the ease of crossing the desert in only two days! They were told of the "big money" they would make in the United States. Twenty-six hopeful men paid the equivalent of \$1,800 each to their "benefactor" to be taken to the border and given a guide. The nineteen year old guide was unfamiliar with the route he was told to take. For successfully guiding the walkers through the unknown territory, his incentive was that he would receive \$100 per walker to reach the endpoint. Of these 26, only twelve survived. Their stories form the basis of this riveting, shocking and emotional account of their fifteen days of wandering in the desert.

Reasons are told why each person was willing to leave their families and dare to cross the Arizona desert by plunging into it with approximately two gallons of water and small backpacks of food. Urrea talks about how the walkers become lost and disoriented, how they wandered through the desert and how they gradually lost rational thought. He describes in detail the physical torment that comes with lack of water and food with the burning heat of the desert all around them. Additionally, he describes how it is that people die in the desert.

The political posturing of governmental agencies both in Mexico and the United States was inevitable in the aftermath of the discovery of these walkers, in the attempts to rescue them and in the costs of treating them and returning the bodies back to their Mexican

communities. Urrea relates how the human rights groups, talk show hosts, anti-immigration groups and politicians all pull and tear at the event, utilizing the event for their own purposes. He reveals misunderstandings that exist on either side of the border about the nature of the people who dare to enter the United States and those who enforce border security. He helps us to understand the conditions of daily life in Mexican villages that force people to take the risk of crossing into the United States. Finally, he describes the types of thugs who callously exploit the hopes and fears of people on both sides of the border for their personal financial benefit.

Most importantly, what this book does is to open a "human" window to the border security question; telling us very graphically why people come to the United States as "walkers," and the risks involved with the journey. It in no way excuses them or denies us the right to protect our borders. It is an unbiased study of the problem made very real to us through the description of the human agonies, costs and depravities on both sides of the issue. It's engrossing and shocking, a very revealing study of one event that defines the pertinent question of border security. The story that Urrea tells is not pretty, but it helps us understand the complexity of the border problems.

*Devil's Highway* is a little over 200 pages. You could finish it in an afternoon or in a couple of evenings of reading. I'd encourage you to read it, as it will open a window of understanding on not only what our National Guard members' job is at Operation Jump Start, but it will increase your understanding of the border problems. 

*This book opens a "human" window to the border security issues so prevalent today.*

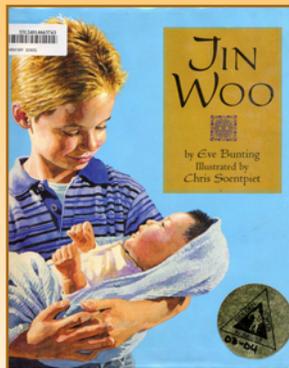


## BOOK REVIEW: JIN WOO

*By Eve Bunting; Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet; Published April 2001 by Houghton Mifflin Company  
Book Review by Denise Anderson*

Since my daughter Anna started kindergarten in August, she is able to bring books home every week. I love to see what she brings home in her backpack. The latest book is "Jin Woo." It is about a couple who adopt a Korean child, and how their other adopted son David is not happy. He likes being an only child and doesn't want to be a "big brother." David is very afraid that the new baby will get all the attention.

They pick up Jin Woo at the airport and David starts to warm up to the baby. They bring the baby home where they are met by family, friends and neighbors.



David learns that when he was brought home his parents made a big fuss over him. His Mom gives David a letter that the baby wrote (with her help). It says that he is so happy to be part of the family and to have a

big brother and to let him know that his parents have enough love in their hearts for both of them. This story is about

how our lives change when we have children and we love them all, adopted or otherwise.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who is expecting a new child into their lives. It will help both parents and children adjust to a new child/sibling. It will especially help the first child adjust to the addition of a younger brother or sister. It is sometimes difficult for an only child to transition to being the older sibling and all the attention the new arrival is getting from parents, family and friends. This book helps in that transition. 

## MARDI GRAS TRIVIA

*Compiled by Peggy Brown*

- When does Mardi Gras officially start?
  - 6 January
  - 5 February
  - 15 January
  - 15 February
- What do the colors (purple, green and gold) of Mardi Gras symbolize?
  - royalty, land, power
  - wine, land, money
  - justice, faith, power
  - royalty, faith, power
- What is the significance of the King Cake?
  - It is the only cake that the Priests of the parish can eat before Lent.
  - It is used to celebrate the Epiphany, when the wise men brought the gifts to the baby Jesus.
  - It is the cake that is given to the King and Queen of the Mardi Gras party.
  - There is no significance; it is just a cake that is served during Mardi Gras.
- What does Mardi Gras mean?
  - French for "Tuesday Party"
  - Creole for "Celebration"
  - Creole for the start of Lent
  - French for "Fat Tuesday"
- What is a "krewe?"
  - The group of servants that take care of the King and Queen of Mardi Gras.
  - The sponsors of the Mardi Gras parades and parties in New Orleans.
  - The name for the King and Queen of Mardi Gras parade.
  - The name for the groups of party-goers that watch the parades.
- When is Mardi Gras Day for 2008?
  - February 5th
  - February 19th
  - March 18th
  - March 4th
- When did the tradition of celebrating Mardi Gras begin in New Orleans?
  - 1701
  - 1709
  - 1699
  - 1675
- When and where was the first Mardi Gras parade?
  - Early 1700's in New Orleans, Louisiana
  - Early 1700's in Atlanta, Georgia
  - Early 1800's in New Orleans, Louisiana
  - Early 1700's in Mobile, Alabama
- Mardi Gras is not only celebrated in New Orleans, but all over the world. What are a few other common names for the Mardi Gras Day celebration?
  - Rio de Janeiro Carnival, Brazil
  - Shrove Tuesday, United Kingdom
  - Día de los Muertos, Mexico
  - Both a and b
  - Both a and c
- What is the significance of Mardi Gras Day?
  - It is the celebration of new life and the coming of Spring.
  - It is the day before Ash Wednesday and a celebration before the start of Lent.
  - It is a day to celebrate the French customs and people who originally settled in the New Orleans area of Louisiana.
  - It is a celebration of the Spring Equinox, when day and night are equal and in balance.

*Mardi Gras Trivia Answers on Page 14*



## NATIVE AMERICAN LUNCHEON CELEBRATION RECAP

By SFC Colin Jones



On 14 November 2007 people from many backgrounds came together to pay tribute to and learn about Native Americans and their service to our country. LTC Thomas Brewer was the featured speaker at this year's event. LTC Brewer is an Oglala Sioux, which is part of the Lakota bands of the Sioux. LTC Brewer's presentation included a DVD entitled, *The Warriors Way*, while the audience enjoyed a delicious buffalo sandwich (bison raised by Ben and MSgt Mary Wittler of Wittler Enterprises – [www.wittlerenterprises.com](http://www.wittlerenterprises.com)), corn casserole and a pumpkin bar for lunch. The DVD (which can be purchased through Nebraska Educational Television), displayed the effects that Native Americans have displayed in all branches of the military. Through watching this video the audience was able to gain an appreciation and understanding of the impact that Native Americans had during all conflicts that our nation has been a part of. The DVD, *The Warriors Way*, showed the important roles that Native Americans played in each conflict, which include the celebrated code talkers of World War II, the Navajo, Sioux, Cheyenne and others.

The military has been a big part of many Native American families. LTC Brewer's family is no different. His wife, Kelli, is a full time soldier with the Nebraska Army National Guard. Reach

further back in LTC Brewer's family tree and you will find a Captain in the Union Cavalry, who was sent west to fight the Indians on the plains, and ended up marrying a daughter of Chief Red Cloud - these two fortunate souls are LTC Brewer's Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother. LTC Brewer's grandfather was a pilot in World War I. His father was an Airborne Ranger with the 2nd Ranger Company in Korea who was twice wounded and awarded two purple hearts. All in all, LTC Brewer has 21 brothers, cousins and nephews who are veterans of the military. The same goes for many Native American families, who have a proud heritage of serving their country.

During the early part of the 20th century for Native Americans the military meant finally gaining citizenship. During World War I, Native Americans were granted citizenship for enlisting into the armed forces. At this time, according to the 1906 Burke Act, the only Native Americans that were granted citizenship were those who privately farmed their own land and left the jurisdiction of the reservation. In fact, it would not be until the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act which granted all Native Americans, on or off the reservation, citizenship.

The military has long been a means to escape the reservation life, offering opportunities for military schools, travel, employment and college. The military will continue to play a vital role for Native Americans; and Native Americans like LTC Brewer will continue to play a vital role for the military. 

## HERITAGE LUNCHEONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

### African-American Heritage Month Celebration

February 21

Featuring LtCol Paul Adams, Tuskegee Airman with Diane Bartels as interviewer  
Spirit of 76 Armory 1776 N. 10th St.  
Caterer: Skeeter Barnes

### Women's History Month Celebration

March 27

Featuring MG Kirkland, Nevada Adjutant General (TAG) and Girl Scout Troop #500  
Spirit of 76 Armory 1776 N. 10th St.  
Caterer: The Blend

### Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration

May

**Hispanic American Heritage Month Fiesta**  
September/October

### Native American Heritage Month Celebration

November

### KOKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS UPCOMING PERFORMANCES



### Multicultural Festival

Thursday, February 28  
6:30pm  
Cavett Elementary  
7701 S. 36th St.

### UNL Japan Festival

Thursday, March 6  
6:00pm  
City Campus Student Union

### Performance and Workshop

Saturday, March 15  
3:00pm  
Bennett Martin Library 136 S. 14th St.

### Performance and Workshop

Saturday, April 12  
3:00pm  
Eiseley Library 1530 Superior St.



## SEP MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

### *WO1 Robrenna Redl - Traditional Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier*



Growing up as an Army brat was one of the greatest blessings in my life. The experience placed me in situations where I was exposed to individuals of various cultures and experiences. It afforded me the ability to adapt to various circumstances and allowed me to view diversity as more than gender or race.

My mother married my step-father when I was about five years old and although I was born in Chicago, Illinois where most of my extended family lives, I lived overseas in Germany in the cities of Hamburg and Frankfurt. I also lived in Fort Bliss, Texas, where both of my younger sisters were born. I spent most of my formative years in Waukegan, Illinois and Fort Hood, Texas, where my mother and sisters still reside.

It seems military children are always trying to prove themselves because more often than not they are the new kid in town. I made friendships with children from various cultural backgrounds whom I probably wouldn't have met if I had lived in one place all my life. I distinctly remember my older brother and I would play with friends in Germany who spoke very little English and needless to say we spoke very little German, but that didn't seem to matter. We spoke the universal language of childhood. I received my first

Barbie as a gift from an older sister of one of my German girlfriends. It's good to make friendships; however, there comes a time to say goodbye and start all over again. Of course as a child it's difficult, but eventually I learned to adapt and overcome. As an adult I am grateful for those experiences.

Given that I come from such a diverse background, when I moved to Nebraska from Austin, Texas (where I was Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) for eight years), it was a bit of a culture shock. Nebraska is more of a homogenous state based on demographics compared to what I was accustomed to. Ever since marrying my husband Troy here in Lincoln, and due to the fact that both of my children were born here, I now call Nebraska my home. I feel it's the right place to raise children.

Since becoming a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard (NEARNG), I attended the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute where I became certified as an Equal Opportunity Advisor. I'm also trained as a diversity facilitator. The difference between the two is equal opportunity is based on law while diversity is based on emerging trends in the demographics of a community.

In my opinion, diversity is not just race, gender or age. Diversity is the collective gathering of skills and life experiences. In our current climate younger warriors have more experience and training in their first three years than some have had in ten years of being a warrior. One example is the training tempo of basic training. Warriors are trained in urban operations and to perform other Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills that weren't part of initial entry training when I attended basic training eighteen years ago. It's important to bring young warriors and their families into the fold of the Nebraska Guard and mentor them. Mentorship is also very important to me. I have been fortunate enough throughout my military career to have mentors at every level. Every

Warrior needs to have a mentor to gather insight on their career path and make him or her feel as though someone really cares, not just as a Warrior, but also as a person.

Although there is room for improvement, Nebraska has progressed in the area of diversity. I know there are still some people who just don't understand diversity issues. They don't see the importance of acknowledging how



different groups of people have contributed to America becoming the great country it is today. That's one reason why the heritage recognition luncheons are important. Hopefully they provide a glimpse of what role other cultures have played in our society and in the military. I think people need to step out of their comfort zone just a little. If people did, they would be amazed to see that we all want the same things, which is to be treated with dignity and respect.

In most areas in my life I represent the fulfillment of Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream. In his "I Have a Dream" speech he stated he wanted his children to live in a nation where they were not judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I've met many people in my life where my character was priority over anything else. I am so grateful to him and others before me who have paved the way for all Americans to live the American dream. 



## THE MULTICULTURAL COALITION CONFERENCE RECAP

By Pam Makovicka

The Grand Island Multicultural Coalition held a one day conference with the theme "The Different Faces of Diversity" on October 23, 2007. The coalition had three main goals for the conference: 1) through prominent speakers, provide participants with increased awareness of different cultures; 2) offer representatives of agencies new modes and strategies they can incorporate to improve their services and objectives; and 3) engage conference attendees in dialogue and provide tools to initiate positive change.



The coalition was successful in all three goals. The opening keynote speaker, Michael Soon-Lee, spoke on bridging differences. Mr. Soon-Lee is the President of EthnoConnect, a company that helps businesses

market and sell to multicultural customers in America. He is the first Asian-American to earn the Certified Speaking Professional designation. Mr. Soon-Lee is the author of the book "Black Belt of Negotiating." He stressed the importance of realizing the value of every individual making our lives richer. Mr. Soon-Lee pointed out the cultural differences within a culture. An example of this is the Hispanic culture which includes Mexicans, Central Americans, Spaniards, South Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans. Each group has their own heritage and dialect. Being aware of these differences will help you break the barriers and make your community or workplace stronger and more productive.

The next keynote speaker, Dr. Juan Andrade, Jr., is the President and Executive Director of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute. He received the Presidential Medal, one of the highest honors an American can



receive, which was presented to him by former President Bill Clinton. Dr. Andrade began with "Adversity and Diversity – You Can't Tell the Difference." He stated that Latinos are

a great American asset as they lead the nation in population growth. Dr Andrade encouraged Latinos to change peoples' perception of what they can bring to the U.S. and take an active role in the future of America by voting.

The Coalition saved the best for last: Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch,



the highest ranking Hispanic female officer - Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired), U.S. Army Combat Support Field. LTC Kickbusch is a renowned charismatic, passionate and influential speaker who carries her powerful message of what it takes to be an effective leader in today's global marketplace to hundreds of schools, colleges, corporations and government institutions. For the past ten years, LTC Kickbusch has dedicated her life to empowering a new generation of Hispanic leaders. She has worked with over one million children and their parents across the United States through Educational Achievement Services, Inc., a company she founded in 1994.

Born and raised along the border in small la barrio in

Laredo, Texas, LTC

Kickbusch is all

too familiar with the challenges of poverty, discrimination and illiteracy. Although she grew up without material wealth, her immigrant parents taught her valuable lessons such as she was rich in culture, tradition, values and faith. While LTC Kickbusch was in school, a white gentleman from Boston by the name of Mr. Cooper

decided to help the Laredo, Texas

Hispanics get the education they needed. LTC Kickbusch credits Mr. Cooper for inspiring her to get her college degree. After working at a job with a six figure salary for a few years, she decided it was not the fulfillment she was seeking and decided to mentor kids as Mr. Cooper had done for her.

The highlights of her presentation included the power of forgiveness, how does hate happen and feeling from the heart. She left everyone in the room inspired to make a difference in this world.

The Grand Island Multicultural Coalition is to be commended for planning a conference that enriched all who attended. Their work in the Grand Island area has provided the community with the tools to meet the needs of their diverse population. 

*Being aware of these differences will help you break the barriers and make your community or workplace stronger and more productive.*



*Diversity: Our Advantage Continued from Page 1*

and educators. This range of experience and knowledge proved invaluable in protecting the colonies, winning the Revolutionary War and assisting the development of a new country.

The modern day Militia, the National Guard, has become the focal point of providing trained and professional soldiers and airmen to wage the GWOT. Like their predecessors, the National Guard soldiers and airmen of today protect family, home and community from attack or natural disaster.

In order for the National Guard to meet its mission of protecting our communities, state and nation, we need to employ a workforce as diverse as America itself. Diversity reflects the unique ways we vary as people—our nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, culture, education, values, beliefs, abilities and disabilities. These assorted attributes create different demographic, functional and intellectual views, which are so vital to our innovation, agility, responsiveness and awareness. By recruiting and retaining smart, focused people from a myriad of occupations and cultures, who have various abilities and experiences, we produce a dynamic force with unlimited potential. Our diversity inspires us to expand our minds and our goals, to look deeper and understand more. By recognizing the strengths of every individual and establishing an inclusive environment, we are getting the very best that our soldiers, airmen and civilians have to offer; which allows us to successfully meet the mission requirements of today and tomorrow.

One need not look far to understand the benefits of diversity. Creativity increases when people with different ways of solving difficult problems work together towards a common solution. There is

no one best answer to any question - the more ideas you can obtain from different people, the more likely you are to develop a workable solution. Productivity increases exponentially when people of all cultures pull together towards a single inspiring goal. Patriotism and love of state and country are powerful concepts and motivators for Americans of all backgrounds. New processes can result when people with different ideas come together and collaborate.

In today's fast-moving world, there is no longer room for thinking, "We have always done things this way and cannot change." Soldiers and airmen must bring multiple skills to the environment, think cross culturally and adapt quickly to new situations.

The National Guard is a community-based, community-supported, military force. Great strides have been made in ensuring the Nebraska National Guard is a reflection of our communities and cultures. More needs to be done. For those of us in leadership positions today or those who will be tomorrow, diversity is every bit as important as gaining a new weapon system, or securing operational funding. Managing diversity so as to employ its strengths is a leadership imperative. The National Guard is the premier military force in the world; more innovative, creative and operationally flexible than any other force, including our active duty counterparts. We have been successful for 371 years because of a deep commitment to our communities and because of our diversity. Diversity is our advantage. It is the linchpin in our ability to continually transform to meet ever changing threats abroad and at home.

Our National Guard's future and prosperity depend on our ability to develop and employ the talents of our diverse population. Diversity is not just the right thing to do; it is also a military and organizational necessity. 

*Our diversity  
inspires us to  
expand our  
minds and our  
goals, to look  
deeper and  
understand  
more.*

## DIVERSITY DATES FEBRUARY/MARCH 2008

February 2.....	Candelmas (Christian)
February 2.....	Groundhog Day (U.S.)
February 2.....	Imbolc (Pagan)
February 3.....	Setsubun (Japan)
February 3.....	Suyapa Day (Honduras)
February 5.....	Constitution Day (Mexico)
February 5.....	Shrove Tuesday (Christian)
February 6.....	Ash Wednesday (Christian)
February 6.....	Waitangi Day (New Zealand)
February 7.....	Chinese New Year
February 7.....	Losar (Tibet)
February 7.....	Lunar New Year (International)
February 11.....	Thomas Edison's Birthday (U.S.)
February 11.....	Kenkoku Kinen-no-Hi (Japan)
February 11.....	Vasanta Panchami (Hindu, Sikh)
February 12.....	Abraham Lincoln's Birthday (U.S.)
February 14.....	Race Relations Day (U.S.)
February 14.....	Valentine's Day (U.S.)
February 16.....	Independence Day (Lithuania)
February 17.....	Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week (Christian, Jewish)
February 18.....	President's Day (U.S.)
February 18.....	Independence Day (Gambia)
February 19.....	Rashtriya Prajatantra Divas (Nepal)
February 21.....	Lantern Festival (China, Taiwan)
February 21.....	Shaheed Day (Bangladesh)
February 22.....	George Washington's Birthday (U.S.)
February 22.....	Abu Simbel Festival (Egypt)
February 23.....	Republic Day (Guyana)
February 25.....	Fiesta sa EDSA (Philippines)
February 26.....	Intercalary Days (Baha'i)
February 28.....	228 Memorial Day (Taiwan)
March 1.....	Martenitz (Bulgaria, Romania)
March 1.....	Samiljol (South Korea)
March 2.....	Read Across America Day
March 3.....	Hinamatsuri (Japan)
March 4.....	Casimir Pulaski Day (Poland, U.S.)
March 6.....	Independence Day (Ghana)
March 6.....	Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)
March 8.....	International Women's Day
March 9.....	Daylight Savings Time Begins (U.S.)
March 10 ..	Great Lent Begins (Orthodox Christian)
March 11.....	Restoration of Lithuanian Statehood
March 12.....	Moshoeshoe's Day (Lesotho)
March 15.....	Memorial Day for the 1848 Revolution & War for Independence (Hungary)
March 16.....	Palm Sunday (Christian)
March 17.....	St. Patrick's Day (Ireland, U.S.)
March 18.....	Charshanbesuri (Iran)
March 19-20.....	Mawlid al-Nabi (Islamic)
March 19.....	St. Joseph's Day (Christian)
March 20.....	Equinox
March 20.....	Independence Day (Tunisia)
March 20.....	Maundy Thursday (Christian)
March 20.....	Ostara (Celtic, Pagan)
March 20-21.....	Purim (Jewish)
March 21.....	Benito Juarez's Birthday (Mexico)
March 21.....	Good Friday (Christian)
March 21.....	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (U.N.)
March 21.....	Noruz (Iran)
March 22.....	Emancipation Day (Puerto Rico)
March 22.....	Hola Mohalla (Sikh)
March 22 (several days).....	Holi (Hindu, Sikh)
March 23.....	Easter (Christian)
March 24.....	Easter Monday (Christian)
March 25.....	Independence Day (Greece)
March 26.....	Swadhinata Dibash (Bangladesh)
March 29 ..	Boganda Day (Central African Republic)





## FROM LABOR TO LEADERS: LATINO LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By *LaVonne Rosenthal, SFC Kim Moore, SGT Adrian Velez and SSG Raphael Razuri*

The Heartland Latino Leadership conference was attended by four Special Emphasis Program group members. All have contributed to this article, as all four had different perspectives of the same conference. LaVonne Rosenthal begins the article with her experiences, followed by SFC Kim Moore, SGT Adrian Velez and SSG Raphael Razuri providing their viewpoints.

### *From LaVonne Rosenthal*

The eighth annual Heartland Latino Leadership conference was held at the Qwest Center in Omaha, 8 and 9 November 2007. Before even reaching the conference site, attendees were met by picketers carrying signs that referred to illegal immigrants and the loss of jobs. Under the guise of courtesy, one picketer told another to press the crosswalk button so pedestrians could cross from the parking lot to the Qwest Center. While waiting to cross, one picketer said to me, "It's too bad we have to be out here." Since I'm not one to enlist conflict, I remained silent. Many thoughts went through my head, such as, "Yes, it's too bad you chose to be out here. Just leave." But I kept my comments to myself.

Once in the Qwest Center conference area, the atmosphere became one of celebration and education. This year's conference theme was "From Labor to Leaders: Realize Your Power." Attendees heard from a number of Latinos who are in leadership positions in local and national businesses. As part of speaker introductions, companies who sponsored a portion of the conference had representatives from their organization greet the audience. This demonstrated the value placed by these large organizations (ConAgra, First National Bank, State Farm, etc.) on the Latino culture.

Workshop topics focused not only on professionals, but also on aspiring professionals – youth attendees who were



either in high school or college. These young people left the conference with a renewed sense of who they are and how valuable they are to the future of the Latino culture, as even the opening speaker told everyone to be proud of who you are and not to let others define who you are.

One of the keynote speakers was Cid Wilson, who told an inspiring story of how he worked his way up the corporate ladder at UBS PaineWebber, starting in the mailroom as an unpaid intern. He reminded the audience that the fastest growing community in the U.S. is the Latino community. Cid's advice to the young people in the audience was to combine motivation and compassion to guarantee corporations will seek you. Another sage comment was to never take career advice from someone who's not where you want to be. Go to those individuals who are doing what you want and get their recipe for success. He revised the cliché, "Knowledge is power" to "Knowledge is potential power."

One of the workshops I attended was Package Your Potential. The focus was on preparing for a job interview as well as what not to do in a job interview. Presenters began the workshop with a mock interview to give the audience a picture to evaluate. The mock interviewee demonstrated typical Latino characteristics that could be perceived as inappropriate by an interviewer. One of those behaviors was when shaking

hands at the start of the interview, to touch the interviewer's forearm. Even in this staged scenario, the mock interviewer was taken aback by the overly personal touch. Personal space for the Latino culture is much smaller than the American culture. In a diverse professional environment, it's important to be aware of how those differences are received.

On Friday, a scholarship luncheon recognized Latino youth who received scholarship awards for college. The guest speaker was Jimmy Cabrera, a motivational speaker and author.

What a great, energetic man!! He is also a great role model for the youth in the audience as well as the adults. The title of his presentation was "Delivering Results through PEAK Performance." He used PEAK as an acronym for Passion, Excellence, Attitude and Knowledge. Jimmy also challenged the audience to discover your "DNA" – Determination, Nothing can stop my success and Always moving forward. This gentleman overcame many obstacles in his own life, and shares tools for success in his book, *"What's in Your Backpack? Packing for Success in Life."* A significant phrase we repeated with Jimmy was "If it is to be, it's up to me." This exercise was a great motivator to everyone, reminding us that each of us is responsible for making a difference. Jimmy also opened our eyes to having an attitude of "er" – better, stronger, greater, wiser, teacher (you get the idea...). Another piece of wisdom was spelled out in the word "HIP" – Humility, Integrity, Passion. Jimmy provided many nuggets of inspiration for the audience and had a positive impact, especially on the young people.

Throughout these two days I was fortunate to spend time with our Hispanic liaisons, SSG Raphael Razuri and SGT Adrian Velez. These two individuals are glowing representatives for the National Guard among the Latino and Hispanic communities. They were

*Continued on Page 13*



*Latino Leadership Continued from Page 12*

continually interacting with attendees, sponsors and presenters not necessarily to recruit individuals into the National Guard, but to just “be there” and build relationships.

Another workshop I attended was called “X – Y – Boom: Are you ready for the Millennials?” This session on generational diversity (one of my favorite topics) was presented by Cynthia Buettner, division manager for Customer Service Operations for Omaha Public Power District (OPPD). From first hand experience, she shared with us the challenges leaders face in managing the youngest generation in the workforce. Major issues for employers, according to Cynthia, were the high expectations set by Millennials for their work environment (especially in the area of technology), preference for team and group work and the close relationship they have with their parents, to name just a few. Managers are finding that parents of this generation are more directly involved in their work activities, to include negotiating benefits and performance ratings for their employed children. We were fortunate to have Millennials in the audience to verify and dispute some of the characteristics research has assigned to this up and coming generation.

This conference was a great opportunity to see firsthand the strong sense of family and community that is characteristic of the Latino culture. As one of the few non-Latino attendees, I was impressed by the sense of inclusion I felt during the conference. I was not singled out by anyone, nor was I excluded. I was treated with equal respect without any special attention. I encourage you to attend the conference next year – November 13 and 14, 2008 – mark your calendars now!!

#### ***Insights from SFC Kim Moore***

Regina Montoya, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the New America Alliance, was the keynote speaker opening the conference. She said not to let others define you; you define yourself. The vision of others and expanding diversity has been very important to the diversity

that we love and celebrate today.

She stressed that doing the right thing means taking risks and making a difference. For example, coming here today meant walking past protestors. This meant ignoring their message, being brave and respectful and attending the conference. Taking risks like this is what helps you gain an education and make a difference. She said that when you think you have all the right answers is when you quit learning. She also stated that you never have all of the right answers. She stressed the importance of giving back to the community. There are many examples of successful people that make it and then never lend their hand to help others.

One of the seminars I attended was called Self Marketing Power. The presenter said, first of all, do not be selfish – use your power to benefit the company.

*Doing the right thing means taking risks and making a difference.*

The company should help you build up your name. You have to become a celebrity within your circle of influence. Your circle of influence includes the people that can help you be who you want to be.

Another nugget of information from this workshop was that there are two ways of thinking. One way is to think of yourself as a business. You are a unique brand. You need a marketing plan, mission statement and a vision. You are an independent contractor. The second way of thinking is to think the way politicians do. Politicians know their name is a brand. They know the average voter is very unsophisticated. Everything they do builds up their brand. The voters are people in their circle of influence.

The speaker also provided the eight rules of self marketing:

1. Think positively.
2. Develop an area of expertise.
3. Be prepared (something wonderful will happen). Practice relentless

preparation; be positive.

4. Have the right attitude – a “can do” attitude, and believe in a positive sum game. Believe that everyone can win. Don’t bad mouth others; it can hurt you more than you think.
5. Everyone counts – everyone needs a great deal of attention.
6. You are always being watched. What you do when no one is looking can hurt you.
7. Embrace professionalism. Some people believe they are always on stage. It is okay to be over dressed. Always stay in character. Suspend disbelief. Don’t be someone you are not.
8. Communicate clearly. Be real, concise and meaningful. Go into networking with a goal. Introduce yourself to several people. Get a direct opportunity, lead for an opportunity, valuable information. Focus on the other person. Ask questions about the other person. Focus two-thirds on them and one-third on yourself. Leave an item of value with each person – a joke, information or trivia.

#### ***Views from SGT Adrian Velez:***

This was the second year that I attended the Heartland Latino Leadership Conference. This was made possible through an attendance scholarship program that the conference offers to people who could not normally attend due to financial hardships. To receive this scholarship you must volunteer two hours of your time to work at the conference. For me this was not work, but the perfect opportunity to meet people and network.

Your two hours of volunteer work could be anything from working at the registration table, which is what I did, up to and including the introduction of speakers of the breakout sessions. I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people that I did not know and dialogue with them about some of the reasons why they attended the conference. I was also able to meet contacts that could help me out in future programs.

The conference offered a wide variety of workshops for professionals and aspiring professionals. Some of the workshop topics were in Spanish for people who

*Continued on Page 14*



## WEBSITE REVIEW: VIRTUAL TOURS FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

[HTTP://WWW.USA.GOV/TOPICS/VIRTUALTOURS.SHTML](http://www.usa.gov/topics/virtualtours.shtml)

by Denise Anderson



It is so easy these days to get on a server list which will send you information on new

and updated web sites. One web site of interest is the virtual tour of the United States Government.

Have you ever wanted to visit a national landmark but doubt you will take a trip there any time in the foreseeable future? This website allows you to get a glimpse of many areas of interest that you might not be able to visit in person.

For example, you can tour the Holocaust Memorial Museum exhibits, visit the Gettysburg National Military Park and even take a virtual tour of the Pentagon.

A very exciting link to try is the Fredrick

Douglass National Historic site virtual tour. Frederick Douglass was a famous leader of the abolitionist movement who fought to end slavery within the United States prior to the Civil War. You can tour different rooms in Fredrick Douglass's home (e.g. library, parlor, bedrooms, etc.) and get interesting facts about the family.

Another fascinating area of the web site is the museum lesson plans. You can get education related activities which are geared towards grade/age appropriate activities along with photographs of museum objects.

Therefore, if you are unable to physically visit a historical site and/or museum the next best thing to do is a virtual tour. 



*Latino Leadership Continued from Page 13*

have a hard time understanding English or just preferred to hear the breakout in Spanish. Some of the breakout sessions were: Package Your Potential, Self Marketing Power, Finding A Healthy Life – Work Balance, Becoming An Effective Leader, Why The Community Matters and many more. This was a two-day conference that offered education, food, scholarships to aspiring college and high school kids, awards and a wonderful dance to end it all.

The two days that I spent at the conference gave me the opportunity to meet many people who are inspiring professionals in their fields. This was a wonderful time to see the Latino leaders sharing their experiences and teaching other professionals and aspiring professionals in the community that they can be someone who can achieve their dreams. At the same time, everyone is to be very aware of all the other nationalities and generations that are also in the work force and every day life. It is important that we not be racist, but the opposite and to work being understanding and flexible.

### *Views from SSG Raphael Razuri*

The 2007 Latino Leadership Conference was my first since I took the position as Hispanic Liaison for the Nebraska Army National Guard. Overall it was informative, with great messages and a learning environment with workshops that dealt with all levels of experiences. The conference was a success and it is probable that it will continue to grow.

Many times during the conference the speakers referred to Latino families who fall within or below the poverty level. While there are many poor Latino families, there are others who come from professional families of doctors, teachers, lawyers, etc. who are well-educated and respected pillars of their communities. Not all Latinos come from poor and/or broken homes. It is important to help those families that need help, as well as be aware of others who come from diverse economic backgrounds. 

### *Mardi Gras Trivia Answers from Page 7*

1. a – 6 January 2008. The Mardi Gras celebration always starts the 12th day after Christmas.
2. c – justice, faith, power
3. b – It is used to celebrate the Epiphany, when the wise men brought the gifts to the baby Jesus.
4. d – Mardi Gras is French for “Fat Tuesday.”
5. b – Krewes are the sponsors of the Mardi Gras parades and parties in New Orleans. They are the lucky people that get to ride on the floats and hand out the trinkets while passing through the streets of New Orleans during Mardi Gras parades. While there are literally dozens of Krewes, each with their own rules and traditions, there is a general framework that binds them together: each Krewe must hold a parade which includes floats or bands, they have to hold a ball and most importantly they have to have the Mardi Gras celebration be its main purpose.
6. a – February 5, 2008. Mardi Gras Day or “Fat Tuesday” is the day before Ash Wednesday. The date can vary from as early as February 3rd to as late as March 9th as the date is dependent on that of Easter.
7. c – 1699. Mardi Gras came to New Orleans through its French heritage in 1699. Early explorers celebrated this French Holiday on the banks of the Mississippi River.
8. d – Early 1700's in Mobile, Alabama. Even though you hear more about the parades in New Orleans, Mobile has the longest tradition associated with Mardi Gras-style parades.
9. d – Carnival in Brazil and Shrove Tuesday in the United Kingdom are just two other Mardi Gras type celebrations. There are other celebrations throughout the world.
10. b - Mardi Gras day is the day before Ash Wednesday and a celebration before the fasting of Lent. Mardi Gras today is about various cultures coming together to celebrate the things that make them unique and uniting them under the common theme of being people who like to have fun, enjoy each other and have a great time.



## SEP MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

### *COL Roma Amundson - Commander 92d Troop Command and SEP Program Chair*

To begin with, I'm a second-generation American. My grandparents on both sides emigrated from Germany during the early 1900's, went through the difficult examinations at Ellis Island and somehow ended up in northeastern Nebraska near Spencer. I grew up in a household where German was spoken which I naturally learned as a second language.

My parents valued education, so they sent me to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). What a shock! To come from a high school class of 42 seniors to a university where 23,000 students wandered the campus. It took a little adjusting on my part, but I survived, and in 1972 I graduated from UNL with a degree in teaching.

I taught English and German for ten years in Columbus, Nebraska. During those ten years, I studied for a summer at Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg, Germany in 1975; worked as a tour guide in Europe in the summers of 1977 and 1978 for the International Educational Institute; earned a Master in Education (M.Ed.); enlisted in the military and later received my commission as 2LT in the Nebraska Army National Guard (NEARNG); and married my husband Randy Amundson. Those were pretty eventful years. Actually, Randy and I were both in the NEARNG before we were married, and we both attended Officer



Candidate School (OCS), except in different classes. I was one year ahead of him.

In 1982 I left teaching and went into sales and marketing, an area in which I've been consistently engaged for 21 years in both insurance and investment products or in real estate. I worked about ten years in the insurance and investment field, and then I spent about two and a half years working with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency in the education division, which I really enjoyed. However, because the funding for the position went away in 1995, I turned to real estate marketing and sales, which is still now my primary "bread and butter."

My husband and I have two children. Our son Justin is 23, a 2LT in the Air Force, and is stationed at Randolph Air Force Base. Our daughter Dawn is 22 and a senior at UNL.

My avocation has always been the Guard, although I do think that the Guard is really much more than that now – I find myself spending quite a bit of time with the Guard and all the related activities. I think it is because I enjoy the people and the work so much. The Guard truly is "family," and it has been part of my life for over 29 years. I know so many of the people, so much of its tradition and feel such a part of it that I can't imagine how my life would have been had I not been involved in the Guard. Besides, I truly believe in the philosophy of the "militia" and its mission. Being in the Guard is for me a way of life and service to the nation.

I believe that the Guard has truly challenged me with all the various assignments I've had. It has provided me with many educational challenges; it's developed my skills and initiated personal growth; and it has certainly offered me many travel opportunities. I think that the most important way in which I've benefited is because I've had the thrill of working with people who care about their country, who truly demonstrate integrity in their dealings and who are concerned about others' welfare.

So, thank you to all the Guard members – I really enjoy serving with you, and I look forward to all the times we can get together either on or off the job!!! 

## AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY FACTS

February 1, 1865..... John S. Rock, 1st Black to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court  
February 2, 1776.....George Washington answered letter from author Phyllis Wheatley  
February 2, 1807..... Congress legally banned foreign slave trade  
February 3, 1920.....Negro Baseball League founded  
February 4, 2007..... Tony Dungy became 1st Black head coach to win the Super Bowl  
February 5, 1934.....Hank Aaron born  
February 7, 1867..... Frederick Douglass & Black delegation called on President Johnson  
February 8, 1951.....Private Edward O. Cleaborn, Memphis Soldier, awarded Distinguished Service Cross

February 9, 1964..... Arthur Ashe, Jr. became 1st Black on U.S. Davis Cup team  
February 11, 1644..... 1st Black legal protest in America by 11 Blacks who petitioned for freedom in New York  
February 12, 1909..... NAACP founded in NY  
February 13, 1746..... Absalom Jones, 1st Black Protestant Minister, born  
February 14, 1867..... Augusta Institute, later Morehouse College, opened in Atlanta  
February 16, 1874..... Frederick Douglass elected President of Freedom's Bank & Trust Company  
February 17, 1950...Thomas L. Griffith admitted to Los Angeles Bar Association  
February 18, 1688..... 1st formal protest against slavery by Quakers

February 19, 1940..... Smokey Robinson born  
February 20, 1895..... Frederick Douglass died  
February 21, 1965..... Malcolm X assassinated  
February 25, 1870..... Hiram Revels elected 1st Black in U.S. Senate  
February 26, 1926...Carter G. Woodson announced "Negro History Week"  
February 27, 1988...Debi Thomas became 1st Black to win medal at Winter Olympics  
February 29, 1919..... Pan-African Congress, organized by W.E.B. Dubois  
February 29, 1942..... Tuskegee Airmen initiated



*Irish Christmas Continued from Page 4*

a truce between enemies. When Ireland became a Christian nation the plant was dismissed as pagan and banned. It eventually rebounded during the Victorian era when the custom of kissing under the mistletoe became an accepted Christian tradition.

Lighting a candle in the windows of Irish homes is a tradition that is still practiced today. There are several purposes for this tradition, but primarily it is to symbolize welcoming Mary and Joseph and the Christ child. During penal times\* the candles indicated a safe place for priests to conduct mass, as this was illegal during that period. Traditionally the youngest person in the household lights the candle, while only a girl bearing the name of 'Mary' may extinguish it.

At the completion of the evening meal on Christmas Eve, the kitchen table is once again set with a loaf of bread that contains raisins and caraway seeds, a pitcher of milk and also a large candle that remains lit. Entrances to homes are left unlatched for Mary and Joseph or any poor wandering traveler to receive this hospitality. This tradition is called the "Laden Table." This is similar to an American version of this tradition in which cookies, milk and carrots are placed for Santa Claus and his reindeer. The Laden Table is more focused on the religious side of Christmas rather than the Santa Claus aspect.

On Christmas Eve it is customary for the Irish to attend midnight services for their respective religions, to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Children place stockings and pillowcases at the foot of their beds before going to sleep on Christmas Eve. In the morning they awaken to find fruit, chocolates and small gifts left by St. Nicholas or "Santy Claus." Although in some parts of Ireland

the celebration of St. Nicholas takes place on the 6th of December, "St. Nicholas Day" rather than on Christmas Eve.



Christmas Day brings family and friends together for fellowship and festivities. The Christmas Day meal normally consists of stuffed goose, turkey, ham, brussels sprouts and (of course) boiled potatoes. Various types of Irish Christmas puddings, mince pies and

cakes are among favorite Irish desserts.

The day following Christmas is known as "St. Stephen's Day."

It is also commonly referred to as "Wren's Day" or "Day of the Wren."

This national holiday primarily honors Stephen, the first Christian martyr who was stoned to death shortly after Christ's crucifixion. However, the celebrations have little to do with the Saint. There are various legends surrounding this holiday's festivities. One of the more popular legends takes place during the Viking raids of Ireland in the 700s. Irish soldiers who were sneaking up on a Viking encampment were betrayed by a wren that was eating breadcrumbs from the top of a drum. The sound of the wren's tapping beak awoke the drummer, the alarm was sounded, the plot failed and the Irish were defeated. Another

legend claims that while St. Stephen was hiding from his persecutors, a chattering wren revealed his location resulting in his stoning. The wren became known as "the Devil's bird" and custom has it that it should be hunted down and stoned to death in the same manner as St. Stephen. On the morning of St. Stephen's Day, parades of Irish (mainly young boys) dressed in motley attire, blackened faces and accompanied by musicians take to the streets in various parts of Ireland singing "the wren's song" and asking for treats. Traditionally, a pole with a wren placed at the top of it is carried along the parade route as well. In years past, a live wren was hunted and killed for this festival; however, in today's Ireland a fake wren is used.

The Irish Christmas season officially ends on January 6th with the Feast of the Epiphany. This holiday is also referred to as "Little Christmas." This is the day

many Irish Catholics believe the wise men came bearing gifts for the baby Jesus. This belief mirrors the twelve days of Christmas, in which the celebration of Christ's birth runs from December 25th to January 6th. On Epiphany some Irish households exchange gifts as well. At the conclusion of the Epiphany, decorations are taken down and the Christmas season officially comes to a close.

As is the case with many countries, some of the Christmas traditions in Ireland vary somewhat depending upon the region of the country. However, the Christmas holiday season remains an extremely important holy time of year that is filled with many festivities and much enjoyment for the Irish.

May your next holiday season be filled with many blessings and happiness!

Nollaig Shona Duit! (Gaelic for "Merry Christmas")

\*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peenal\\_Laws\\_\(Ireland\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peenal_Laws_(Ireland))

*In Ireland, the Christmas season is primarily focused on the holiday's religious meaning and a time for family and friends to gather.*

In keeping with my Mardi Gras theme (see trivia on page 7), I decided to spice things up a bit for this edition with a jambalaya recipe. Before you start cooking, enjoy the history of jambalaya.

Jambalaya is broken down into two different categories: creole and cajun. Creole jambalaya originates from the French Quarter of New Orleans and was an attempt by the Spanish to make paella in the New World. Since saffron was scarce due to import costs, tomatoes became the substitute. Creole jambalaya, or red jambalaya (as known to the Cajans) is found primarily in and around New Orleans. Cajun jambalaya, also known as brown jambalaya, does not have tomatoes as an ingredient. Cajun jambalaya originates from Louisiana's rural, low-lying swamp country where crawfish, alligator, shrimp, oysters, duck, venison or other wild meats were readily available. Cajun jambalaya has more of a smoky and spicy flavor than creole jambalaya.

Since I am a big fan of tomatoes, I chose to make a creole jambalaya. You can use this recipe as a base and then be creative with substitutions of other meats and/or shellfish. If you do not like or have an allergy to shellfish, chicken or turkey can be substituted.

### CREOLE JAMBALAYA RECIPE

3 lbs. shrimp	1-16 oz. can tomatoes	1/8 tsp cayenne pepper (or more to taste)
1 lb. smoked sausage (chorizo or andouille works well)	3 cloves garlic, chopped	1 tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. oil	1/4 cup parsley, chopped	1/8 tsp. cloves
1 Tbsp. butter	2 cups chicken stock	1/8 tsp. allspice
1 cup onions, chopped	1/2 cup green onions, chopped	1/2 tsp. chili powder
1 cup green peppers, chopped	2 bay leaves	1 1/2 cups long grain rice
1/2 cup celery, finely chopped	1 tsp. thyme	
	1 tsp. basil	

1. Peel the shrimp.
2. Slice the sausage and sauté in oil and butter over low heat for about 5 minutes.
3. Add the onions, green peppers, celery and garlic and sauté slowly until the vegetables are tender; about 3-5 minutes.
4. Stir in the tomatoes, seasonings, rice and stock.
5. Add the shrimp and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cover.
6. Simmer for about 25-30 minutes, or until rice is fluffy.
7. During the last 5 minutes of cooking add the green onions and chopped parsley.



Serves 6

[www.southernfood.about.com](http://www.southernfood.about.com)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jambalaya>

<http://allrecipes.com> 

## THE NEBRASKA MILITARY DEPARTMENT VALUES DIVERSITY

The purpose of the SEP Group is to work with leadership and management in carrying out their joint responsibility to identify barriers to the recruitment and advancement of special emphasis groups, devise solutions and draft plans to implement the solutions.

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