

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

State building boom continues

Officials break ground on new joint force headquarters

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor



New Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters.

State and federal officials broke ground on the Nebraska National Guard's new \$26.9 million Joint Force Headquarters building during a ceremony, March 31, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

Governor Dave Heineman thanked those who had worked

to make the new facility a reality and said it will be a big step for the citizens of Nebraska.

"This is a very, very important day for the state of Nebraska," said Heineman. "This new Joint Force Headquarters will be an essential part of our emergency planning response for years to come."

See JFHQ on 7.

New reserve center to give Columbus troops new capabilities

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers assigned to Columbus, Neb., will soon have a new, 46,000-square foot, state-of-the-art reserve center to call home.

Standing on the corner of a grassy field that will soon house an \$8 million Armed Forces Reserve Center, officials from the Nebraska National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve and local governmental leaders

broke ground on the construction project, March 15.

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the new AFRC is part of a state-wide effort to replace aging Army Guard and U.S. Army Reserve armories with energy efficient facilities that will enable units to be able to accomplish much more of their pre-mobilization tasks at home.

"This is a great step for us to replace some aging facilities with high quality, energy efficient

See COLUMBUS on 6.

22 Months In Afghanistan

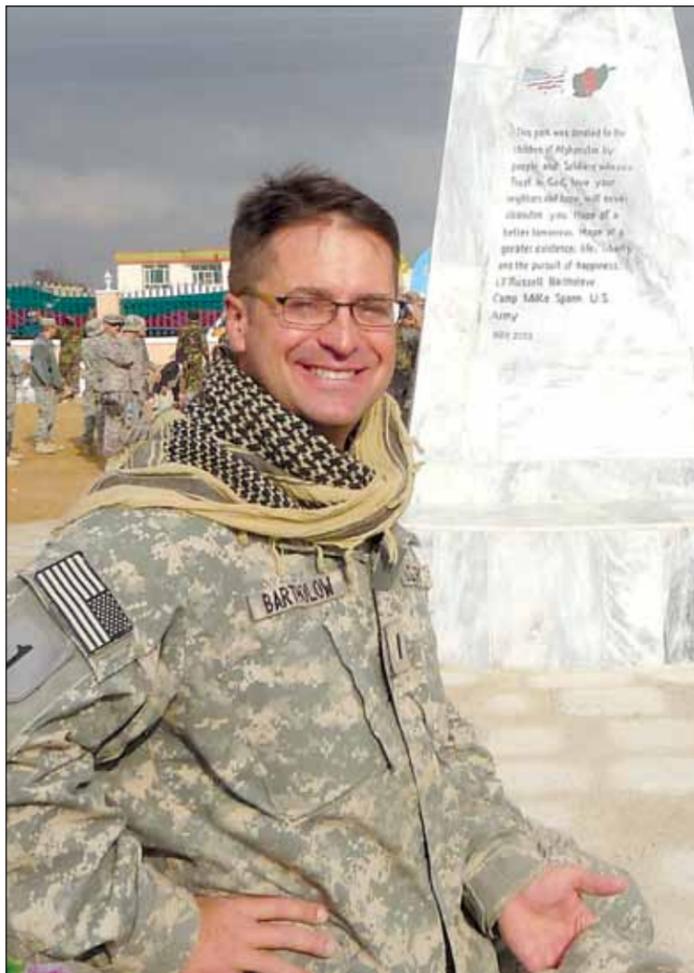


Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow
Making A Difference; 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow, Nebraska Army National Guard, poses by a monument at a park he helped build during his 22-month deployment to Afghanistan. Bartholow became interested in rejoining the military after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and ended up recording the longest uninterrupted deployment to Afghanistan of any other Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier.

Guard Soldier's journey to Afghanistan started with simple dream

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Russell Bartholow struggles to remember exactly when the dream first occurred.

Was it a sudden realization or did it evolve more slowly over time? He simply doesn't have the answer.

What he does know is that following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, he became consumed by an overriding desire to make difference.

It's probably safe to say that many people had similar thoughts following 9/11 and the beginnings of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and Bartholow would've probably been forgiven if he'd simply chalked it up to a simple early middle-age crisis.

He'd already served a stint as an active duty infantryman and a follow-on tour in the U.S. Army Reserves and was now a college graduate who had developed a successful internet business.

For some reason that Bartholow still struggles to define, this dream

See MAKING AN IMPACT on 8.

First of a
Multipart
Series

Soldiers, families gather information at Omaha workshop

By Spc. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

More than 1,100 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers and their families participated in a Yellow Ribbon Program pre-deployment workshop at Omaha's Qwest Center, Feb. 20-21. The gathering was the largest the Nebraska Guard has seen.

The event was sponsored for units deploying to Iraq and Af-

ghanistan later this year: the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's Headquarters Company, the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron and the 1167th Brigade Support Company.

The Yellow Ribbon Program's briefings help families and loved ones understand what resources are available to them when their Soldier deploys, said 1st Sgt. Kenneth Winn, the first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry. Winn said

the information gathered during the workshop will provide people with answers to some of the questions they may have down the road.

The workshop is a great way to share those resources, said Winn, who will deploy for the third time.

On hand for opening comments was Brig. Gen. Roma Amundson, the Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general.

"Less than one percent of the people of the United States wear

the uniform," said Amundson. "So that means that those people that are associated with that one percent are very scattered."

Getting involved with support systems is very important, she said. The Nebraska National Guard will be that support system for those needing it.

Amundson recalled when her husband, retired Lt. Col. Randy Amundson, mobilized in 2003. "It

See YELLOW RIBBON on 9.

Nebraska state legislature congratulates Air Guard wing

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska State Capitol's Warner Chamber has been the scene of many different events over the year.

The historic chamber took on a definitive shade of digital green and tan, April 6, when the Nebraska Legislature formally honored the men and women of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing for earning the organization's 10th U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

"Be it resolved by the members of the 101st Legislature of Nebraska, Second Session, that the Legislature hereby congratulates and extends its appreciation to the men and women of the 155th Air

See RESOLUTION on 4.

Air Lift

Nebraska Air National Guardsmen practice recovering aircraft using just seven pounds of air pressure

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

If there is only seven pounds of air pressure in a car tire, it's a flat tire.

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing recently proved that seven pounds of air pressure is enough to lift much more weight than the average car when they took a yearly training exercise to its limits by using seven pounds of air pressure in multiple airbags to lift a KC-135R Stratotanker at the air base in Lincoln, Neb., April 15.

Called a crash, damage, disabled, aircraft recovery, or CDDAR exercise, the Airmen simulated a scenario in which an aircraft suffered a failure of one of its landing gear while taxiing, causing the aircraft to come to rest on its jet engines at the intersection of the Lincoln Municipal Airport's two major runways.

See CDDAR on 3.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Getting Diled In: Tech. Sgt. Christopher Deaton, 155th Maintenance Squadron, tightens air hoses to a aircraft lifting bag control console for the 26-ton aircraft lifting pneumatic bags.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' review seeking broadest input

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Defense Department's review on the potential impact of repealing the ban on gays serving openly in the military will solicit input from troops of every service and rank — as well as their families through surveys, focus groups and — social media tools, the team heading up the review told Congress, March 3.

Jeh C. Johnson, the Pentagon's general counsel; Gen. Carter F. Ham, commander of U.S. Army Europe; and Clifford Stanley, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told the House Armed Services Committee March 3 they seek to get the widest range of viewpoints from both within and outside the Defense Department as they conduct the review concerning potential repeal of the law commonly known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates ordered the 10-month review in February to solicit views about a repeal, as well as the potential impact if Congress directs it. He issued guidelines and parameters for the review March 2, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that any change in the law is implemented in a way that minimizes disruptions in military operations.

Toward that end, the working group will focus its work on assessing any impact a repeal would have on readiness, recruiting, retention, family readiness and unit cohesion, Johnson said.

The working group conducting the review is a cross-section of the military, Ham told the House panel. Its members represent a wide variety of ages, ranks and military specialties, come from every service, including the Coast Guard, and serve in both the active and reserve components.

Navy Fleet Master Chief Petty Officer Scott Benning serves as the group's senior enlisted leader, with access to all group activities and a reporting chain that goes directly to Johnson and Ham, the general said.

Both have asked every member of the working group to set aside their own views so they can conduct an objective, comprehensive review, Johnson told the House panel, "because frankly, that is, in my experience, the best way in which members of the U.S. military go about their work — if we are all asked to set aside our personal opinions and do the best we can at an objective and thorough analysis."

■ Mullen urges more 'Soft Power' in Afghanistan

MANHATTAN, Kan. (AFPS) – The nation's top military officer expressed concern March 3 that U.S. government agencies other than the military have been slow to expand their role in Afghanistan.

Speaking to an audience at Kansas State University, Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underscored the need for a "whole-of-government" approach to Afghanistan, with greater input from so-called "soft power" agencies such as the

State Department.

"My fear, quite frankly, is that we aren't moving fast enough in this regard," Mullen said. "U.S. foreign policy is still too dominated by the military, too dependent on the generals and admirals who lead our major overseas commands, and not enough on the State Department."

Mullen's remarks at the Landon Lecture echoed a familiar refrain that the United States should seek balance in military and nonmilitary efforts, a tack that represents a departure from what Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has referred to as a "creeping militarization" in American foreign policy. The chairman embraced requests by Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton for more funding and greater emphasis on soft power, suggesting that deployment of U.S. troops should depend on other government agencies' readiness to engage.

"I would argue that in future struggles of the asymmetric, counterinsurgent variety," he said, "we ought to make a pre-condition of committing our troops that we will do so only if and when the other instruments of national power are ready to engage as well."

Mullen acknowledged the value of having a strong military able to rapidly deploy in response to national security needs, but stressed the need to have more weight shouldered by interagency partners.

"It's one thing to be able and willing to serve as emergency responders," he said, "but quite another to always have to be the fire chief."

Mullen said a whole-of-government approach within the United States should be complemented by support from American allies and partners. "In addition to bringing the full weight of the U.S. government to bear, we must also bring our allies and partners with us to the fight," he said, noting that 42 nations are participating with the United States in Afghanistan.

"Whether by formal alliance or informal agreement," he continued, "multinational commitments lend not only a higher sense of legitimacy to the effort, they lend to local populations certain skills and knowledge which we alone do not possess."

■ Beginners Motorcycle Rider courses available for National Guard Soldiers, Airmen

If you are a current member of the Nebraska National Guard, you are eligible for reimbursement if you attend The Motorcycle Safety Foundation approved Basic Rider's Course.

Completion of the Basic Rider's Course is required to operate a motorcycle on military installations. The two- to three-day course (depending upon provider) includes classroom instruction and practical riding experience in a controlled setting. It is designed for beginners and re-entry riders above the age of 19.

Once completed, the training allows riders to waive the Nebraska State motorcycle test for an operator's license and may also qualify the participant for lower insurance premiums.

management and technology.

For example, the new policy allows commanders to temporarily limit that access as required to maintain operations security or address bandwidth constraints. It also prohibits malicious activity on military information networks and denies access to sites promoting prohibited activity such as gambling, pornography and hate crimes.

While information sharing may seem the polar opposite of security to some people, Wennergren said the Defense Department can no longer afford to consider just one or the other.

"If you look at either one individually, you will fail," he said. "You will have great security, but no ability to access information sharing. (Or), if you think only about sharing, you will run into issues of operational security and letting bad things into your system. So you can no longer think of them as two separate subjects."

The new policy promotes what Wennergren calls "secure information sharing," providing the balance needed to tap into the capabilities social media networking provides without compromising security.

He emphasized the importance

of personal responsibility in using unclassified military networks to access these tools and said the department will continue to evaluate the policy after it takes effect.

"There's a huge imperative for security," Wennergren said. "It is everyone's responsibility in the department to make sure they are doing all that they can to protect our information and our information systems."

Ultimately, he called responsible, security-conscious use of social media networks a win-win proposition for the Defense Department and its members.

"The world of Web 2.0 and the Internet provides these amazing opportunities to collaborate," Wennergren said. It not only promotes information sharing across organizational boundaries and with mission partners, but also enables deployed troops to maintain contact with their loved ones at home.

"So if you work on those two pieces — access and security — this really is giving people this avenue to do amazing things in terms of getting the information shared and making decisions happen much more rapidly," Wennergren said.

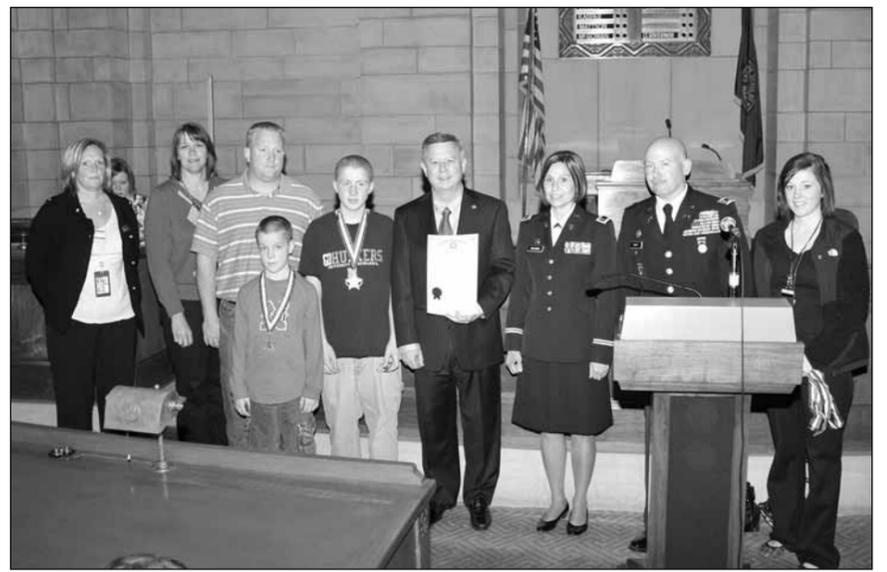


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Month Of The Military Child: Gov. Dave Heineman (center) stands with a group of Nebraska Army National Guardsmen and Family Program representatives, April 7, at the State Capitol in Lincoln, Neb.

Military kids honored during monthly proclamation event

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Governor Dave Heineman signed a proclamation recognizing the continuing sacrifices of Nebraska military children during the governor's monthly proclamation signing ceremony, April 7, at the Warner Chamber in the State Capitol.

The Month of the Military Child is an annual federal recognition effort held each April to heighten public awareness of the sacrifices that children of military parents make every day as their parents serve in support of the United States, both here in America as well as around the world.

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general, the roles that Nebraska's military kids of all services — Active, Reserve and National Guard — play cannot be underestimated.

"Our military kids sacrifice each and every day. They are amazing examples of courage, devotion and resiliency as their parents answer the call to serve Nebraska and our nation," said Lyons. "Just like their

parents who serve in the military, these kids are every day heroes."

"The Month of the Military Child events and activities let us show the youngest members of our military family — the children — how proud we are of their contributions, too," Lyons said. "Our military children are unsung heroes. This is our chance to thank them for being so supportive of their parents."

According to Pamela Stemple, Nebraska National Guard state youth coordinator contractor, a number of activities are being planned across the state in recognition of Nebraska's military kids. Additionally, many businesses throughout the state are offering discounts and special opportunities for military children during April.

"Military children serve too, especially when our nation is at war," said Stemple. "They see their parents deploy to combat regions and while they understand that it is mom or dad's job, it doesn't make it easy."

For learn more about activities planned in support of the Month of the Military Child recognition effort in Nebraska, contact Stemple at pamela.stemple@us.army.mil.

Note: In order to be eligible for reimbursement, members must obtain pre-approval from the Safety Office prior to registering for this course.

For additional information, or to get pre-approval, contact the Nebraska Army National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1833 or the Nebraska Air National Guard Safety Office at (402) 309-1118.

■ Gates expresses confidence in continued Manas access

ABOARD A MILITARY AIRCRAFT, (AFPS) – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates expressed confidence April 13 that

political upheaval in Kyrgyzstan won't cause the United States to lose use of an air base that's critical to supplying operations in Afghanistan.

Gates told reporters traveling with him to Peru he has no reason to believe that Kyrgyzstan's new leader, Roza Otunbayeva, will renege on the lease for the transit center at Manas. Otunbayeva took power during unrest a week earlier that ousted President Kurmanbek Makiyev.

"Everything I have been able to see or read suggests that there is a willingness to leave Manas open and to continue allowing our use out of it along the lines of the terms of the agreement," Gates said.

DoD policy allows social media access with caveats

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Attention all Facebookers, Twitter tweeters and YouTubers: a new Defense Department policy authorizes you to access these and other Web 2.0 platforms from nonclassified government computers, as long as it doesn't compromise operational security or involve prohibited activities or Websites.

Defense Department officials issued the long-awaited policy, Feb. 26, establishing consistent rules for all military members and employers. Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III, who signed the policy, said it strikes a critical balance between the benefits and potential vulnerabilities of these applications.

"This directive recognizes the importance of balancing appropriate security measures while maximizing the capabilities afforded by 21st-century Internet tools," he said.

While authorizing access to these tools, the new policy also recognizes the importance of protecting military networks and operations, said David M. Wennergren, deputy assistant secretary of defense for information

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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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Searching For Crew Members: A member of the Nebraska Air National Guard Fire Department prepares to search the KC-135 Stratotanker for injured crew members.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Adjustments: Senior Airman Timothy J. Baruth, 155th Maintenance Squadron, makes adjustments to the amount of air moving into one of the 26-ton aircraft lifting pneumatic bags.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Loaded Down: (Foreground) Airman 1st Class Travis L. Tonkinson, 155th Maintenance Squadron and Tech. Sgt. Dale E. Duhachek, 185th Maintenance Squadron (Sioux City, Iowa,) carry hoses at the start of the crash, damage, disabled, aircraft recovery exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base.

CDDAR continued from page 1.

“The whole exercise consisted of a simulated aircraft incident,” said Col. Keith Schell, commander of the 155th Maintenance Group. “In this case, we simulated that the aircraft was on take-off roll and it suffered a track failure – basically a gear collapsed – and the aircraft came to (rest) in the middle of two major runways. That would drive the Airport Authority to say we need to get the aircraft off of there right away because they need to open one of them up for commercial traffic that comes in and out of Lincoln.”

In order to move the aircraft, the side that suffered the failure would need to be lifted off of its engines before a trailer could be placed under the wing allowing the aircraft to be towed safely.

Several options exist to lift an aircraft, but the 155th utilized a newly acquired air bag system made up of several individually controlled bags stacked on top of each other that, once inflated, can lift the aircraft using only seven pounds of air pressure in each bag.

Although this is an annual exercise, this was the first time an actual aircraft was lifted, said Schell. The Air Force doesn't allow lifting of primary aircraft, but the 155th happens to have a KC-135 belonging to the U.S. Air Force Museum that is waiting to be permanently displayed as a static aircraft.

Initially the museum denied requests to lift its aircraft, but once they learned that Chief Master Sgt. Russell Kobaly, a quality assurance supervisor for the 171st Air Refueling Wing in Pittsburg, Pa., and the lead CDDAR program specialist for the Air National Guard, was there to assist, they gave their permission.

Kobaly said he has been working on aircraft recovery since 1975 and has performed anywhere from 85 to 100 aircraft lifts during exercises and real-world incidents. He said there are two main purposes for the exercise.

“One is to ensure personnel safety – they need to know how to handle the equipment and understand the hazards of doing this operation,” said Kobaly. “The secondary importance is to prevent secondary damage to the aircraft.”

Kobaly added that in a real-world situation CDDAR teams can usually have an aircraft lifted and off of the runway in less than an hour.

Schell said he wanted to accomplish two goals.

“For the maintenance side of it was the communication flow, because we wanted to make sure that the individual incident went all the way through the channels all the way down to the bottom level of the CDDAR team getting notified,” said Schell. “The second one was the CDDAR team actually going out there, looking at the problem, analyzing it, coming to a conclusion about how to move the aircraft and then actually doing the lift – and of course, doing it safely and correctly.”

“They fulfilled that goal one hundred percent.”

In addition to the scenario of failed land-

ing gear, the exercise included two more scenarios to involve more organizations on the base. “We added a couple extra things in there to test the fire department, of course they're first response,” said Schell. “Then a simulated injury and then a simulated fuel spill and that included environment and the fire department.”

Schell said they faced several challenges, but communication and getting everyone on the same page proved the most challenging because of how many different groups were involved. “This is the first time that some of the people actually ran a checklist with the CDDAR exercise, so some of the terminology that they didn't know, they do now,” he said. “Another one of the challenging things is making sure you have all the right equipment. A lot of the CDDAR equipment is expensive and so that's been a challenge trying to get that stuff.”

Schell said successfully completing the exercise not only shows the Airmen the aircraft recovery capabilities they now have, it puts the 155th ARW in a favorable light with others.

“I was confident that they'd be able to do it, but more importantly, now they know they can do it safely and effectively,” said Schell. “It shows the Lincoln Airport Authority and the tower...and the National Guard Bureau that we are fully capable.”

“With the air show coming in next year, this is a boost because one of the things that they really want to see at bases is if there is aircraft recovery,” he added.

The exercise definitely had an impact on the young Airmen getting their first look at the new air bag equipment and how it operates.

“This is the first time I've done it,” said Airman 1st Class Travis Tonkinson, an Airman with the 155th's Repair and Reclamation shop.

“It's almost like a game plan of how everything needs to take place,” added Tonkinson. “You might not know exactly what you need to do, but at least you have a general idea what needs to happen.”

Actually lifting the aircraft was a bit surprising to those involved. “The ease at which the bags raised it – I was surprised that it was that easy,” said Schell.

Tonkinson echoed Schell and thought it was gratifying to see the plane lifted. “Any time you lift an airplane it's pretty neat,” he said. “If you were doing that in the real world I'm sure it would be pretty gratifying to actually lift it... get a trailer underneath of it and see it get rolled away.”

Working alongside the members of the 155th were two members of the 190th ARW in Topeka, Kan., and nine members of the 185th ARW in Sioux City, Iowa. The Airmen from other units were there to train with and assist the members of the 155th and they all felt the exercise was a success.

“Everybody that went there from the other two units and our unit said that it was a great exercise because it was so realistic,” said Schell. “Talking with Kansas and Sioux City...now when they have an exercise like this they're



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Preparations: Senior Airman Timothy J. Baruth, 155th Maintenance Squadron, tightens air hoses to a aircraft lifting bag control console for the 26-ton aircraft lifting pneumatic bags, April 15, during the crash, damage, disabled, aircraft recovery exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

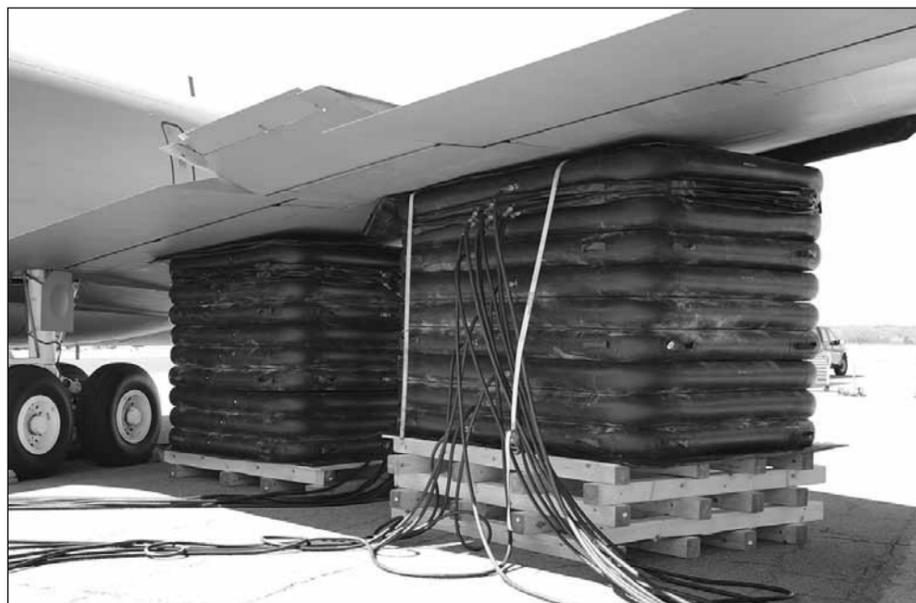


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Air Lift: The wing of a KC-135 begins to be lifted up by the 26-ton aircraft lifting pneumatic bags, April 15. The April 15 crash, damage, disabled, aircraft recovery exercise gave Airmen from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing and visiting Airmen from the Iowa and Kansas Air National Guard the opportunity to actually go through the steps of physically lifting an aircraft off the ground using the air bag system.

going to call us and see if we want to send anybody up because this is great for all of us.”

Schell said the seamless work between the three units really shows the strength of the Air Force's training.

“The other two units and our people got together and did exactly what the book says, by the regulations,” said Schell. “They looked at the problem, they came up with a solution, and they were able to carry it through and these people had never worked together before.”

Overall, Schell was very pleased with the exercise and said the things that needed to be

corrected were very minor and have already been addressed.

“It's nice to know that we're able to do this,” said Schell. “It's nice to know that we have all the equipment we would need to do something like this, so it's a big morale boost and a confidence builder.”

“It was a great exercise,” he added. “I think it did exactly what we wanted it to do, wanting to show where we were maybe falling short in some areas like the communications, but it showed we could do what we needed to get done and we did.”

Nebraska senator visits with Guard families

■ Senator Mike Johanns speaks to 1195th Transportation Company families during visit to Hastings, Grand Island

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

Family members of Soldiers deployed with the 1195th Transportation Company were given the opportunity to voice their concerns when Sen. Mike Johanns visited with them at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., Feb. 17.

Johanns joined Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, state command sergeant major, and other distinguished guests by boarding a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter in Lincoln and flying first to the Grand Island Army Aviation Support Facility for a tour of the facility.

They then made the quick trip to the Greenleaf Training Site to meet with the approximately 15 family members.

Once at the GTS, Johanns and the family members were briefed on the Nebraska Military Department's current operations, facilities and future projects. Following the briefing Johanns spoke directly with the family members, beginning by thanking the family members for their dedication and sacrifice.

"Let me start and tell every one of you how much I appreciate your service," said Johanns. "I don't draw a distinction there. I think family members provide a very, very valuable service here, too."

Johanns, who sits on the Veterans Affairs Committee, said he places a very high emphasis on issues affecting service members and their families, and wanted to hear any concerns the families had.

"I'm all ears," said Johanns. "I want to hear what's going on. I want to hear how you're doing, but I want to hear how your Soldier is doing... what do they need? What can we do to try to make life better for you or for them?"

For several family members in attendance this was not the first time their Soldier had been deployed, so they were able to compare the current deployment to those in the past. The overall sentiment was that things were getting better, but access to communication had made the biggest improvement.

Klarrisa Haag, wife of Staff Sgt. Joseph Haag, said frequent communication has helped them greatly in their first year of marriage.

"I think that open communication, espe-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

"I'm All Ears": Nebraska Senator Mike Johanns speaks with family members of Soldiers deployed to Iraq with the 1195th Transportation Company during a trip to the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., on Feb. 17. Johanns wanted to hear about the issues affecting the family members while their loved ones are deployed.

cially in our first year of marriage and being apart, has been huge for us and it really, really helped us stay on the same page," said Haag. "I'll probably get to talk to him, if not today, there's a good chance tomorrow... I kind of consider it just a long distance relationship and it doesn't feel so much like a deployment."

Family members said that along with phone calls, the social networking Website "Facebook" and the video teleconferencing site "Skype" have been very helpful in keeping the lines of communication open.

Johanns said getting a different perspective from the family members gives him a new view of what they and their Soldiers go through.

"I absolutely come away with a little bit different perspective," said Johanns. "Communication is the key... the ability to just talk on a regular basis so there isn't this complete disconnect for a period of time is absolutely essential."

"Meeting with families brings to me reality," he added. "I don't have to go back now and guess what they're going through. I've talked to them. They tell me what they're going through and the challenges they're facing."

Family members said they were glad that Johanns took the time to speak with them and listen to their concerns.

"I am really impressed that he is showing

such an interest and it makes me feel good that somebody in a senator position is willing to come here and listen to the families," said Diane Evans of Loup City, Neb.

She and her husband Larry, who was also in attendance, have two reasons for concern. They are the parents of Sgt. Patricia Evans and Spc. Nicholas Evans, both of whom were deployed with the 1195th.

Haag echoed the Evans' comments, saying she was happy to speak with someone in a position to make possible changes.

"I think it's amazing that he came out," said Haag. "It's kind of a once in a lifetime opportunity to really express how you feel about your spouse's deployment to somebody who is really concerned and can do something about it. So he was great to speak with and you could tell he really took our concerns to heart."

Johanns encouraged the family members to take full advantage of all of the programs and benefits available to them and promised to work to make deployments easier on the service members and their families at home.

"I won't promise you we can solve all the world's problems," said Johanns. "But I will promise you that we'll make a commitment to do everything we can to help you deal with the issues that you face and try to make that a bit better."

Guardsmen can now use state tuition assistance at Bryan LGH medical school

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

The Nebraska National Guard honored the Bryan LGH College of Health Services, March 18, at the school's campus in Lincoln after it was added to the list of educational institutions eligible for state tuition assistance.

Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, presented a certificate of appreciation to the Bryan LGH College of Health Sciences to thank them for their work on behalf of those aspiring to enter the medical field and in recognition of the beginning of the school's eligibility for state tuition assistance.

"We have two purposes here today," said Lyons as he addressed guests from both the Nebraska National Guard and Bryan LGH. "One is just to recognize Bryan LGH College of Health Sciences for the great work that they do training men and women for careers in the health services."

"The most significant development is now they're eligible for state tuition assistance," added Lyons. "What that means, is that our Nebraska National Guard members who want to pursue careers in health sciences can come here to Bryan LGH and help that burden of tuition be relieved a little bit by being eligible for state tuition assistance."

The college already boasts students who are involved in the Nebraska National Guard, so the tuition assistance eligibility is very welcome.

"I'm thankful that the Guard has helped me thus far, and I'm even more thankful that they're going to help me even more," said Pvt. Amanda Odvody, a medic with the Medical Detachment and first semester student at Bryan.

"Now that there's even less financial burden on me that means there's more funds available for me to go for my higher degree."

Odvody said being a medic in the Nebraska National Guard has helped her get a leg up on other students at Bryan. She said she believes others could benefit, too.

"I would suggest to anybody who is considering medical, to try out the Guard and be a... medic like I am," said Odvody. "It's a great foot in the door for me - it showed me that this is really what I want to do."

President Obama: Risk of nuclear attack has grown

WASHINGTON (AFPS) - While the risk of nuclear war between countries has dropped, the risk of a nuclear attack has risen, President Barack Obama said April 13.

Obama officially opened the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., where leaders of 47 nations were meeting to address the problems of nuclear materials and the threats that rogue nations and terrorist groups pose.

Dozens of nations have nuclear materials that could be sold or stolen and fashioned into nuclear weapons, Obama said. "Just the smallest amount of plutonium, about the size of an apple, could kill and injure hundreds of thousands of innocent people," the president said.

Terror groups would use the weapon if they could get their hands on one, Obama told the group, specifically citing al-Qaida's efforts to acquire nuclear materials. "If they ever succeeded, they would surely use it," he said.

"Were they to do so, it would be a catastrophe for the world, causing extraordinary loss of life and striking a major blow to global peace and stability." Nuclear terrorism is the greatest threat to the world today, and the world needs to take action, he added.

RESOLUTION continued from page 1.

Refueling Wing of the Nebraska Air National Guard on earning their 10th Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and thanks them for their excellent service to this state and nation," Nebraska Sen. Mike Flood, speaker of the house, read before formally presenting a framed copy of Legislative Resolution 310 to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, before a chamber filled with members of the Lincoln-based Air Guard unit.

LR 310 was initially introduced by Senator Bob Krist, a retired active duty Air Force officer who once served as the active duty advisor to the 155th ARW. The resolution was also sponsored by Nebraska State Senators Bill Avery, Colby Coash, Danielle Conrad, Tony Fulton, Robert Giese, Mike Gloor, Ken Haar, Charlie Janssen, Russ Karpisek, Amanda McGill, Scott Price and Kate Sullivan.

Krist said he was immensely proud to introduce the resolution, which was adopted by the Legislature on Feb. 11.

"The point of this (resolution) is to recognize our citizens in the state of Nebraska for their significant contributions," said Krist. "And this being your 10th time (to receive) a unit award, in my opinion, is very significant."

Also attending the ceremony was Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, who also offered his congratulations to the 155th ARW.

"You know, you've had many challenges



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Congratulations: (from left) Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, State Sen. Mike Flood and State Sen. Bob Krist present Col. Rick Evans III, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing and Nebraska Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons with a signed copy of LR 310 formally recognizing the 155th ARW for earning its 10th U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award during a ceremony held at the Nebraska state capitol building in Lincoln, Neb., April 6.

over the years, but particularly since Sept. 11, 2001. We've continued to ask more and more of you every day," said Sheehy. "Not only to assist aircraft that are flying around the world as they are traveling to the theater, but also here in the United States because of natural disasters, hurricanes, fires in California. You answer the call each and every day."

Lyons, who accepted the resolution on behalf of the 155th ARW, said he too was extremely proud of the jobs the organization

accomplishes every day.

"It goes without saying that for a unit to receive 10 outstanding unit awards from the United States Air is a significant achievement," said Lyons, adding that the unit's streak of awards stretches back decades. "You know, airplanes come and go, missions come and go over time, but what doesn't change here is the treasure of the organization, and that's the Airmen... They're just outstanding men and women who get up every day dedicated to serving their fellow Nebraskans and serving their nation."

Col. Rick Evans III, commander of the 155th ARW, echoed those comments. "It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to stand in front of you today and accept this recognition from the Legislature and from the state for the men and women of the 155th Air Refueling Wing," said Evans.

"As General Lyons mentioned, this unit has a long and very impressive history."

Evans said he's particularly proud of the mission that the 155th ARW performs every day on behalf of the citizens of Nebraska and the United States.

"The most important thing we do is bring in great Airmen to serve their state and nation," he said. "And we do have truly outstanding Airmen who brought this award home to Nebraska."

'Band of Huskers'

Informal network keeps Nebraskans connected while training in Alabama

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

Comaraderie, team building, building blocks of success... call it what you want, but Nebraska's warrant officer and Army aviation community have created a 'Band of Huskers' at Fort Rucker, Ala., and it is working for the warrant and commissioned officers attending some of the most intensive training the U.S. Army has to offer.

Fort Rucker, Ala., is the home of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Candidate School and the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence where hundreds of warrant officers and commissioned officers receive their initial and follow-on pilot training in helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft every year.

The southeastern Alabama post is also currently home to approximately 20 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers in various stages of their flight schools.

Considering the fact that flight schools can often last between 18 and 24 months, the fact that the Nebraska Soldiers have essentially formed their own internal social network shouldn't really come as a surprise.

Still, say the Guardsmen, the ability to mingle and stay in contact with others from the Cornhusker state has been an extremely positive experience for the Nebraskans and their families, many of which are also living in the region while the Soldiers attend training.

"The aviation community is fairly small, so we will all work together sooner or later," said Capt. Michael Wieneke, a helicopter student pilot who has been training at Fort Rucker since last July. "We also get to hear of different stages of training. We get to help each other out and for people coming up, we pass along tips and hints".

"There are people here that are farther ahead of me in the course and it is good to talk to them so you know what is going on ahead of you in flight school," added Warrant Officer Sean O'Malley, another Nebraska helicopter student pilot training at Fort Rucker.

"Sometimes we get together

at someone's house and barbecue or watch a football game; there are people that have gone to the beach in Florida," he added. "We will know people when we return to Nebraska."

The network has been especially helpful for the accompanying spouses, say many of the student aviators.

"(The training here is) difficult," said O'Malley. "These get-togethers are way better for the wives because they may be home for most of the day and of course when we come back from class they hear all about what we did during the day in flight school."

"Sometimes it's better for them to talk to other wives during these activities. It really does help," he added.

Tess Bayne, the wife of Warrant Officer Chad Bayne, agreed. She's been living in Alabama with the couple's kids since October while her husband attends flight school. She said the Husker network has been extremely important

"We get together for all the Husker games," she said, adding that the contacts she's making now will pay extraordinary dividends later when the Soldiers deploy.

"When my husband is deployed it will be easier to know each other now, rather than later, when we get together for the first FRG (family readiness group) meeting," she said.

The Husker network was particularly helpful last fall when the group decided that no Nebraska Soldier stationed at Fort Rucker would go without a Thanksgiving dinner.

"Warrant Officer Chad Bayne and his wife got almost everyone that was here at the time around Thanksgiving, which was almost 17 people, together," said Wieneke. "Everyone at least stopped in. Most stayed. Kids were playing outside in the Alabama weather."

The groups also have frequent access to state leadership. For example, state aviation leaders or senior warrant officers often attend graduation ceremonies for those Nebraska Soldiers graduating from either the Warrant Officer Candidate School course or from flight school.



Photo by David Nore

Welcoming A Soldier To The Warrant Officer Community: Chief Warrant Officer 5 Burdette Chappell and Warrant Officer Courtney Miller discuss topics of concern following Miller's graduation from Warrant Officer Candidate School, held at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum on Fort Rucker, Ala.

They also make a point to visit as many other Nebraskans stationed at Fort Rucker as possible.

That has made a major impact on the Soldiers.

"I have seen Nebraska representatives almost every month, which is good," said Bayne. "Other warrant officers don't even know who their SAO (State Aviation Officer) is and don't know really know what is going on back in their state."

According to Lt. Col. Rick Gray, Nebraska Army National Guard state aviation officer who is also currently attending C-12 fixed wing aviation training at Fort Rucker, the visits are extremely important.

"I want everyone to know each other," said Gray, who recently attended both a Warrant Officer Candidate School and initial flight training graduation ceremony with Chief Warrant Officer 5 Derek Simons and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Burdette Chappell, both of whom traveled from Nebraska to attend the ceremonies at Fort Rucker's Army Aviation Museum.

"It helps in a lot of ways. Part of

it is an accountability; you hate to let down your friends. If you aren't studying back at the unit or if your flying ability starts to degrade, you are now kind of letting down your friends, not just other unknown Soldiers," he added.

That in turn, said Gray, makes it easier to retain trained aviators – many of whom have had more than \$1 million invested in their training – in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"To me it starts a more family or familiar environment. You're not just a Soldier that shows up at drill or an AFTP (additional flight training period), you're a part of this military family, as (are) your spouse and kids," said Gray.

"Some of these Soldiers have become friends while they have been down here," said Gray. "This also gives more faith and confidence that the family has in the military, because now they can put a face to a name."

Warrant officers just graduating from flight school say they can definitely see the benefits of

staying in touch with peers and state leadership.

"I think that it is great because it informs us of what is going on back home," said Warrant Officer Matt Svoboda after his graduation from the rotary wing pilot graduation. "(The leaders) want to know where we are at and they want to be involved to help us with our progress in the training."

"It was always nice to know the state supported us. They just didn't ship us off and leave us and say 'See you when you get back,'" added Warrant Officer Derek Whistler, who graduated on the same day as Svoboda. "We knew there was someone there if we needed them."

"I'm honored that they came. I didn't expect it at all," said newly pinned Warrant Officer Courtney Miller, who recently graduated from the Warrant Officer Candidate School. "It is great to see support from my upper chain of command."

"I don't know how it compares with other states, but I am impressed that they would come down for (my) graduation."

Recruit Sustainment Program continues to prepare new Soldiers for success

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

Most newly enlisted Soldiers understand they will have to endure basic combat training followed by advanced individual training. Still, many enlistees have a lot of additional questions about what to truly expect.

That's why the National Guard developed and implemented the Recruit Sustainment Program.

The RSP was created to introduce new enlistees to the military environment and ease their adjustment from civilian to BCT and AIT. It also prepares enlistees mentally, physically and administratively, which ultimately reduces the number of Soldiers who drop out before their initial training is complete.

"The overall goal is to prepare the Soldiers for basic training so that we reduce our training pipeline losses," said Sgt. 1st Class Brad Ranslem, RSP readiness noncommissioned officer. "It's also a good way for us to keep tabs on Soldiers so they don't get lost in the shuffle."

The Nebraska National Guard recently began hosting RSP open houses to allow the new enlistees to continue learning while also showcasing some of their newly acquired knowledge.

More than 30 newly enlisted Soldiers and approximately 40 guests attended one such open house at the

armory in Norfolk, Neb., March 13.

During the open house participants tested their physical fitness by performing push-ups and sit-ups much like they would during an actual Army Physical Fitness Test. They also disassembled and reassembled an M-16 rifle, utilized an engagement skills trainer and participated in other fun activities.

"It's all about training the Soldiers, obviously, to prepare them for basic," said Ranslem. "We really focus on making sure that they're learning the tasks. But at the same time (we're) making sure that there's structure and discipline (and that) it's also enjoyable."

Ranslem said the transition from civilian to Soldier is often stressful, so any knowledge the RSP can provide the new enlistees can help alleviate some of that stress.

"A lot of them have never flown before. This is their first time away from home and they get there and then all of the sudden this guy is yelling at them," said Ranslem. "It's just a huge amount of stress put on their shoulders. So anything that we can train them on...even if it's just one drill before basic training... can help alleviate some of that stress."

At 33-years-old, Marco Flores, of Columbus, Neb., may have more life experience than most of the RSP participants. Still, he didn't know that much about the military.

"Going to RSP gives you a



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

On The Clock: Rebecca Johnson, a senior at Twin River High School in Genoa, Neb., reassembles an M-16 rifle during a Recruit Sustainment Program Open House held at the Norfolk Armory, March 13.

head start, definitely," said Flores. "You're going to know about the rank structure. You're going to probably be more physically fit than you would otherwise. It's going to prepare you for the routine when you come here on weekends."

"I think they're giving you just a taste of what you're going to expect at basic training, although when you go to basic from what I understand, it's a lot more intense,"

he added.

For Ashley Sukup, an 18-year-old high-school senior at Wayne High School in Wayne, Neb., RSP has been an extremely positive experience.

"I've learned about the (phonetic) alphabet. I've learned all the ranks. Learned how to disassemble and reassemble an M16. We learned how to do gas-mask drills...and how to don your protective gear," said Sukup. "Just things you're going to need to know when you go through basic."

"I'll know how to address a drill sergeant and I'm not going to be so nervous when I go," she added. "I'll already know the Warrior Ethos and the Soldier's Creed and I'm going to be a little bit more prepared for (physical training) than most people would."

Sukup said she also has gained confidence and leadership skills through RSP. She said she's confident she's ready to help any of her fellow Soldiers when she ships off to BCT on May 18.

"Before, I used to feel really intimidated," said Sukup. "I always held back and I didn't really ever use to speak out or step up and do something and now I'm not afraid."

Although the RSP is serious about preparing enlistees to be successful during their training, they do like to provide time, like the open house, to allow the participants and guests to let their hair down and have a little fun and work on building teamwork.

"This thing, it just gives them an opportunity to let loose, come together as a company and just have some fun and just enjoy themselves," said Ranslem.

Since the inception of the RSP, Ranslem said Guard officials have seen a decrease in the number of training losses and have received some great feedback from the participating Soldiers.

"A lot of them came back and they're like, 'I'm so glad that I had this program...I knew so much before I went,'" said Ranslem. "There's so many of my privates that come back and they request to try and become cadre...because they liked the program and they understand what its usefulness is."

Ranslem knows first-hand the value of the RSP for the new Soldiers.

"When I went (to basic), I remember standing in civilian clothes and I remember going on the drill floor and just standing there feeling like, 'What am I doing?'" he said. "I wish I would have had at least the opportunity to do this."

"I think it's a big program to prepare our Soldiers and make them feel at home – comfortable," added Ranslem. "And if nothing else...you can at least teach these kids a few of the basic things to help them be more successful. I think it's really helped us reduce the amount of training-pipeline losses...so I think it's been a great benefit to the state."

New simulator allows Guard to train driver safely

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Members of Nebraska National Guard transportation units have a new training aid at their disposal.

Now before risking possible equipment damage or – worse yet – personal injury, Soldiers will be able to develop and hone their driving skills on the state's new U.S. Army Operator Driving Simulator. The USA ODS, which was provided with funds from the National Guard Bureau, arrived in Nebraska approximately the beginning of the year. Its permanent home will be the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., but was in Lincoln, March 5, when training officials showcased its capabilities to the state's commanders.

The simulator is a self-contained, generator-powered, highly-mobile trailer that offers driver simulations for seven different Army vehicles from Humvees to Heavy Equipment Transport vehicles.

Drivers sit in a life-like cab that can be configured to look like any of the different vehicles to include interchangeable dashboards with fully functional gauges and controls. The cab and dashboard also offer tactile feedback with a vibrating steering wheel and moving seat. Drivers then look at a 180 degree video representation of what is in front and surrounding them.

"This trailer is an individual driver trainer, driver simulator," said Bob Bergman, a training aids, devices, simulators and simulations facilitator with General Dynamics Information Technology, a company contracted to oversee the Army National Guard's battle simulation programs.

"Its intent is to take an unqualified Soldier or Airman through different vehicles and different levels of difficulty until they're comfortable (with) how the vehicle operates, how it feels and how to turn corners with it before we send them out in the real vehicle in real traffic," he said.



Master Control: Sgt. David Dettwiller, a mechanic with the 1075th Transportation Company, monitors the progress of a student driving the Nebraska National Guard's new driver simulator while the simulator was at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb., March 5.

According to white papers for the USA ODS, the simulator is capable of training drivers for both on and off-road driving with more than 100 scenarios specifically designed for military truck driver training. Lesson plans are available ranging from beginner to advanced tactical driving with several environmental conditions available such as day, night, rain, snow, fog and sandstorms.

Virtually any type of terrain imaginable is also available to provide the trainees with experience in almost any driving situation they may encounter.

In addition to providing different vehicle options and training scenarios, the simulator is able to digitally assess each student's performance, track that performance and maintain individual records.

Part of Bergman's duty is to train Soldiers how to use the simulator so they can train other Soldiers. Sgt. David Dettwiller, a mechanic with the 1075th Trans-



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Just Like The Real Thing: Sgt. Robert Lenz, 1075th Transportation Company, drives in the Nebraska National Guard's new Army Operator Driver simulator. The simulator is intended to provide Soldiers or Airmen training on vehicles they may find themselves driving without risking vehicle damage, their safety or the safety of others.

portation Company in York was one of those Soldiers.

Dettwiller said he has personally driven almost every vehicle that can be simulated by the USA ODS, and said it provides an extremely accurate representation of the real vehicles.

"It's just like the real deal," said Dettwiller. "It's as close to being in a five-million dollar piece of equipment as you can get."

Dettwiller has helped train new Soldiers on the many different types of vehicles the Nebraska National Guard utilizes. He said he sees the new simulator as a valuable asset for saving resources while still being able to properly train new Soldiers.

"The way the Guard's going now I think it's a good asset," he said. "They can learn on this, it actually

feels real. It's not just a computer screen, it actually moves, the seat moves, everything moves. You put them in different scenarios...it's just like driving a normal vehicle."

Bergman said the simulator can also be easily updated if the National Guard procures new vehicles.

"They can just push us the software and it comes with another dash," he said.

The driving simulator will allow experienced Soldiers to hone their skills. It will also allow new Soldiers to gain a level of proficiency and a feeling of comfort with the vehicle they will be driving before they actually get to the real thing.

"I think (Soldiers) will like it," said Bergman. "I think they will feel more comfortable when they actually go drive the original vehicles. What we're trying to do is get that

word out that we have some devices in this state and they can enhance training instead of becoming an additional training requirement."

Dettwiller said he feels good being able to train Soldiers without them being a risk to themselves or others.

"You can train people without it being a risk," said Dettwiller. "You're not risking the lives of other Soldiers or other people on the roads whatsoever."

"I'm not in there risking my life and their life and the lives of civilians," added Dettwiller. "They can learn everything here and you can grade them on it and judge them on it and they can try again...they can try it as many times as you want to and then you can go out there in the real thing and it feels exactly the same."

Old Kearney armory added to national historic registry

By Dr. Richard Clark

State Command Historian

The old Nebraska Army National Guard armory located in downtown Kearney, Neb., was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Built by the Works Project Administration during the Great Depression, the building served as an active armory for 60 years. The current owner, Nancy S. Freburg, purchased the building in 1997 and prepared the petition for inclusion of the building on the register in 2009. Freburg's efforts to preserve the building mean that it will remain in place for future generations.

Retired Col. Kenneth Hassler worked in the building and was glad to hear of the building's recognition as a historic place.

"When I started out full-time in the Guard, I worked there for 10 or 11 years," said Hassler. "It is appropriate that the building was added because it witnessed so much of the Guard's history."

Construction of the building began in late 1935 and ended in 1936. In 1939 the WPA completed a garage to the west of the main armory and in 1957 the Nebraska Guard added an enclosed breezeway with a new kitchen and toilet facilities.

"They knew what they were doing back then," said Hassler. "The walls are the hardest concrete I have ever seen."

From 1936 until 1996, the building housed several Nebraska National Guard units. It was originally constructed as the home of the 120th Wagon Company, redesignated in 1936 as Company D, 2nd Battalion, 110th Quartermaster Regiment.

Over time the armory housed additional units of the 110th Quartermaster Regiment, the 734th Ordinance Maintenance



Courtesy Photo

Historic Armory: The old Nebraska Army National Guard armory located in downtown Kearney, Neb., was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building housed a Nebraska unit from 1936-96

Co. (1947), the 734th Ordinance Battalion (1953), the 128th Engineer Bn. (1959), and the 1-195th Armor Bn. (1968).

In 1996 the 1-195th Armor moved to a new readiness center at the Kearney Airport.

The building also served as a military and community center for Kearney. Military balls and public dances took place in the main armory. At one time, the city used the armory as a skating rink. The building also offered shelter for snowbound travelers of Interstate 80.

Inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places provides certain benefits to encourage building owners to preserve a building, but it does not guarantee it won't be destroyed or moved.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Digging In: Nebraska National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve and local Columbus, Neb., leaders break ground on a new \$8 million Armed Forces Reserve Center, March 15, in Columbus, Neb.

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modern facilities for Soldiers, their families and the communities in which they live and serve," said Lyons. "We're very happy to be here today."

Lyons said the project will be an appropriate addition for the Guard and Reserve, both of which are being called upon frequently to support missions overseas and at home.

"We spend a lot of time training at home station these days so that our Soldiers have to spend less time at their mobilization station. So facilities such as this for the Army Reserve and the Nebraska Army National Guard really have a direct impact in what we do both here in Nebraska and overseas," said Lyons.

Col. Little Hersey, 88th Regional Support Command, U.S. Army Reserve, echoed Lyons, adding that the U.S. Army Reserve is looking forward to continuing to develop ways in which it can cooperate with the Nebraska Army National Guard to provide Soldiers with the best possible facilities in which to train and prepare for a wide array of contingencies.

"The transformation of the 21st century Army is very important," he said, adding that the U.S. Army considers the partnership it has developed with the Nebraska Army National Guard during work on similar projects in

Beatrice, Kearney and the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., as extremely valuable. "The coordination and partnership has really brought some projects to bear that will impact and support our Soldiers."

The Columbus AFRC will include a much larger parking area, allowing the Guard and Army Reserve units to be able to park their vehicles next to the facilities. According to Guard officials, the project is expected to be completed in spring 2011.

When completed, the facility will house the Nebraska Army Guard's 1075th Transportation Company, which also has a detachment in York, Neb., and the U.S. Army Reserve's 45th Military Police Detachment.

Between three and five people will work full-time at the facility.

According to Mike Moser, Columbus mayor, the city is excited to see the project, which was first recommended by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure commission, finally begin.

"It's another date in the history of Columbus that will be long remembered," said Moser. "We've had a presence here by the Guard and Reserve for many years. We're very excited to have them build their new facility here in Columbus."

"It's a great economic force for Columbus," Moser said, adding that the city will also be building a park near the AFRC. "We're looking forward to completing it soon and we welcome them to Columbus."



Pvt. Kate E. Myrtue

“I’m a hometown girl. I liked that I could stay around here and didn’t have to move off if I didn’t need to.”

— Pvt. Kate E. Myrtue about the reasons why she chose to join the Nebraska Army National Guard

Photo by Spc. Koan Nissen

Pushing Through: Pvt. Kate E. Myrtue, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln ROTC program, pushes herself during a physical fitness test at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Soldier’s schedule keeps her plenty busy

By Spc. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

The arduous hustle and bustle of an aggressive young college student’s life can be more than enough for any person to handle.

Rigorous tests, quizzes and the occasional narrow-minded professor is enough to complicate the most organized of schedules.

Now toss in the demands of a modern-day Army on top of it all and you have yourself a dedicated Nebraska National Guardsman.

Pvt. Kate E. Myrtue, a 21-year-old native of Murray, Neb., manages her military and personal life by keeping organized and focused on the end goal – graduation.

But she doesn’t have much excess time on her hands, she said. Between her part-time job, Army ROTC, 12-semester credit hours and being a Soldier in the Nebraska Army National Guard, she stays plenty busy.

For example, during a recent drill with the 92nd Troop Command on March 19-21, she found herself out at the Nebraska National

Guard’s Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. There she gave up her books and comfortable classrooms for an opportunity to experience rollover drills in the Army’s Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT).

The Army’s HEAT is a half Humvee on an axis designed to mimic the effects of a vehicle rollover. As the spinning begins, she’s executing procedures like a trained professional. She latches on to the gunner’s leg, pulls him in and hangs on for dear life; an action that would potentially save the life of a fellow Soldier should she find herself in that critical situation.

“I’ve actually been in a rollover before,” she said. “This felt the same, but in slow motion.”

Further educated and a little more banged up, Myrtue’s experience was one that the overwhelming majority of her fellow classmates won’t ever, hopefully, get to experience.

But being a Soldier wasn’t always at the forefront of Myrtue’s mind. One day, she found herself attending a local job fair while doing research for a class when she came upon a find that would begin to shape her

life in a permanent way.

“Last year I was just kind of going through a slump in my life and I didn’t really know what I wanted to do,” she said. “There was National Guard stand there and I thought ‘Why not? I’ll go see what they’re up to.’ Next thing I knew I was walking away with papers.”

“I talked to my parents about it and they were like ‘OK, if you’re serious about this, you’re going to research every branch and decide if this is really what you want to do,’” she said. “I just kept coming back to the National Guard.”

Myrtue said the deciding factor came down to being able to stay in Nebraska.

“I’m a hometown girl,” she said. “I liked that I could stay around here and didn’t have to move off if I didn’t need to.”

“I hope to stay here in Nebraska and raise my family – have a nice little farm or something.”

One of the many moving parts that Myrtue deals with on a day-to-day basis is her part-time job as a veterinary assistant.

When she first told her employers she had joined the Nebraska National Guard they responded positively saying “You’re actually not our first that has gone to the Guard.”

Telling her boss that she joined the Guard was almost more difficult than telling her parents, she said. But she was relieved when they explained to her that some of their family members had been in the Army and they understood her position.

The job not only serves to pay the bills, it helps her keep in touch with her passion for taking care of animals. And taking care of animals is something she hopes to do in the Army. But until she decides on veterinary medicine, she’ll be learning to how to take care of humans as she is slated to attend the Army’s health care specialist AIT during the summer of 2010.

Meanwhile, Myrtue acknowledged how important her family support is to her life’s endeavors. She recognizes that without the support of her parents, Andy and Marilyn Myrtue, she would have a much more difficult road ahead of her.

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“All of the key stakeholders from an emergency management response standpoint are going to be in one facility working together to provide (for) and protect the citizens of Nebraska.”

*—Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons
Nebraska adjutant general*

When completed the building will include approximately 140,000 square feet of space and will house the leadership and administrative functions of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. It will also house the state’s Emergency Operations Center, the Nebraska National Guard’s Joint Operations Center and a Nebraska State Patrol dispatch center.

The headquarters is expected to be completed sometime in spring 2012. Approximately 360 employees will work in the facility, including 5-7 members of the Nebraska State Patrol.

U.S. Senator Ben Nelson said he was proud of the men and women in the Nebraska National Guard and is pleased with the capabilities the new facility will provide.

“Constructing this facility in this location will provide much greater security, greater efficiency and outstanding coordination to handle the tasks that must be done on a daily basis as well as in times of disaster,” said Nelson.

Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, said the organization is excited to see the facility finally take shape, adding the groundbreaking was an historic event.

“We’re breaking ground today on a project that will replace several other decades-old facilities with a modern, energy-efficient Joint Force Headquarters that truly repre-



Photo by David Nore

Breaking Ground: Governor Dave Heineman (fifth from left), Sen. Ben Nelson (sixth from left), Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons (seventh from left) and other state leaders break the ground for the new \$26.9 million Joint Force Headquarters building during a ceremony, March 31.

sents the best in inter-agency cooperation,” said Lyons. “It’s a big day in the history of the Nebraska Military Department and for the state of Nebraska.”

Lyons said the project began just after 9/11 in response to an important question.

“How can we collaborate together to provide preparedness response planning for the citizens of Nebraska and also support our federal mission for the Air and Army National Guard?” said Lyons.

Once the facility is complete the citizens of Nebraska will see the answer to that

question, he said.

“I think what the citizens of Nebraska will see when this facility is completed is a fully functional facility here, in 2012, with all of the emergency management functions under one roof,” said Lyons.

“So anywhere from preparing plans, to actually executing those plans for a local disaster or state disaster – all of the key stakeholders from an emergency management response standpoint are going to be in one facility working together to provide (for) and protect the citizens of Nebraska.”

Lessons learned over 22 months in Afghanistan leave lasting impact

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The goal seemed so simple. Russell Bartholow wanted to make an impact on what was going on in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The thing was, at 38 years old, he simply didn't know exactly how.

That was until his uncle, a retired colonel in the Nebraska Air National Guard, suggested that he take a look at the Nebraska Army or Air National Guard, to check out what they could offer him, to see if they might help him achieve his goal.

MAKING AN IMPACT continued from page 1.

of making a concrete difference slowly, but surely became an enveloping passion.

"You know, I'm really not sure when the desire to make a difference really started," Bartholow said. "I tried donating to some non-profits, but that simply didn't seem to be enough. (I wanted) to give something back to the community, to America, as somebody who enjoys our freedoms."

Late into the nights he devoured news articles about the battles in Afghanistan and Iraq. He read countless blogs and began to intensely study the two nations, their peoples, their cultures, their histories through the books he was able to find.

Before long, Bartholow developed an understanding about the various issues facing the Iraqi and Afghani people. Yet, simply studying about Iraq and Afghanistan did little to quench this overriding thirst to do something concrete; to make a difference.

Looking To Serve

Even Bartholow's relatives noticed that he was conflicted by this growing dream.

After graduating from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a degree in Political Science, Bartholow moved to Lincoln to attend law school at the University of Nebraska. However, he dropped out after a year and accepted a job as the director of Business Services at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Bartholow also stayed in close contact with his uncle, George Boshae, a colonel in the Nebraska Air National Guard, and Boshae's wife, a retired U.S. Air Force officer.

Boshae said he sensed Bartholow needed to put his desires into concrete action.

"He was going to make his own decisions, so our job was to love, educate and support him," said Boshae.

Boshae recalled several talks when he and Bartholow discussed Afghanistan and Iraq. The more they talked, Boshae said, the more he realized that Bartholow was looking for a way to get back into the military.

Boshae suggested that Bartholow take a look at the Nebraska National Guard – both Army and Air – because of the roles the organizations were already playing in both overseas theaters. He said it didn't come as any real surprise when Bartholow decided to join the Army National Guard and pursue a commission as a second lieutenant.

Bartholow said the guidance Boshae provided him played a definitive role in his ultimate decision.

"I checked out the Army National Guard and looking at what I could do, the chances for deployment directly to Iraq or Afghanistan (after completing officer candidate school and my officer basic course) seemed appealing. And it seemed like an avenue for a direct impact – an approach that other ways that

That was three years ago.

Between then and now, Bartholow has lived a dream that took him to the rugged frontlines in northern Afghanistan where he not only made an impact, he left a legacy created over 22 months of deployed service, the longest continuous deployment to Afghanistan of any other Nebraska National Guardsman.

During his nearly two-year deployment, Bartholow compiled a list of accomplishments that will be hard to be replicated. He also learned valuable lessons he hopes others can use to also make an impact in war-torn Afghanistan.

I had sought out did not provide," he said.

At 38 years old, getting into the Army National Guard was easier said than done. In order to simplify his life, Bartholow closed his internet business "Nebraska Jerky Company," and sold his four-bedroom home in south Lincoln and most of his "worldly possessions" so that he could move into a simple one-bedroom apartment.

He also began a somewhat difficult process of gaining the needed waivers to join the Guard. Because he was older than the maximum age, Bartholow needed a waiver to enlist into the Nebraska Army Guard and then another waiver to attend Officer Candidate School.

Bartholow said there were times when he felt like the main character in the 1980s-era video game "Frogger," in which a digital frog had to hop across different lanes of on-rushing traffic in order to safely reach the other side.

"If you ever played Frogger... getting through all of the obstacles... I felt like the frog," he said.

Officer Candidate School

Finally, after what seemed like endless delays, Bartholow enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard in January 2007 and then soon found himself attending OCS in Kansas and later at Camp Rapid, S.D. He quickly realized that OCS, where he was forced to try to catch up with candidates that were barely half his age, was going to be much harder than he'd ever expected.

He admits there were times when the physical, mental and emotional toll nearly caught up with him.

"I was sick, physically," he said. "I had to catch up to people who were 22, 23 and I'm pushing 40 – a 20-year difference – so physically, it hit me."

"I wasn't necessarily militarily inclined, so my military knowledge was weak. And then of course those two things combining at the same time affected me emotionally," said Bartholow. "Those three things turned the Frogger machine on me."

Bartholow said he also suspected that the OCS instructors, many of whom were also younger than he was, thought he was a weak link among the candidates; that he was a guy who hadn't completely bought into the commitment he needed to make to be a leader of Soldiers.

"They were really pushing the envelope on me to quit," he said. "They looked at me as this is the weak link, let's get him out."

The thing is, Bartholow said, they may have been right. He said that up until several weeks into OCS he really hadn't made a true commitment to the ideals that officers must live up to.

Finally, after a long day of what seemed to Bartholow to be foolish mind games, he decided that it was time to quit; to give up on the dream and go back to the life he'd led back in Lincoln.

"I walked into the (Teach, Advise

and Counsel) officer's office and said I want to quit. Give me the number to whoever I call at the state to come pick me up. I'm out," Bartholow said.

He said the words that the TAC officer said still ring in his ears today.

"She said, 'No problem. This is best thing for somebody like you.' 'Somebody like you.'"

Those three words stung like nothing else ever had, Bartholow said.

"That was the turning point for me wanting to stay," he said. "I took the number and said thanks. And I did not make the call."

"I decided at that point that I had joined for a reason and that physically, mentally and emotionally, I could get through it," he said. "Especially if my goal was to deploy."

Bartholow said that suddenly, everything seemed to make sense.

"That was the turning point on both ends," he said. "That's the job of the TAC officer, to get people to quit. But none of it made any sense until that moment."

Suddenly, Bartholow said he realized that earning his commission, deploying overseas, making a difference, couldn't be just about him personally. It had to be about something much deeper.

Weeks later, Bartholow stood in formation with the rest of his class and swore to defend the U.S. Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army and the Nebraska Army National Guard. Bartholow, who had once served as the president of the UCSB student body, who had once held an important job at UNL, who had once seemed to be living the American dream as a homeowner and businessman, said it was the most important day of his life up until that point.

"Becoming a commissioned officer in the United States military was accomplishment number one, overshadowing everything else that I had ever done in my job up to that point," he said.

Looking To Deploy

Yet, even though it was a major milestone in his life, Bartholow said it was just the start of a journey. After attending his logistical officer's basic course, Bartholow began scouring for an opportunity to deploy. He logged onto the Army Knowledge Online Website and volunteered to deploy. He also started calling mobilization offices in Lincoln, and others from Texas to South Dakota in an attempt to find a unit that needed a logistics officer.

During one of those calls, in this case with South Dakota mobilization officials, he learned about an opportunity to serve with an Embedded Training Team that was scheduled to deploy shortly to Afghanistan. They needed a logistics officers and Bartholow felt like he was the perfect fit.

Yet there was a problem. The 18-person ETTs, Bartholow said, are typically made up of senior offi-



Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow

Making A Difference: 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow poses with students at the Yul Marab Girl's School at Mazar-e-Sharif during a humanitarian assistance visit in September 2009.

cers and noncommissioned officers. Because Bartholow was a newly commissioned second lieutenant and the ETT needed a senior captain, it looked like the opportunity would pass him by.

"Like everybody else in the process, they were extremely apprehensive," Bartholow said.

And then a strange twist of fate occurred. For probably the first time since he'd joined the National Guard nearly a half-year earlier, Bartholow's age served in his favor.

"Maturity," said Bartholow about the reason why the South Dakota officials decided to take a chance on him, adding that because he wasn't a traditional lieutenant, he was accepted onto the team.

Still, in order to take a lieutenant with them, South Dakota had to receive permission from the theater commander in Afghanistan.

According to Boshae, Bartholow finally confided in him about his desire to deploy as soon as possible shortly after he received his commission. Again, Boshae said, he and his wife supported their nephew's wishes.

"He started talking about his desire (to deploy)," said Boshae. "I guess he kind of felt this sense of responsibility, this obligation, this desire to contribute. I think that he thought that it was a good time in his life to do it and if he waited too long, he might not be able to."

After a long talk about what Bartholow had decided to do, Boshae said he and his wife had just a simple comment: "We support you."

"Our part was just to support him, like any family member... to make sure that he knows we love him and support his decisions," he added.

Finally, in November 2007, Bartholow travelled to Sioux Falls, S.D., to undergo pre-deployment processing with the rest of the team. He then mobilized for additional training in January 2008, meeting up with the rest of the ETT at Fort Riley, Kan.

A few short weeks of training later, Bartholow was in Afghanistan, serving at Camp Spann at Mazar-e-Sharif in the Balkh Province of Northern Afghanistan.

Duty In Afghanistan

Within days, Bartholow said, he quickly realized that his new job at Camp Spann, named after the first American casualty in Afghanistan who had been killed about a block from the forward operations base,

wasn't going to be exactly the role he had envisioned for himself back months before as he stayed up late in his Lincoln, Neb., home dreaming of ways to making a difference in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Assigned as the executive officer of Camp Spann, Bartholow was in charge of vector control – essentially the elimination of rodents and other pest animals – as well as vehicle maintenance and mission movements. Bartholow said they were all important jobs that needed to be done, so, even though it wasn't exactly the job he'd hoped to do, he kept quiet and focused on the job at hand.

"I rolled with the punches," he said. "For the first few months it was FOB-based, though I did several logistics combat missions while I was the XO."

Still, that doesn't mean Bartholow wasn't ready if an opportunity presented itself.

Finally, after several months as the XO, Bartholow said he learned that the base Effects Cell – a team charged with conducting such civil military operations as road construction projects, digging wells, building new schools and clinics in the northern region of Afghanistan – had an opening because one of the team members was rotating back to the United States. Bartholow said he approached the FOB commander and made a simple proposal.

"I told the colonel... if I can get on that team, I would extend," Bartholow said. "I was far from my first period of time being over, but I said, 'If you put me there now, when it's time to extend, I will extend nine months.'"

Bartholow said the colonel seemed surprised at the offer at first, but then made a counter proposition: "He said if you will extend nine months, I will not only put you on the team, I will give you the team."

"And he did."

It was an agreement that would finally place Bartholow in the position he had so desired to be in. It was also an agreement that would cause Bartholow to serve in Afghanistan for a longer period of continuous service than any other Nebraska Army National Guard officer.

Bartholow was finally given the chance to make a difference.

Now, what would he do with this opportunity?

**Coming in June:
TRIALS & TRIUMPHS**



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salom

Head That-A-Way: Sgt. Jose Arguello, a signal intelligence analyst with the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade (left), and Spc. Harry Plendl, a terrain data sergeant with the 67th BfSB, formulate a plan to take on a land navigation course at the Greenlief Training Site in Hastings, Neb., March 16.

Preparing to Deploy

67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade uses extended drills to prepare for Iraq mission

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Members of the Nebraska National Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade continued pre-mobilization training for a July deployment to Iraq during an extended drill period at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb., March 16-20.

The training consisted of many things including engagement skills training, individual weapons qualification and night firing. They also conducted a land navigation classroom session followed by a field land navigation exercise.

The land navigation course was intended to give the Soldiers a refresher on basic map reading and navigation in the event their modern equipment failed.

"Most of the time we'll use GPS or Blue Force Tracker, but there have been Soldiers lost over there and disoriented," said Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Perrone, command sergeant major for the 67th BfSB. "Even if

you've got your GPS (if the batteries go dead, what are you going to do?"

Land navigation is not a skill used every day during a normal job, so it's important to train constantly, said Sgt. Devin Lovgren, chaplain's assistant with the 67th BfSB.

"I think it's important to get this refresher because it's very important training," said Lovgren. "What happens when your electronics go down – radios, your maps, your computers – you're going to have to rely on your basic Soldier skills. It's just something you need to know how to do."

Lovgren said that although the training is very important, it's growing as a team that means the most to the Soldiers during the extended drills.

"The best thing about going through this training is you're able to build those bonds, those team bonds, and you're able to come together," said Lovgren. "It's a lot better than that one weekend a month at the armory."

Perrone hopes that the pre-mobilization training will give the Soldiers confidence in their abilities so they can better perform



Map Coordinates: Pvt. Jeshua Wright, a fire support sergeant with the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, uses a protractor to plan his route through a land navigation course at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb., March 16. Members of the 67th BfSB are using extended drill weekends to prepare for a July deployment to Iraq.

their required tasks.

"Part of being a Soldier is being confident in your skills and abilities and that's what this (training) does. It proves that people

can understand the task conditions and the standards and fulfill those," said Perrone. "It basically just creates a confidence level in the Soldiers."

YELLOW RIBBON continued from page 1.

was really kind of like a mule's kick in my gut," she said. "It was definitely a wake-up call to me."

"It was a wake-up call to my kids too. They were in high school and we had some interesting dynamics when my husband was gone," said Amundson. "I remember reading one time that exposure to pain causes a permanent and lasting change in a person – and mobilizations can be painful."

Recognizing these changes and dealing with them is imperative, said Amundson. Using the resources available, like the family support groups, will help with some of the difficulties.

Several booths staffed by civilians, retirees and Soldiers awaited the group — ready to distribute information on services available to them. One of those groups was the Nebraska National Guard Chaplains Corps.

The chaplain's workshop, which was led by Chap. (Col.) Rod Armon, was of key interest for many workshop attendees.

"If you love someone, tell them," said Armon.

"It's not quite time to say goodbye, but it's getting closer to the time to say goodbye," he said. "So you need to understand that when you do it's going to be a very emotional experience."

Being open and honest is a key component for sustaining a healthy relationship, said Armon, adding that letting everyone get a chance to be themselves and share things



Photo by Spc. Koan Nissen

This Is What They'll Wear: Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Felker demonstrates the various types of equipment the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers will wear during their upcoming deployment.

that are going on in their lives is important. A Soldier may just want to get away for a while, Armon said. Hearing a story about something happening at home may help them do that.

Armon said families also need to realize that when the instant communication lines people are used to go down, it's okay. Things happen and sometimes those means

of delivering messages and personal conversations don't work, he said.

Although Armon spoke primarily about the strains and joys of marriage during a deployment, he also took time to reflect on the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse some Soldiers may encounter.

"I guess I didn't really realize how many issues revolve around alcohol," said Pfc. James Sheldon,

a 24-year-old intelligence analyst with the 1-134th Cavalry. "A lot of the stories I have heard always ended up being (related to) drugs."

Sheldon said he's better informed on the issue now, which will help him be a better friend and peer to Soldiers who may require extra assistance in troubled times.

Chaplains are not here for just religious services, said Chap. (Capt.) Scott Ehler, a Nebraska National Guard chaplain. Chaplains have the ability to help Soldiers and families with the many issues that occur on a day-to-day basis, he said.

Regardless of religious preference, Ehler said Nebraska chaplains are available to help all those who seek assistance, whether it be suicide prevention, alcohol abuse, drug dependency or mental health issues. People needing assistance can call (402) 309-7448, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

The workshop also included a block of information designed to inform the Citizen Soldiers about their legal protection while on active duty.

Col. Doug Wilken, full-time staff judge advocate general, presented an hour-long discussion on Soldiers' and employers' rights while serving on active duty.

With a number of Soldiers having full-time jobs, it's important Soldiers understand their rights and how to identify potential law violations, he said.

But, he added, protection works both ways. Deploying Soldiers need

to understand their responsibilities to their employers. Soldiers seeking legal assistance need only call to get help, he said. Wilken's office can be reached at (402) 309-7301.

Yellow Ribbon Program staffers not only serve to remind those persons involved in an upcoming deployment of resources available, but remind everyone of the historic actions about to happen, say unit leaders.

"The 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade is an historic unit. We will be the first Army National Guard battlefield surveillance brigade to ever deploy," said Col. Philip Stemple, commander of the unit.

Stemple said the units involved in the upcoming deployments have undergone an intensive training cycle that started about 12 months ago. By the time the units mobilize, the total training ramp-up will have been about 18 months.

Stemple also took time to recognize the employee-employer relationships. He said without the cooperation of good employers, mobilizations like this would be much more difficult on the Soldiers.

"Employer Support to the Guard and Reserve is critical," said Stemple.

"Really, there is a three-legged stool here; you've got the Soldier, you've got the family member and you've got the employer. And if any one of those legs of that stool are not strong and solid, and not fastened to the same basic piece, then you've got a problem."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

On The Hot Spot: Sgt. Michael Noyes, Detachment 2, 745th Reconnaissance and Decontamination Company, is inspected by a panel of Nebraska Army National Guard command sergeants major during the Best Warrior competition, March 26-27.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Coleman

Through The Rain: Nebraska Army National Soldiers trudge through the rain during the Best Warrior road march at Camp Ashland, Neb., March 27. The Best Warrior competition was designed to test Soldiers on a variety of different warrior skills.

Best Warriors

By Pfc Justin Zdan
Staff Writer

State's top Soldiers compete for annual titles during two-day contest

A few chosen Nebraska National Guardsmen put their physical and mental strength to the test during this year's third annual Best Warrior Competition, March 26-27.

The grueling competition challenged the Soldiers' basic abilities in such areas as first aid, a road march, weapons qualification, a written test and land navigation.

The Soldiers also had to face a stressful question-and-answer board made up of Nebraska's senior noncommissioned officers.

A total of nine Soldiers competed in two categories according to rank, five junior enlisted and four NCOs. Each competitor was chosen by their respective battalions based upon their merit, qualifications and proficiency.

"Every unit has outstanding Soldiers, but when they come here

they represent their squad, unit, company and battalion," said Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, the state command sergeant major.

"It's important to me to showcase and promote our best and brightest Soldiers to show how great our Nebraska Soldiers are," he added.

The winner of the Best Warrior Competition moves on to the regional competition in Louisiana in June.

Each competitor, who was assisted by a sponsor from their unit, was required to tackle 23 separate subject areas and exercises over a two-day period in a rapid fire pace.

The goal, said Command Sgt. Maj. Randall Schulz, 92nd Troop Command's command sergeant major, was to determine which Soldier and which NCO could overcome the physical and mental challenges the most successfully.

"All this is done in only two days," said Schulz. "Every Soldier has their individual advantages and disadvantages, so everyone has an equal shot."

This year's competition also included a radical change of plans, which also served to showcase the competitors' ability to adapt.

The competition was scheduled to take part at Camp Ashland with a helicopter flight to the Greenleaf Training Site for weapons qualification. Due to stormy weather the flight was cancelled, so the competitors used the Electronic Skills Trainer at Camp Ashland to qualify.

According to the state's senior enlisted leaders, the Soldiers performed extremely well.

"There are some great Soldiers in the Nebraska National Guard, and that's why we do it every year," said Command Sgt. Maj. Leon D. Haith, the 209th Regiment sergeant major. The Soldiers, said Haith, get to demonstrate their warrior skills while also taking pride in representing their units.

"This is about the Soldiers themselves, to stand before their peers and being evaluated. Not everyone has the courage to do that," said Haith.

"They can show their skills and have fun doing it," added Command Sgt. Major John Payer, commandant of the NCO Academy. "I'm very impressed with the skills and talents that these Soldiers possess and I'm impressed with their abilities."



Sandman



Chase



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

Spot Check: Sgt. Carlos Velazquez, 1075th Transportation Company, records information from a target point during the Land Navigation portion of the Best Warrior competition.

The winner of the competition for the NCO division was Staff Sergeant Dominick Chase, Recruit Sustainment Program sergeant. Chase said that winning the state competition was just the first of several challenges he hopes to successfully win. His next focus, he said, is on doing well at the regional-level competition to be held in June.

"I'm going to take my training and quadruple it," he said. "At the regional level there is no room for error."

Chase added that taking his second NCO award in three years was a great personal accomplishment; however he took even more

pride in representing himself as an NCO. "As a retention NCO, I'm not just saying it, I'm doing it also. I'd like to see other NCOs step up and represent their units," said Chase.

Spc. Daniel I. Sandman, a member of the 402nd Military Police Battalion, won the enlisted category. He also said he's looking forward to continue working toward doing well at the regional competition.

"I'm going to work on keeping up on PT and my weak points on weapons memorization," he said, adding that his victory in the enlisted category was extremely narrow. "All the Soldiers were tough competitors. Everyone had a close shot."



Photo by Spc. Koan Nissen

Ready To Do Computerized Battle: Sgt. 1st Class Robert Sons, 92nd Troop Command, mans a computerized machine gun while training with other members of his unit on the Virtual Convoy Assistance Trainer at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., March 27.

Best Warrior Competition

Rained-out events equates to unexpected opportunity for 92nd Troop Command Soldiers

By Spc. Koan Nissen

Staff Writer

Cloudy skies and cool weather didn't stop Nebraska Army National Guardsmen from rolling out to the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

"Seventeen Soldiers from Troop Command and other units came out here to support the Best Warrior Competition," said Sgt. Maj. Robert Morgan.

The intent was to support a weapons qualification and simulation center with the (Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer) and (Virtual Convoy Assistance Trainer, said Morgan.

Competitors in the Best Warrior Competition ended up being grounded in Camp Ashland due to inclement weather, which gave Morgan and his Soldiers a great opportunity to experience as much of the two state-of-the-art simulators

as they could handle.

"It's the number one trainer for convoys in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Spc. Tim Sons, a VCOT operator with the 1167th Brigade Support Company.

A VCOT provides Soldiers with an opportunity to practice convoy operations and security without having to fire a live round or step into an Army vehicle. However, some of the Soldiers did find themselves in, what looked like a half-Humvee on a spit.

The HEAT allows Soldiers to experience a potentially life-threatening situation in a controlled environment, said Sons. Soldiers experience everything from bone-jarring impacts to spatial disorientation as they spin in a simulated vehicle rollover.

Getting Soldiers to act instinctively and without hesitation is the main point of these simulators, said Sons. The training can save their lives, he added.

Nebraska Guardsmen volunteer to help less fortunate creatures

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

He's known as the "Cat Whisperer." A former member of the Nebraska Air National Guard who served in the 155th Tactical Reconnaissance Group from 1954 until the late 1960s, Lowell Brown has made an impact on others throughout his life, be it in the military or in his civilian career as a Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph technician.

Still, Brown struggles to find the right words to describe the impact he is now making as a volunteer worker at the fittingly-named Cat House, a non-profit cat shelter in Lincoln, Neb.

"This is the most relaxing thing that I've ever done in my life," said Brown, smiling as he scratched behind the ears of a striped cat named Tiger. "I can have a bad day and come down here 15 to 20 minutes and I completely forget about my bad day... It's just a totally different world."

The Cat House is located at 1935 Q Street in Lincoln, just blocks from the main downtown area, in a building that once served as a doctor's office. Today, it's a near-home for between 90-100 cats of all sizes, shapes, colors and conditions.

Founded in 1998 the Cat House is designed to be a humane shelter for stray, abused, abandoned and sick cats in the Lincoln metro area, said Alma Vlasak, a Cat House board director.

"Shelters are often very stressful places," said Vlasak, a retired U.S. Army Reserve sergeant first class who served in a Lincoln-based medical unit until several years ago. That's because many shelters often mix different types of animals together.

"But here, it's just cats," she said. In order to lessen the stress, the facility features a safe, cat-friendly environment where cats are allowed, based upon their individual medical condition, to roam about the facility.

She said the impact on the cats, even those that have debilitating illnesses, is noticeable. "We care very much (about them and) they know it," she said. "They have what they need and this is about as good as it gets for a cat in a shelter situation. It's not home, but we do our best to make it as close to it as we can."

Because the shelter is a non-profit, all volunteer organization funded entirely by donations and adoption fees, the Cat House relies completely on its staff of volunteers to ensure that the facility is a clean and safe environment for its residents.

According to Lori Dittrich, volunteer coordinator, the Cat House simply couldn't function without volunteers. "We rely on volunteers for everything," said Dittrich, adding that the organization currently has around 70 people serving in its volunteer ranks, doing such work as helping clean the shelter, checking up on cats at two

different PetSmart locations, serving as foster families, sewing different items for the shelter, or working with the organization's "Trap, Neuter, and Return Program."

The volunteers, like the cats, come in all different forms, Dittrich said. Some are like Brown, retired Lincolniters who simply love cats and want to make a difference in their communities. Others are students from the nearby University of Nebraska-Lincoln campuses who may have grown up with pets, but are now unable to own one because they live in dorms.

And then there are people like Master Sgt. Denise Anderson and Sgt. 1st Class Teresa Flynn, two Nebraska National Guardsmen who both work full-time in the Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln. Both Anderson — a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard — and Flynn — a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard — are self-proclaimed "Cat Lovers" who simply see the work at the shelter as a way to give back to their community while helping out less fortunate creatures.

Anderson, a full-time personnel assistant, first began working at the shelter about a year ago after her cat died. She now volunteers for four hours every Tuesday afternoon to help clean up the shelter and check upon the cats before the organization's "Adoption Night," one of three days the house is open to the public. Anderson's duties include sweeping the floor, cleaning litter boxes, washing food and water dishes and the daily tasks in-

Anderson's duties include sweeping the floor, cleaning litter boxes, washing food and water dishes and the daily tasks in-

Series to spotlight impact of individual volunteerism efforts

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen have long considered the motto, "Citizens Serving Citizens," to be more than just some boilerplate slogan, but rather a contract with the citizens of Nebraska and the United States.

Obviously, this service comes in many forms ranging from volunteering to deploy overseas in support of on-going global commitments and contingency missions, to training in the United States for a wide array of man-made and natural emergencies, or being on-hand when disaster strikes the Cornhusker State in the form of floods, tornadoes, blizzards and so on.

Members of the Nebraska National Guard also make an impact in their state and communities in many different ways.

Often, this comes in the form of the various community relations or outreach programs that units conduct. However, far less known is the work that individual Guard Soldiers and Airmen do by volunteering to work across the state as mentors for at-risk youth, as youth athletic coaches, as local elected officials, as members of civic organization or simply as concerned citizens.

This month the *Prairie Soldier* unveils a new, on-going "Giving Back to their Communities" series about the work that Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen are doing as individual volunteers. In it, we will explore the work that these Guardsmen are doing, why they believe that becoming involved is important and the impact that their service is having on their communities and the Nebraska National Guard.

Anderson, a full-time personnel assistant, first began working at the shelter about a year ago after her cat died. She now volunteers for four hours every Tuesday afternoon to help clean up the shelter and check upon the cats before the organization's "Adoption Night," one of three days the house is open to the public.

Anderson's duties include sweeping the floor, cleaning litter boxes, washing food and water dishes and the daily tasks in-

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Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Gentle Touch: Master Sgt. Denise Anderson talks with a resident of the "Cat House" while grooming his hair. Anderson, a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard, said grooming the cats allows volunteers to more quickly spot possible medical problems.

involved in keeping the shelter in good, healthy order.

Anderson said the work is relaxing. "When I'm having a bad day and I need a feeling of relaxation, these cats will do it for you because they're... you can't have a bad day as they're having," she said. "They're just happy to see you."

"You can't leave here upset. There's a lot of calm energy here," Anderson added.

Along with helping keep the Cat House clean, the volunteers also play a vital role in monitoring the cats, said Anderson, whose family has since adopted a cat from the Cat House. Anderson said after the cleaning work is done, the volunteers typically spread out to visit with the cats, petting them, scratching behind their ears and simply looking to see if the cat is medically okay.

"You can tell if someone is not feeling well," said Anderson as she sat on an overstuffed chair combing out a large yellow-striped cat named Lucky.

Like Anderson, Flynn is also a recent volunteer at the Cat House, although she's donated funds to the organization for several years. She finally started working as a volunteer in January by helping clean up the facility every Tuesday afternoon.

She also said the work is a labor of love. "I've had to wash a lot of dishes," said Flynn, laughing as she gave a tour through the facility's various areas, stopping occasionally to pet cats as they rubbed against her leg or "Meowed" from atop various perches.

Flynn said her favorite area to visit is one that few other members of the staff typically enjoy. Situated in a back area that's closed off from the rest of the cat population are several rooms for the Cat House's sick cats. "This is probably my favorite room," said Flynn as she stopped to say "Hello" to two cats diagnosed with severe health issues that were isolated in their own room. Because of their health issues, Flynn said, the cats will most likely never leave the Cat House.

"They're unadoptable," she said, her voice lowering to almost a whisper. It's that opportunity to give a caring voice to an obviously sick but still happy animal that's the most rewarding, said Flynn. It's why she wanted to volunteer.

Probably the biggest success story of the Cat House, said Vlasak, is the fact that hundreds of abandoned or abused cats have gone on to find new homes, 347 in 2009 alone. That's pretty amazing, she added, considering the state that some of the cats are in when they arrive at the facility.

"A lot of them have been in some very tough situations," she said. "They've lost their trust of humans." That's where someone like Brown comes in. Brown's specialty is working with hard-to-reach felines who've built a distrust of people. Brown visits the Cat House twice a week and visits each cat, taking time to pet them and earn their trust. It's often a long, drawn-out job.



"The Cat Whisperer": Lowell Brown takes time to work with a cat at "Cat House" in Lincoln, Neb. Over the years, Brown, a former member of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, has developed an uncanny ability to build up the trust of non-social cats so that they can be adopted into new families.

"I work with some pretty difficult ones," he said. "And I've been bitten and scratched something fierce."

In one particular instance, Brown worked for an entire year to restore a cat's trust in people. Brown said the reward for his work was when the cat — which many others considered unadoptable — was finally adopted and taken to a new home.

Brown said that the biggest difficulty is simply becoming too emotionally attached to his charges. "It's pretty emotional when I get attached to one and it gets adopted," said Brown. "It lasts for quite a while."

Lowell's work with the cats hasn't gone unnoticed, either. It's what earned him the nickname "The Cat Whisperer" from the other Cat House volunteers. It's also helped motivate others, like Anderson and Flynn, to make a difference.

"Lots of the cats have chips on their shoulders," said Anderson, "so one of our jobs is to teach them to be better cats so that they can be adopted."

"They're wonderful cats if they can just learn to be in a better frame of mind," she added. "When you are done cleaning... you come over and check on all the cats and make sure they're doing okay. You talk to them and pet them. You hope that they find that right home."

Hoping to make that difference is also why Anderson said she doesn't think it's just a coincidence why members of the military, particularly Soldiers and Airmen in the Nebraska National Guard, volunteer so much of their personal time to their communities.

"The National Guard is made up of volunteers. That's what our job is: to help people in need," said Anderson, adding that often means setting aside personal time to help out following disasters or even volunteering to deploy overseas in support of combat operations.

"We do all of it. This is just and offshoot of that (volunteerism effort)."



Volunteering Her Time: Sgt. 1st Class Teresa Flynn, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard, helps clean up the main floor of the Lincoln-based "Cat House" while one of the center's residents watches from atop its perch. The Cat House depends upon volunteers like Flynn to continue to operate.

Johnson takes command of Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Mission Support Group

By Capt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

An Elba, Neb., native recently took command of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Mission Support Group during a ceremony held at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Lt. Col Wendy Johnson, a 1983 graduate of Elba High School, assumed command of the 155th Mission Support Group from outgoing commander, Lt. Col. Dennis Hayward, during a ceremony held at the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Feb. 7. Johnson is the daughter of Allen and Edna Ingerle of Elba, Neb. and is a member of the Carl Mogens American Legion Post 119 of St. Paul, Neb.

Johnson is also a 1993 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Hayward took a few minutes at the beginning of the ceremony to reflect on his two years with the group.

"I need to thank all the men and women of the support group for your hard work and dedication," said Hayward.

"There is no way in words that I can begin to tell you the impact you have had on me."

Hayward has had a long career with the Air National Guard, starting with his enlistment and graduation as a second lieutenant from the ANG Academy of Military Science. He then attended undergraduate navigation and tactical training at Mather Air Force Base, Calif., and RF-4C initial qualification training.

In 1991, after attending RF-4C Instructor School, Hayward was invited to instruct at the RF-4C Replacement Training base in Idaho. There he taught both Spanish and Korean Air Forces how to employ navigation and weapons delivery systems.

After KC-135 combat crew training in 1993, Hayward went on to become a KC-135 certified flight instructor at Altus Air Force Base, Okla. From 1995 to 2001 he served as standards and evaluations deputy chief and then chief of Standards and Evaluations until he was appointed commander of the 155th Operations Support Flight in



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

New Commander: Lt. Col. Wendy Johnson (right) accepts the colors of the 155th Mission Support Group from Col. Rick Evans III during the 155th MSG change of command ceremony, Feb. 7, at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Johnson assumed command from Lt. Col. Dennis Hayward.

July of 2003. His time at Standards and Evaluations was interrupted in 1994 when Hayward deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, to serve as commander of the 90th Expeditionary Refueling Squadron.

Hayward will now become the 155th ARW's vice commander.

After taking the 155th MSG guidon from Col. Richard Evans III, 155th ARW commander, Johnson thanked her predecessor for his work and Evans for his confidence in her abilities to lead. She also addressed many members of her family, acknowledging that her first true leadership role was bestowed on her by her parents in taking charge of her siblings.

Johnson also remarked that her roots were in the mission support group. "My earliest assignment in this wing and my technical expertise and background is rooted in the functions of the mission support group," said Johnson.

"Embrace and lead change at all levels of this fine organization," challenged Johnson. "I challenge you to lead change rather than allow change to lead you. In the words of Mohatma Gandhi, be the change

you want to see in this world."

Johnson began her military career in 1984 when she enlisted into the Nebraska Air National Guard. Four years later she was commissioned as a second lieutenant and served as a social actions officer until she was assigned as the commander of the 155th Services Flight.

In 1990 Johnson accepted a full-time position with the 155th ARW as the wing logistics plans and installation deployment officer where she remained until attending the Air Command and Staff College in July of 2000. In 2004, Johnson assumed command of the 155th Mission Support Squadron before attending Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., in 2005. She returned to the 155th ARW as the 155th MSS commander after completing her studies and a brief internship at U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base.

In 2007 she was deployed to the Central Command area of operations.

After her deployment she served as the 155th ARW executive officer and then as the commander of the Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Nebraska Air Guard general retiring in June

■ Brigadier General Steve Adams credits family, co-workers with shaping career

By Capt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

Brig. Gen. Steven Adams, the current Nebraska Air National Guard assistant adjutant general, Air, will retire in June after 37 years of service in both the active duty Air Force and Air National Guard.

"I feel truly fortunate and blessed to have such a rewarding and wonderful career," said Adams in March during a visit to the Nebraska National Guard air base.

Adams joined the Air Force

in June of 1972 after a recruiter pulled into his dad's service station. "I thought it was a cool idea," he said. "Didn't really have any plans, didn't know why I joined, just an opportunity to get out of a small town and if I wanted to go to school, I'd have the VA GI Bill. But it evolved."

Joining the military set in motion a series of small, but significant experiences that brought the general to where he is today, starting with his assignment as a code breaker of sorts with the active duty Air Force. It was a job that included a lot of math.

"I realized I had more math skill than I believed I had in high school. And from that it gave me the confidence that maybe I should look at pursuing more education. And I did," said Adams.

That set in motion his ability to become a pilot, commander and then general decades later.

"It's amazing how these little things kind of lay the foundation

for other things," said Adams.

Adams career took him from jobs as an enlisted communications intercept analyst to those as a pilot, commander of security police and commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing. Adams credits his achievements and success to those around him, both family and military members alike.

"You don't realize a career like this by yourself. It's everyone around you that helps you realize the success," Adams said.

Adams admits he will miss the camaraderie and affiliation with other Nebraska National Guard service members who together share the same values and mission. But, he said, he has taken what he learned and now uses those same skills in his civilian career with Lincoln Electric System.

Even though he will miss the Guard, Adams said he looks forward to spending more time with his family.

While serving his country, his family tolerated absences from events such as soccer games to first steps, he said.

"I'm truly going to enjoy having the weekends to spend with my family and do some of the things that I made an excuse that I didn't have time to do or that I truly didn't have time to do," said Adams.

He acknowledges the sacrifices his family has made for him enabled him to be where he is today.

"A career like mine is not only realized by everyone around me at the base, but we also have to recognize the sacrifices and time that our families make to this too. I want to acknowledge them and what they have done," he said.

During his visit to the base, Adams thanked all members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard for the support they have given him for many, many years.

"I realize that without them I wouldn't be here reflecting on a truly successful, wonderful career," Adams said.



Adams

Joint qualified designation becoming more important for Guard officers

By Brig. Gen. Roma Amundson
Assistant Adjutant General, Army

The Joint Qualified Officer designation is becoming increasingly relevant to the future career plans of all National Guard officers, whether they are Active Guard, Reserve, traditional part-time Guard members or federal technicians.

The JQO designation will make officers more competitive for promotion, command assignments and selection for senior service schools. Any officer to be nominated as a general officer with federal recognition must possess the JQO designation by 2019. In other words, any Nebraska National Guard officer selected for a general officer's position in the Nebraska National Guard by 2019 must have the JQO designation.

Why is this JQO designation so important now? After all, it's been around for a long time; in 1986, the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act first established the criteria to obtain JQO.

Originally the JQO designation was extended only to those officers who served in a joint assignment within a Combatant Command headquarters, the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense and Defense Agencies Headquarters.

It was typically available for active component Soldiers working in

these high-level units.

Now, with the number and tempo of overseas and domestic missions involving Reserve Component members, the perspective of the DoD has changed.

Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, domestic operations such as Hurricane Katrina and Operation Jumpstart have taken place in a joint environment involving military organizations, interagency, international, and nongovernmental partners, and Reserve Component officers are gaining significant experience in joint operations.

In 2007, the National Defense Authorization Act enabled the DoD to provide credit for the joint experiences that Reserve Component officers had gained through their service in deployments overseas and domestic crises. The DoD devised a points-based system for Reserve Component officers to qualify for the JQO designation and to be competitive.

Two paths are available for officers to work towards obtaining the JQO designation: one is through the Standard Joint Duty Assignment (SJDA) dating from 1986, and the other is through the newly designed Experience Joint Duty Assignment (EJDA).

The SJDA path requires that an officer be assigned to combatant command headquarters, joint staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Defense Agencies Headquarters

for a period of 36 months and have completed JPME I and II or AJPME. This path to JQO is not one for which most Reserve Component officers will typically qualify.

The EJDA path allows officers O-1 and above to accumulate joint experience points by completing shorter joint assignments, experience points and training.

Once an officer O-4 and above has accumulated at least 36 joint experience points and has completed Joint Professional Military Education I and II or Advanced Joint Professional Military Education, they may be nominated by their service for the JQO designation.

Presently, for Nebraska National Guard officers the only immediate and practical way to begin to qualify for the JQO designation is through receiving credit via the EJDA path.

An example of such an assignment is being an Embedded Training Team (ETT) member in Afghanistan where a Soldier is working in a multinational military force, often with NATO forces assisting in training Afghan soldiers.

EJDA points are weighted on the basis of the environments.

In a combat environment, three points are awarded for roughly every month that one is in that environment. If a person is in a non-combat contingency, he or she receives two points for every month, and if one is in a steady state environment – a joint environment in

non-combat status, for example, in a combatant command within the United States – only one point per month is awarded.

In order to receive JQO status through EJDA path, an officer must earn 36 points in an EJDA-approved assignment. The officer must also have completed Joint Professional Military Education Phase I (Intermediate Level Education) and JPME Phase II (service war colleges, Advanced Joint Professional Military Education (AJPME), Joint and Combined Warfighting School (JCWS), and Joint Advanced Warfighting School (JAWS).)

Other joint training is available through Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA), Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander Training Course (JCTC), and others.

These will add to the overall point total, but the JPME I and II must be completed.

National Guard officers must "self-nominate" on-line in order to receive joint experience points. Each officer must provide documentation that supports their joint assignment experience. This documentation may be DD214, orders, individual awards with DA 638s and orders, officer evaluation reports, travel vouchers, and Leave and Earning Statements.

An important change to the self-nomination process is that the deadline of Sept. 30, 2010, has been extended to Sept. 30, 2013. The self-nomination process is on line

at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/jmis/JQIndex.jsp>.

Self-nomination is a complicated process; if you go to the following places, you will find information regarding it: J1, J7 portals on our own Nebraska National Guard network and through the following GKO one also: https://gkportal.ngb.army.mil/sites/J1_T10/JOM/default.aspx.

You can contact the Joint Officer Management office at JOM@ng.army.mil or call the program manager at DSN 327-0950/COM 703-607-0950 for more detailed information. The J1 and J7 in the NE JFHQs also have information.

By 2013, National Guard officers will be able to receive joint credit for assignment in state billets through a program now being developed as the Joint Force Headquarters-State (JFHQ-State) Joint Manpower Program. The concept is in the final phases of DoD approval before it is fielded to the states in order to allow Reserve Component members to follow an SJDA path.

This article is something to clip and keep. Remember, the JQO designation is a criterion for promotion, command assignments and senior service school selection. By 2019, an officer must be a JQO in order to become a GO. Officers must self-nominate on-line to have their joint experiences be recognized in order to gain points.

If you think you have joint experience, apply before Sept. 30, 2013.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Preparing For Their Big Debut: (from left) Grandmother Hood (aka Lt. Col. Mary McGahan) reacts in fright as the Evil Step-Mother (Master Sgt. Trish Petersen) cross-examines her during the trial of the Big Bad Wolf, the central theme behind the melodrama, "Big Bad."

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

They might not be quite ready for New York City's "Great White Way," but a group of Nebraska Air National Guardsmen have spent several nights a week over the last couple months developing their acting chops in preparation for the melodrama "Big Bad."

Without giving away the plot, "Big Bad" essentially revolves around a set of unresolved grievances that causes a group of famous fairy tale characters to bring a class action suit against the Big Bad Wolf.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Stuart Stofferahn, producer and director of "Big Bad," the melodrama will give audiences plenty to laugh about.

"(The characters) are suing for damages and we're finding out that the characters in the case have let themselves go over the years, but that hasn't done anything to ease their anger," said Stofferahn, who typically serves as the Nebraska Air National Guard recruiting and retention superintendent.

The play will be presented three times, April 30, May 1 and May 2, starting at 6:30 p.m. at the WSI building located at 1430 North 10th Street in Lincoln, Neb. A potluck dinner will kick off each evening's performance.

Proceeds from the show will go to the Nebraska Air National Guard's "First Five Forum," an association for Air Guardsmen between the ranks of airman basic and staff sergeant designed to give them an avenue to voice the concerns of lower enlisted members to the organization's senior leadership.

Stofferahn, who has directed and produced six or seven other melodramas in the past, said "Big Bad" is a way to redevelop unit camaraderie in a fun and creative way while also helping out an important local association.

"It really serves a dual purpose," he said. "It gave me a chance to do something that I really enjoy doing (and) it gives us the chance to support the First Five Forum."

Nebraska Air Guardsmen exercising their acting chops in preparation for first-ever melodrama performance



Giving Directions: Senior Master Sgt. Stuart Stofferahn (foreground) demonstrates a move that he wants the cast of "Big Bad" to repeat during a rehearsal at the WSI hall in Lincoln, Neb.

"...The only way for their organization to function is through fund-raisers, so this presented a great way for me to get out of the office and do something I really enjoy and also raise money for a really worthy organization," he added.

In order to put on a melodrama, Stofferahn first had to assemble a cast of fellow Air Guardsmen. Some, like Master Sgt. Patricia "Trish" Petersen, had acted before in college, so a melodrama seemed like a great way to tickle their creative itch. Others, Stofferahn

said, needed a little more cajoling.

"It wasn't too bad. I had to strong-arm a few volunteers — Jeff Claypool — but the interesting thing about a volunteer production like this is that you really depend upon volunteers. It's not like they're getting paid. You have to know what you're doing to coerce people to volunteer and commit to something like this... and it's a huge commitment."

For the better part of two months, the volunteer cast has gathered at the WSI hall near Military Road in Lincoln, Neb., and rehearsed

each Tuesday and Thursday evening. Tack on nightly three-hour dress rehearsals planned for the week before the production and the sales job got a little tougher.

Yet, Stofferahn said, he was confident that once the cast members stepped on stage they would be hooked.

"I knew that once they got here they would be committed because it's a lot of fun to be up on stage," he said.

Staff Sgt. Phyllis Brown, a chaplain's assistant assigned to the 155th Air Refueling Wing, said she signed up to play the part of Sydney Grimm, a flashy, hyperbole-laden local television reporter, because she knew it would give her an opportunity to meet other members of the organization in a fun, non-work setting.

"I live in Omaha and I've been in the unit almost four years and I never get the chance to do things with people in the unit outside of work, so I thought this would be a good time to meet everyone, hang out with everyone and let them see a different side of me and vice-versa," she said.

After just a few rehearsal sessions, Brown said she was hooked.

"Oh my God, it's just great," she said. "I just love doing this."

Petersen said the opportunity to get back up on the stage was simply too good to pass up.

"I thought it sounded like fun. I used to do a lot of plays and musicals and things in school and really haven't done anything since college," she said. "So, this sounded like a lot of fun and a lot of fun people."

Petersen said she likes getting to play the part of the Wicked Step-Mother, who she described as a high-priced, high powered lawyer who has been assigned to represent the Big Bad Wolf as a pro-bono defense attorney.

"(She's) not very thrilled about it, but as the case goes along I kind of get into the part and I enjoy yelling at all of the sweet little people of Fairy Tale Land," she said. "It's a lot of fun. I'm having fun with it."

For ticket information, contact Stofferahn at stuart.stofferahn@ang.af.mil.

Air Force launches new Website to encourage family fitness

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFNEWS) — In conjunction with the start of the FitFamily initiative, Air Force Services Agency officials launched a family fitness Website, Jan. 30, as part of the Year of the Air Force Family.

FitFamily is a goal-incentive program and is open to all active duty, Reserve and Guard members, Department of Defense and civilian families, retired military members, honorably discharged veterans with 100 percent service-connected disability, and former or surviving military spouses and their family members.

To enroll in the program,

families can log on to <http://www.USAFFitFamily.com> and click on "Register My Family." The system will send a password to each family member's e-mail.

"FitFamily is an important component of the overall Air Force fitness and health initiative and a visible part of YOAFF," said David Brittain, FitFamily program manager at the Pentagon.

"The child and youth programs and the adult fitness centers will work closely together to promote the program. They will partner together and schedule activities throughout the year and incorporate FitFamily activities into

already existing YOAFF events."

The FitFamily Web site provides resources, ideas and goal setting tools to help Air Force families be active, make healthy nutrition choices and have fun in an effort to promote overall wellness.

"The FitFamily program is more than just logging points, monitoring progress and earning incentives. It's about families spending quality time together and setting goals with each other," said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James Roy, the Air Force's top enlisted Airman.

"Developing and caring for Airmen and their families is a top

priority. We must continue taking time to care for and honor our commitment to our families."

One benefit to the FitFamily Website is that deployed members can still participate with their family by working on their goals at the deployed location. "FitFamily can boost the morale of deployed Airmen by keeping them involved and working towards a common goal with their family," Brittain said.

"The site will have healthy recipes submitted by Air Force families as well as other resources. The goal of the FitFamily program is for families to begin thinking about family wellness, and ultimately

incorporate healthy habits and lifestyles in all aspects of their lives," said Brittain.

Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz designated July 2009 to July 2010 as the Year of the Air Force Family, a year-long focus on Air Force programs highlighting the importance of, and commitment to, the entire Air Force family.

"The Air Force is a great place to live, work and play," said Mike Bensen, deputy to the commander of Air Force Services Agency. "Our focus is to make it even better for our Air Force family."

Celebrating Diversity

Maintaining integrity gave Americans ability to persevere despite obstacles

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

“Integrity means being the same person in private as you are in public... you are who you are.”

That was one of the key messages a veteran University of Nebraska assistant football coach brought with him when he served as the keynote speaker for the Nebraska Military Department's annual African-American History Luncheon, held Feb. 10 in Lincoln, Neb.

Coach Ron Brown serves as the coach for tight ends under Nebraska Coach Bo Pelini. He also served as the receivers coach for Nebraska's Tom Osborne and Frank Solich from 1987 to 2003.

Brown also has garnered state-wide and national attention as co-founder of a state-wide Christian ministry called Mission Nebraska and as the state director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and is a regular columnist for the FCA's national magazine, "Sharing the Victory."

During his speech to the Nebraska Military Department, Brown spoke passionately about ten distinguished African-American leaders who, despite numerous obstacles and challenges, were able to remain true to themselves and as a result were able to change America for the better.

For example, Brown spoke about Matthew Henson, a noted African-American explorer who accompanied Cmdr. Robert Peary dur-

“When I think about life, you have to have something that you put into the ground that is non-negotiable.”

— Coach Ron Brown

ing his expedition to reach the North Pole and in 1909 was actually the first person to reach what many had long thought to be an unreachable destination. Henson also was given the honor of planting the American flag into the ice, claiming the victory for America.

That act, said Brown, has stayed with him as a poignant example of staying true to one's self, no matter what the odds or challenges.

“When I think about life, you have to have something that you put into the ground that is non-negotiable,” said Brown.

Among the others Brown spotlighted were George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, Jackie Robinson, Sojourner Truth, Tony Dungy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Brown also spoke of three lesser known people who directly affected his life. The first was his natural mother, who became pregnant out of wedlock. Despite pressure

to abort the baby, Brown said, she kept the child through the pregnancy and then put him into an orphanage.

“She's a hero of mine because she chose life over death,” said Brown.

The second two were Brown's adopted parents. Despite being elderly, the couple decided to adopt Brown from the inner-city orphanage and take him to Massachusetts where they raised him as their own. The couple soon adopted a second child, who would become Brown's younger sister.

Brown said that even though his parents weren't well educated, they worked hard to ensure that the two children would have the benefit of education. Brown would go on to graduate from Brown University and receive his master's degree from Columbia University.

Brown said he learned tremendous lessons from his parents.

For example, his father was a World War II veteran who served in a segregated unit in the European Theater. A veteran of the North African and Sicilian campaigns, Brown's father returned back to the United States where he experienced firsthand the injustices of segregation while stationed in Georgia.

“He came back to Georgia and couldn't do things that German prisoners of war could do, like sit at a lunch counter or wherever he wanted to on bus,” said Brown. “But it never broke his spirit.”

It also didn't change his feelings for the

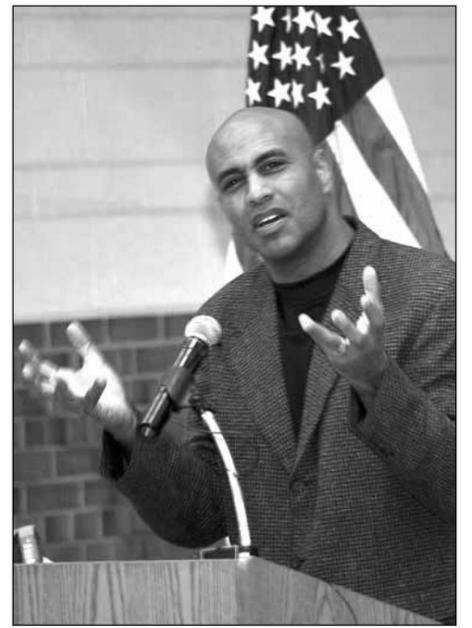


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Keynote Speaker: Coach Ron Brown, assistant football coach for the University of Nebraska, speaks about the role that integrity played in the lives of 10 distinguished Americans, Feb. 10. Brown served as the keynote speaker for the Nebraska Military Department's annual African-American History Luncheon held at the Spirit of 1776 armory in Lincoln, Neb.

United States, said Brown.

“My father, in spite of all that... I never met a more patriotic person than him,” he said.

Brown said it is the spirit of never quitting, of never compromising one's internal values, of never giving into self-pity that has helped him become the man he is today.

“That's my stake in the ground.”

Newly hired state command historian hopes to preserve Nebraska National Guard's stories for future generations

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

One of the best known quotes about history was penned by George Santayana in 1905: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

While most have heard it, how many have thought about how it applies specifically to military history and the history of the Nebraska National Guard?

For as long as there have been battles, wars and interest in defending one's family, tribe, area or nation, glorious tales of battles have lived on through stories, hieroglyphics, cave drawings and books long after those who lived it are gone.

To better understand, document and tell the Nebraska National Guard's story, a new state command historian was recently hired.

Richard Clark, Ph.D. began his career with the Nebraska National Guard in October 2009. Growing up Clark didn't really know what he wanted to do with his life, but in hindsight, always loved history.

“If the truth be told, years later upon looking back at my inspiration, when I was eight years old I wanted to be Indiana Jones,” admitted Clark.

Clark was born in Texas and raised in the South and Southwest. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Texas A&M University and a Master of Arts in History from Southern Methodist University. He earned his Ph.D. in history from Tulane University in New Orleans, La., where he completed his dissertation on the city's sexual subcultures of the mid-20th century.

Before coming to the Nebraska National Guard, Clark taught at Tulane and previous to that worked as a public historian and as an independent consultant.

With ancestors who fought in the American Civil War and other relatives who have served in many branches of the armed services,

“In a combat situation, no one has the time to worry about history. But when the day is over, all anyone wants to talk about is what happened.”

— Richard Clark, PhD
State Command Historian

Clark became interested in military history during his undergraduate days at Texas A&M.

After Clark accepted the command historian job with the Nebraska National Guard he moved from New Orleans to Lincoln. Before moving to Lincoln, Oklahoma City was the farthest north he had been, so the Nebraska climate had some surprises for him.

“Probably the biggest change has been the weather,” said Clark. “But unlike most of the others living here...I have relished all the snow this year.”

Clark serves as the Nebraska National Guard's expert on the best practices of history ranging from research and writing, to the preservation of historical sources.

His duties include presenting the history of the Nebraska National Guard to students and the general public, preparing unit historians for their duties and acting as a subject matter expert in the field of history.

Clark is working on many projects such as a history of the Nebraska National Guard since 1991, individual unit histories, unit deployment histories and video documentaries of Nebraska's historic armories. One of Clark's biggest projects is planning the future of the Nebraska National Guard Museum and establishing a permanent historical document archive.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Preserving A Legacy: Dr. Richard Clark, state command historian, kneels in front of the 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Division “All Hell Can't Stop Us” flag at the Nebraska National Guard's Museum. Clark began his career with the Nebraska National Guard in October 2009 and is working to preserve the history of the Nebraska National Guard.

Preserving, recording and sharing the history of the Nebraska National Guard is very important, but often an afterthought, said Clark.

“The role of the historian is most evident after the fact,” said Clark. “In a combat situation, no one has the time to worry about history. But when the day is over, all anyone wants to talk about is what happened.”

“What you and your unit do is immensely important to the welfare of our nation and our state, and everyone should recognize your accomplishments,” he added. “The only way that the people can give you and your unit the honor it deserves is if you...record and protect that story.”

Clark is particularly fond of oral histories from those who have seen and done. He said he is impressed with the foresight of Army leaders in the area of oral history.

“Long ago the leaders of the Army realized that if the Army doesn't preserve its story for future generations, its story will most likely be lost,” said Clark. “Army Chief of Staff Gen. William Westmoreland realized that every man that retired from the Army represented a loss of knowledge and in response pioneered an oral history program

in order to preserve the lessons learned by its retired leadership.”

Clark said military members often don't realize what their contributions mean.

“The interesting thing about history is that the things many of us take for granted, things that we see or do every day, are remarkable for others,” he said. “This is especially true for members of the Nebraska National Guard who do and see things that others will never experience in person.”

Clark said he is interested to hear the stories of the members of the Nebraska National Guard to further bolster its rich history.

“I hope that everyone in the Guard will have a greater appreciation of their own past,” said Clark. “I invite anyone who wants to talk to me — who wants to tell their story — to get in touch with me. I want to record your stories.”

With so much military history to deal with, and the proud members' stories, Clark feels honored to be given the responsibility to preserve the history.

“I am proud of the opportunity to work for the Nebraska National Guard,” said Clark. “The Nebraska National Guard has a long and

proud warrior heritage and to be entrusted with the responsibility of perpetuating and preserving this heritage is a great trust.”

Although he hasn't served in the military, Clark knows what it means to serve the country and said he will do his best to tell the story of those who are willing to sacrifice.

“The things that the members of the Nebraska National Guard do, not only in combat, but every day, is beyond the normal experience of most people and it's important to document for the general public what the Guard does,” said Clark. “Individuals in the Guard are proud of their experience and they want it to be remembered and shared. It is easier to fight and sacrifice if you know you will not be forgotten, and even more to know that you will be celebrated.”

“Be proud of your heritage and traditions, be part of these traditions, and preserve your story for the future,” added Clark. “I am here to help you in this mission.”

For more information on the history of the Nebraska National Guard, or to donate time, goods, or stories, contact Clark at (402) 309-7307 or dennis.h.clark@us.army.mil.

Nebraskan played pivotal role in historic African American unit

By Dr. Richard Clark
State Command Historian

■ Colonel William Hayward fought largely forgotten battle to give now famous 369th Infantry Regiment opportunity to fight

In World War I, few American units matched the achievements of the 369th Infantry Regiment.

The 369th was originally designated the 15th New York Colored Infantry and was an all African-American unit. Popularly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters,” the unit was under fire for 191 days, a period longer than that experienced by any other American unit during the war.

The Hellfighters never gave up an inch of ground once it had been taken and refused to retreat. The German High Command offered a bounty for the capture of a live member of the regiment, but not a single Hellfighter was ever taken alive.

The 369th received France’s Croix de Guerre award for heroism in combat and the individuals of the unit earned more citations for bravery than any other American unit in the war.

The remarkable feats of the individuals of the 369th each deserve their own recognition, but the common thread – the reason that these men were placed in a position to achieve these feats – was the vision and leadership of a single man: Col. William Hayward of the Nebraska National Guard.

Fighting For Freedom

In the early 1900s, the United States was a country divided by categories of race, class and gender, and the idea of African-American Soldiers was a nightmare to some.

The image of armed African Americans had been frightening in the South since the rise of racial slavery during the colonial period. The history of the pre- and post-revolutionary South is full of tales of armed slave revolts and the efforts of white slaveholders to suppress these insurrections.

Regardless, African-Americans fought on the side of freedom in the American Revolution and again took up arms in the American Civil War.

The period following the Civil War ushered in an era of new rights and freedom for the former slaves, but these hard-fought freedoms were increasingly suppressed in a country unable to deal with the specter of free and equal African Americans. This was especially the case in the South where laws, known as Jim Crow, sought to return the former slaves to a defacto state of slavery. But even outside of the South, racism ran riot throughout the country.

By the 1910s, assumed racial inferiority made many whites un-

willing to train Blacks as Soldiers or allow them to serve equally with whites in the United States Army.

However, by the time of World War I, all Black units were a fact of the U.S. Army. Following the Civil War, the Army raised several Black regiments – the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry – to fight on the frontier. Named “Buffalo Soldiers” because of their appearance and tenacity, the African-American Soldiers of the frontier established a history of honor and courage. In one example, Sgt. George Jordan of Fort Robinson, Neb., earned the Medal of Honor and brought credit to his adopted state of Nebraska.

In Cuba during the Spanish-American War and Mexico against Pancho Villa, Buffalo Soldiers again reaffirmed their reputation for bravery and ferocity.

The 369th Harlem Hellfighters were established in this tradition.

Fighting For The Right To Fight

Despite these precedents, the U.S. Army and state National Guard commands were reluctant to establish Black units. In New York, Charles Fillmore lobbied for an African-American National Guard Unit, but Fillmore was unsuccessful for several years.

Into this breach stepped Col. William Hayward.

Hayward was a native Nebraskan who fought with the Nebraska Militia in Cuba during the Spanish-American War where he led African-American troops. Following the war, Hayward served with the reorganized Nebraska National Guard and earned the rank of colonel.

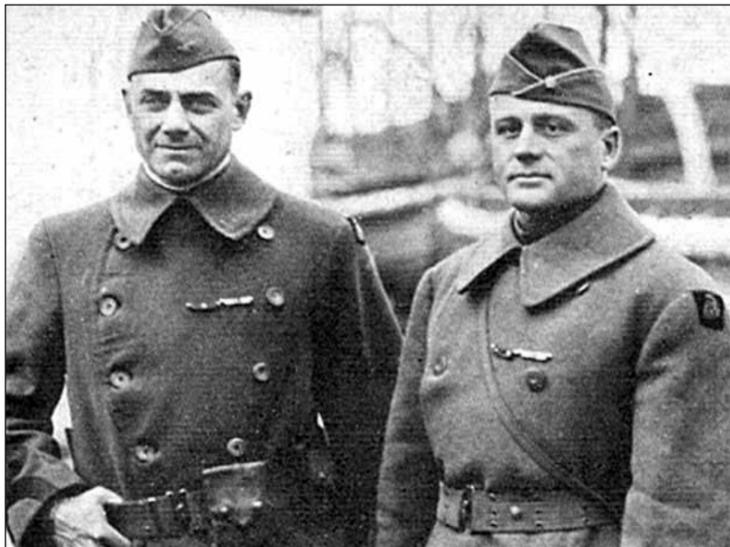
He moved to New York to work for a law firm and eventually became the assistant to New York District Attorney Charles Whitman. When Whitman moved to the Governor’s Mansion, Hayward became his legal counsel.

Hayward eventually worked as the public service commissioner of New York State, a position he resigned to form the 15th New York. Hayward used his political clout



National Guard Heritage Painting

On The Attack: “Hell Fighters’ from Harlem,” by H. Charles McBarron, depicts the 369th Infantry Regiment at Sechault, France, on Sept. 29, 1918. The famed African American infantry regiment, which overcame racism and an unyielding bureaucracy to earn the right to fight, was commanded by Col. William Hayward, formerly of the Nebraska National Guard.



National Guard Historical Photo

Battlefield Leaders: Col. William Hayward (left) and Maj. Arthur W. Little (right), pose for a photograph during a lull in the fighting in France. The two Soldiers served as the senior leaders of the famed “Harlem Hellfighters,” also known as the 369th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard.

to secure approval of the African-American Regiment in the New York National Guard.

Recruiting began on June 29, 1916, and by October Hayward and Fillmore had raised 10 companies, enough men to receive recognition by the state of New York. By April 1917, the regiment included 1,378 men, which was enough for federal recognition at peacetime strength. Another 600 recruits secured federal recognition at war strength.

Once established, Hayward’s regiment faced repeated adversity. Quartermasters tended to prioritize white units over the 15th New York and the Harlem Hellfighters were poorly equipped. Regiment members drilled with broomsticks in vacant lots, theater basements, and empty dance halls. Regimental headquarters was, for a time, based out of a beauty parlor and regular business took place at a Harlem cigar store.

By the summer of 1917, the unit was hard pressed for a place to drill with 2,052 enlisted and 54 (white) officers, the largest colored unit in the United States Army. Segregated units existed in New York, Illinois, District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Ohio, but only the 15th New York and 8th Illinois were large enough to be regiments. The remaining states’ units were “separate companies.”

Regardless of white sentiments, African-Americans served in record numbers and the Army drafted 367,700 African-American Soldiers during WWI.

The United States declared war on April 6, 1917, and the 15th New York Regiment shipped to Camp Whitman for swearing in to Federal service on July 15.

The regiment subsequently

trained at Camp Wadsworth, S.C. Because of racial tensions in there, the Army routed the 15th to Europe soon after arriving with little combat training. The 15th arrived at Brest, France on Dec. 27 and mobilized to St. Nazaire where the regimental Soldiers worked as manual laborers.

Combat In The Trenches

The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) Command subsequently posted the 15th to the Brittany region of France to serve as POW guards. Because of political concerns, Gen. John J. Pershing was reluctant to place colored units into the field under American Command.

Meanwhile, the French Command requested American troops to serve under French Command to replace casualties.

Hayward pleaded with Pershing to send his men into battle and Pershing responded by placing the regiment under the French High Command as the 369th Régiment d’Infanterie États-Unis.

After training with the more experienced French troops and receiving French supplies, the newly designated 369th took control of a sector at Bois-d’Hauze, Champagne, through July until taking point at Minacourt, France.

In France, the Harlem Hellfighters recorded extraordinary feats of courage and ability. In one day of fighting, a unit of the 369th began with 20 officers and 700 men and ended with 7 officers and 150 men in fighting condition, but continued fighting despite overwhelming odds.

Although no members of the 369th were ever captured alive, the regiment captured many German troops. The 3rd Battalion alone

captured more than 400 German soldiers.

The 369th never lost a foot of ground once taken. In spring 1918 during fighting in Belleau Wood, the French ordered a retreat. Hayward responded, “Turn back? I should say we won’t. We’re going there or we don’t come back.” He then tore off his officer’s insignia and charged.

The 369th earned the Croix de Guerre as a regiment, and two members, Pvt. Elmer McCowin and Sgt. Bill Butler, each earned the Distinguished Service Cross. Two members of the 369th earned the Croix de Guerre in their own right.

Setting The Stage For Change

Members of the 369th and other African-American regiments returned to the United States with a new confidence, but while they had changed, American attitudes remained the same.

Initially, public praise raised the hopes of returning Soldiers, but post-war reactions against the turmoil of the war years creating a growing fear of change and difference, and fostered a resurgence of racism. Race riots erupted across the country.

Old attitudes among whites clashed with new attitudes among returning African American veterans. Returning Soldiers had found their voice and courage during the war and were unwilling to return to the subjugation of the pre-war years.

In the end, Col. William Hayward and the Harlem Hellfighters were an important part of American history.

As a leader, Hayward embodied the Army’s value of innovation in the face of new and unprecedented realities of warfare. He worked within the civilian political and military command structures in pursuit of a project of which most white Americans were highly suspect.

In addition to his ability to innovate, Hayward was a superior combat leader. For his service and courage, France admitted him to the Legion of Honor, the *Ordre national de la Légion d’honneur*, created in 1820 by Napoleon Bonaparte and awarded him the *Croix de Guerre*.

Ultimately, Hayward was part of a sea change in racial attitudes that was beneficial for the U.S. military and foreshadowed the changing realities of American society.

Suggested readings:

• Harris, Bill. *The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2002.

• Harris, Stephen L. *Harlem’s Hell Fighters: The African-American 369th Infantry in World War I*. Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, Inc., 2003.



National Guard Historical Photo

Veterans Of France: Members of the 369th Infantry Regiment celebrate as they return to New York after a year of fighting in France. The African American National Guard infantry regiment earned countless honors during its exceptional service in the trenches during World War I.

Kids Corner

News & Features Affecting Nebraska's Military Children

Upcoming summer will offer state's military kids multiple opportunities to participate in fun activities

By Pamela Stemple

Nebraska Army National Guard Child and Youth Program

This summer will be packed with camps, camps and more camps. What a great time we are going to have.

June Camping: What a way to start off your summer

•**June 4-6**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska are holding a three-day camp in Valentine, Neb., for kids between the ages 8-17.

We are reaching out to all our kids from all over the state for this camp. This will be our first time camping overnight at this camp and it is packed full of adventure: river rafting, hiking, sports, stargazing singing around the campfire and so much more.

•**June 11-12**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska are planning a visit to the Omaha Zoo. It is almost approved, but not quite yet. I just wanted to give you a heads up so you can save the date.

You will have an opportunity to stay in the desert area and spend the night, observing all the things that go on in the desert, just like our troops do when they go overseas.

•**June 19-20**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska are holding another two-day camp at McCook Community College for military kids between the ages 8-17.

•**June 25-27**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska camps will provide a three-day camp at Camp Eagle near Fremont, Neb., for kids 6-18 with a fun getaway for 20 military youth as well as a healthy break for guardians from the daily challenges of caring for individuals with disabilities.

From campfire sing-a-longs and late night ghost stories, to nature walks, swim-

ming, and arts and crafts, Easter Seals Nebraska camps provide the same excitement and activity available at other summer camp programs.

•**June 20-25**, National Military Family Association is holding their world famous "Operation Purple Camp" in Fremont, Camp Eagle for ages 7-10. Visit www.operationpurple.org to register your children.

July is busy too: You will have so many choices.

•**July 10**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska are hosting a one-day camp in Wayne, Neb.

We are still working on the actual venue right now, but it will be a sports day. So, bring your gloves and bats and soccer balls. We may even get tennis in there along with kickball.

•**July 18-23**, National Military Family Association is hosting their second and final camp for the summer at Camp Eagle in Fremont for kids between the ages of 9-12. Visit www.operationpurple.org to register your children.

•**July 25-29**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska will be holding a four-day camp for teens between the ages 12-17. There will be plenty to do with swimming, horseback riding, obstacle courses stargazing and campfires galore.

•**July 31**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska will be hosting a one-day camp in Kearney, Neb., at Yanni Park. There is a pavilion reserved with a fun day of fishing, paddle boating and so much more.

August Camp Dates: You would think summer is over, but guess again.

•**Aug. 1-3**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska camps will provide a three-day camp at Fremont's, Camp Eagle with a fun getaway for kids 6-18 for 20 military youth as well as a healthy break for guardians from the daily challenges of caring for individuals with disabilities.

From campfire sing-a-longs and late night

ghost stories, to nature walks, swimming, and arts and crafts, Easter Seals Nebraska camps provide the same excitement and activity available at other summer camp programs.

•**Aug. 4-8**, Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska are hosting another four-day camp at Camp Comeca in Cozad, Neb., for those between the ages 12-17. There will be plenty to do with swimming, horseback riding, obstacle courses stargazing and campfires galore.

In the month of August we will be hosting a one day camp in Grand Island/ Kearney/ Hasting area. So be looking for a flyer coming out for that. We would like to have an outing in Grand Island at the water park.

So, that is what we have planned for the summer camping season.

Thanks to Operation: Military Kids and Easter Seals Nebraska for their willingness to help us put on these camps. We would not have been able to offer so many choices throughout the state.

Take advantage of these wonderful opportunities.

Other news:

We are holding our first teen panel meeting on Aug. 28 at Ashland, Neb. I would like to invite all of the teens between the ages 12-18 to come and join in.

You will have a chance to get to know the teens in the National Guard here in Nebraska.

Some of the things that we will be discussing: What you want to see happen in Nebraska for the teens in the Guard? You will have an opportunity to make a logo for t-shirts. Where do we want to have our next meeting? Set-up a Facebook page and whatever else you decide is important.

It will be about what you want and need. So, I will get more information out about this in July. Be sure to save the date on your calendar.

'Eagle Eyes' giving people skills to spot potential danger

The United States remains a nation at risk of terrorist attacks and will remain at risk for the foreseeable future.

Force protection anomaly reporting is critical to defeat future terrorists attacks, both domestically and overseas. After action reviews following past attacks on U.S. facilities and personnel indicated observations of, but not the reporting of, suspicious behavior.

In order to correct this situation, the Defense Department, and specifically the U.S. Air Force, instituted the Eagle Eyes program. Eagle Eyes is an antiterrorism initiative that enlists the eyes and ears of military members and citizens.

It starts with teaching people about the typical activities terrorists engage in to plan their attacks. Armed with this information, anyone can recognize elements of potential terror planning when they see it. The seven general indicators of terrorist pre-operational planning are:

Surveillance: Someone recording or monitoring activities. This may include the use of cameras (either still or video), note taking, drawing diagrams, annotating on maps, or using binoculars or other vision-enhancing devices.

Elicitation: People or organizations attempting to gain information about military operations, capabilities, or personnel. Elicitation attempts may be made by mail, fax, telephone, or in person. Examples could include being approached at a gas station (or anywhere else) and asked about what's happening at a base or other military facility.

Tests of Security: Any attempts to measure reaction times to security breaches or to penetrate physical security barriers or weaknesses. Example: a driver approaches a gate to a military facility, without an ID, and pretends to be lost or to have taken a wrong turn, just to learn the procedures of how he is dealt with and how far into the facility he or she can get before being turned around.

Acquiring Supplies: Purchasing or stealing explosives, weapons, ammunition, detonators, timers, etc. This indicator also includes observations of individuals acquiring military uniforms, decals, flight manuals, passes or badges (or the equipment to manufacture such items) or any other controlled items.

Suspicious Persons Out of Place: People who don't seem to belong in the workplace, neighborhood, business establishment, or anywhere else. This category is hard to define, but the point is that people know what looks right and what doesn't look right in their neighborhoods, office spaces, commutes, etc, and if a person just doesn't seem like he or she belongs, then they probably don't.

Dry Run: Putting people into position and moving them around according to their plan without actually committing the terrorist act. An element of this activity could also include mapping out routes and determining the timing of traffic lights and flow.

Deploying Assets: People and supplies getting into position to commit the act. This is a person's last chance to alert authorities before the terrorist act occurs. Look for people loading up vehicles with weaponry, explosives, etc, and/or parking that vehicle somewhere and leaving it. Also be on the lookout for people in military uniforms (who don't look right) approaching an installation or getting into a vehicle, or people who seem out of place standing by at a certain location as if waiting for something to happen.

The Eagle Eyes program provides a network of local, 24-hour phone numbers to call whenever a suspicious activity is observed. The program is in use at the Air National Guard Base and surrounding businesses. The 155th Security Forces Squadron has a 24-hour control center which can be contacted to report suspicious activity involving the Nebraska National Guard. The phone number is (402) 309-1552 or (402) 309-1551.

For more information, contact Capt. David Cooper, Nebraska Army National Guard antiterrorism officer at (402) 309-7406, or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard antiterrorism officer at (402) 309-1565.

Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder
Antiterrorism Officer
Nebraska Air National Guard

Easter Bunny takes annual party inside armory

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

A little bit of rain and wind didn't faze the Easter Bunny one single bit.

Originally, the staff of the Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office planned on hosting its annual Easter Egg hunt, March 27, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

However, when the weather turned iffy for the event, which is typically one of the two most popular children's party put on by the Family Program Office each year, organizers simply changed course and held the Easter Egg hunt on the Penterman Armory assembly floor.

"We had to do things a little differently this time," said Pamela Stemple, Nebraska Army National Guard state youth coordinator contractor. "Usually we lay them out in rows (on the grassy mall of the air base...) but I've heard nothing but good comments so far."

For the approximately 200 military kids that participated in the egg hunt, this year's search took place amongst a maze of cardboard boxes in which the Easter Bunny's legion of helpers had strategically hid the multi-colored plastic eggs filled with candies and other treats.

Along with hunting for eggs, kids also had the opportunity to play in two large inflatable play areas, pet several different types of rabbits brought out to the base by a local 4H club, or select a present from rows of toys.

According to Master Sgt. Deb Hraban, a Nebraska Air National Guardsman who trekked to the base with her husband Tech. Sgt. Joe Hraban and their two children, 5-year-old Lyndi and 16-month-old Trent, even though the party had to be moved indoors, it was still a huge treat.

"It's a blast," said Deb Hraban. "We wrote it on the calendar and we kept counting the number of days until the Easter Egg Hunt."

Most importantly, she said the event was a great way to spend time with her family and others like hers.

"It's just a day where the kids can go out to the base where mommy and daddy work and get to see something fun and hunt for some eggs and get together with other kids of parents we know."

"It's a relaxing day. You're still at work, but you're having fun with your kids and laughing at how funny they are with the other kids," she added.

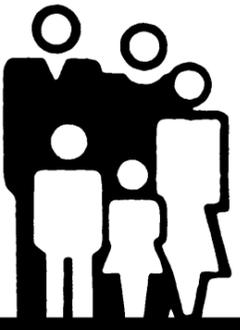


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On The Hunt For Eggs: Children begin collecting their multi-colored plastic Easter Eggs at the start of the March 27 Easter Egg Hunt at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Due to inclement weather, officials from the Family Program Office moved the annual hunt — one of the two most popular family events it holds each year — into the Penterman Armory where kids searched for the treat-filled eggs amongst cardboard boxes set out on the armory drill floor.

Stemple said getting military families together and participating in fun activities is what events like the Easter Egg hunt are all about.

"It brings the National Guard together and it's a good time for military families to get together and see each other," she said. A similar Easter Egg hunts was held in Omaha on April 3.



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



Family Office sponsors women's defense classes

Family Program Office

The Family Programs Office offered two free Women's Self Defense Classes for military family members in March. Each class was comprised of two three-hour sessions and was instructed by Sgt. Chris Brammer.

Brammer is a former martial arts instructor, competitor in national and international martial arts competitions ranging from boxing, Muay Thai kickboxing and Mixed Martial Arts competitions. He was also a women's self defense instructor before enlisting into the military.

Now working on pre-mobilization orders for the Family Programs Office, Brammer wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to utilize his past skills to further prepare the family members for Nebraska's largest mobilization to date.

Assistant instructors were Sgt. Chris Moulton, Sgt. John Johnson, Spc. Torrey Helmick and Pfc. James Cherry. Together they instructed over 30 students.

The defensive class consisted of two main topics. The first is

Situational Awareness. This block of instruction is designed to teach students that avoidance and pre-planning is the key.

The primary goal in personal self defense is remembering that "Ultimate Victory is Avoiding the Fight."

This included topics like current statistics for female assaults, avoiding common surroundings used by criminals, detecting a threat before it presents itself and mental preparation.

The second part was hand-to-hand combat techniques. The techniques taught are effective regardless of size of the opponent and simple to remember.

Family members trained on striking target areas on the body, defense against common takedowns and ground fighting.

The class is designed to build on the previous techniques learned and ended in a final defense situation. The test was presented by one of the instructors, wearing a large padded suit for this practical application.

The Family Program Office has received a large amount of positive feedback from all of the women who attended the training.

The women also showed tremen-



Photo courtesy of the Family Program Office

Defensive Training: Women practice defensive moves during one of two free Women's Self Defense Classes offered to military family members in March. The classes were taught by Sgt. Chris Brammer, a former martial arts instructor who is working temporarily for the state Family Program Office.

dous gratitude and requested that another class be offered.

A future class was scheduled

to be offered in April. However the next class was to be extended from two days to three days in order to

include instructions on defense against blunt and edged weapons and defense against firearms.

Getting to Know You:

Newest Yellow Ribbon Program staff members bring diverse experiences to organization

■Melissa Guenther

My name is Melissa Guenther and I am one of the new Yellow Ribbon Program support specialists for the Nebraska Army National Guard.

I grew up in Brule, Neb., before moving to Lincoln, Neb., in 2000 where I attended and graduated from Northeast High School in 2002.

I enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard when I was a senior in High School and in spring 2002 I went to basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., and then continued on to the Logistical Supply Specialist School at Fort Lee, Va.

I was deployed to Iraq as a production control clerk for the 267th Maintenance Company from February 2004 to February 2005.

Once I was back from deployment I moved to Kitzingen, Germany, to be with and marry Steven Guenther, who I had met while deployed in Iraq.

We currently live in Lincoln. We have two children, Nathan, who is 3 years old and Isabella, 1.

In May 2009 I graduated from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln with a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and a minor in Chemistry.

I am currently enrolled in an EMT course at Creighton University in Bellevue, Neb.

In August 2009 I chose not to reenlist in the Nebraska Army National Guard, but instead start a different career path with the Nebraska Army National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program as a contracted employee.

I still wanted to help support Soldiers and their families as they deal with the high pace and constantly changing military demands.

■Melody Olson

My name is Melody Olson and I was recently hired by the Nebraska National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program as a Yellow Ribbon support specialist.

I grew up in Brule, Neb., and moved to Lincoln, Neb., in 2000 where I attended and graduated from Northeast High School in 2001.

I worked at Cedars Emergency Shelter from 2001-03 as a youth specialist. I worked with children from ages 0-18 who were placed at Cedars for emergency care.

From 2004-05 I took care of my niece full-time while my sister was deployed to Iraq with the Nebraska Army National. I then worked at Region V Services from 2005-08, in their group homes, and adults that had Developmental Disabilities.

From 2008-09 I went back to Cedars Emergency Shelter as a youth specialist.

I have attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 2001 and have one class left to graduate with a bachelor's degree in Early Developmental Psychology and a minor in Sociology. I also am currently working on a second bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

I joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in January 2008 and am currently serving with the 67th Battlefield Support Battalion as a supply specialist.

I married Peter Olson in 2009 and we currently live in Lincoln with our 9-month-old daughter, Audrey.

I am looking forward to working with the Soldiers and family members of the Nebraska Army National Guard and helping them work through all of the cycles of the deployment phases.

I am especially excited to use my experience with children to help with the chil-



Courtesy Photo

Yellow Ribbon Staff Members: (From left) Melody Olson, Melissa Guenther and Vadra Stutzman each recently joined the Yellow Ribbon Program as support specialists. Each of the women bring a variety of diverse experiences with them to their new positions, which are designed to help Guardsmen and their families deal with the stresses of a deployment.

dren's activities during the Yellow Ribbon events we will be holding for the Soldiers and their families.

■Vadra Stutzman

My name is Vadra Stutzman and I am the new Yellow Ribbon support specialist for the Nebraska Army National Guard.

I have lived in Lincoln, Neb., all my life and have been a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard since January 1989.

I worked full-time for the Air National Guard from 1989-95 where I held jobs within the Information Management and Security Police sections.

In 1995 I left my full-time position with the Nebraska Air National Guard to take a position with the Lincoln Police Department as a police officer.

In June 2006 I returned to the National Guard to work full-time again in Human Resources.

This past summer I saw that the Nebraska Army National Guard had a contracted position open in the Yellow Ribbon Program. I knew that I would be retiring from the Nebraska Air National Guard sometime in 2010 and thought to myself, 'Wow this would be a great opportunity for me to keep a job within the Military Department and continue to help Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard.'

I believe that the Yellow Ribbon Program is a great program that will help our Soldiers, Airmen and their family members cope with the stresses that come with the deployments that our Soldiers and Airmen go on.

I am excited and looking forward to being a part of the Nebraska National Guard's Yellow Ribbon Program.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

First Lieutenant
David R. Koesters

Chief Warrant Officer Four
Carrie L. Hancock

Chief Warrant Officer Two
Bradley W. Adams
Keal S. Bockelman
Jake A. Edwards
Jessie F. Harris
Ross W. Haselhorst

Warrant Officer One
Brandon M. Hill
Kevin E. Monismith

Master Sergeant
Kenneth P. Roddy

Sergeant First Class
Gail M. Amend
Joseph E. Janke
Kevin D. Smith

Staff Sergeant
Dustin M. Bauer
Brent J. Benes
Michael J. Coleman
Ross A. Hartman
Terry A. Morava
Noe Ramirez
Jarrod J. Schmoker
Dustin A. Seidler
Jonathan H. Terry
Brandi M. Vrba
Christina M. Wattier
Maryjo A. Yager

Sergeant
Robert D. Bare
Joshua R. Bland
Paul C. Craig
Matthew K. Hagen
Cordero R. Hansen
Jon L. Johnson
Daaron J. Kiefer
Jason A. Kilcoin
Sean M. Kotalik

Diana K. Krepel
Thomas H. Loos
Stuart J. Mason
Javis A. Olson
Jerry T. Peck
Crystal G. Richey
Scott A. Schuld
Norrissa N. Shuck
Gary L.A. Sons
Daniel C. Wilkins

Specialist
Larry L. Anderson Jr.
David J. Barrett
Michael S. Boesen
Coy M. Boland
John J. Bookman Jr.
Roderico B. Caceres
Johnathon S. Clark
Michael A. Clark
Cole M. Classen
Craig A. Cleveland
Anthony W. Coppedge
Kyle R.T.D. Creeach
Kathryn J. Dennis
Aaron A. Dickey
Nathaniel J. Emons
Kenton C. Ewing
Geoffery M. Florom
Kadron R. Fye
Jennifer A. Grimm
Christopher S. Haag
Jason J. Hansen
John M. Herfel
Tiffany J. Holsten
Holden T. Isley
Joseph W. Keeler
Alex J. Koehler
Ashley N. Koehler
Carsen J. Kuehl
Shawn E. Llewellyn
Whitney R. Malcom
Jessica A. Marlow
Chase D. Maurer
Keith W. McAuliff
Coady N. McMullen
Monte E. McWilliams
Juan P. Mendez
Aaron C. Menke

Paul D. Myers
Sean P. Niekum
Amber J. Nielsen
Chad C. Oestreich
Travis W. Rupp
Seth E. Schleicher
Carley L. Schultz
Preston H. Sheets
Darius E. Stanley
Colton J. Stepp
Kayla M.M. Tarr
Shane C. Thompson
Jason W. Trumble
Bradley J. Wardyn
Daniel J. Wardyn

Private First Class
Ashley R. Adkins
Anthony D. Bueche
Kristen A. Dutcher
Joseph M. Gomez
Nathan R. Graber
Shawn P. Hale
Brock T.L. Hemphill
Dallas L. Isley
Schlyer C. Jensen
Michael L. Jolkowski
Aaron M. Kaufman
Jadin B. Keller
Zackary L. Klapperich
Kylan P. Lonowski
Brady K. Marksmeier
David M. Mueller
Maxwell Q. Nyce
Joseph E. Prichard
Clay E. Robinson
Brian S. Rydberg
Adrian L. Sanders
James E. Shields
Jazmin R. Utterback

Private Two
James D. Brady
Kodi J. Classen
Joshua A. Linder
Emelia M. Newman
Ashton J. Ohde
Arthur Q. Willets

Air National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Alessandro Bruzzano

Senior Master Sergeant
Bradley J. Freeman

Master Sergeant
Megan L. Brozovsky

Bryan J. Wright

Technical Sergeant
Matthew J. Wattier

Staff Sergeant
Tiana T. Flowers
Andrew B. Kendall
Scott Robotham

Winston L. Sanniola
Tyler W. Sorensen
Dillion J. Woodrum

Senior Airman
Hannah T. Bowder
Eamonn Collins
Christina Gaukel
Chaz R. Jensby
Tara Petersen

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Army Commendation Medal
Capt. Stephen A. Marquez
1st Sgt. Joseph J. Wren
Sgt. 1st Class Richard A. Hagedorn
Staff Sgt. Dustin L. Beaudette
Staff Sgt. Christine L. Raftery
Staff Sgt. Matthew L. Starkey
Staff Sgt. Adren W. Uhlig
Staff Sgt. Brandi M. Vrba
Sgt. Kourtney K. Kaminski
Spc. Lucas B. Mutschelknaus

Army Achievement Medal
2nd Lt. Tyler E. Horning
Staff Sgt. Michael A. Brickner
Sgt. Joseph D. Busing
Sgt. Matthew C. Herring
Sgt. Jason C. Jensen
Sgt. Darrell G. Lewis
Spc. Sean C. Hanger
Spc. Tyler J. Wolfe
Spc. Matthew S. Wonder
Pfc. Benjamin G. Helmink

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gregory J. Reicks
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark D. Roland
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert P. Davis

Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit
Command Sgt. Maj. Eli A. Valenzuela

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal
1st Sgt. Tomas C. Ortiz
Staff Sgt. Robert L. Halmes Jr.

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal
Capt. Charles D. McWilliams
1st Lt. Viola L. Raschke
Sgt. Lindsay M. Loftus

Air National Guard Meritorious Service Medal
Lt. Col. Samuel R. Venev

Air Medal
Lt. Col. Jeffrey A. Briere
Lt. Col. Chris S. Collins
Maj. John D. Williams
Capt. Edward M. Conner
Capt. Randal L. Douglas
Capt. Wade R. Holen
Senior Master Sgt. Russell J. Sladky
Staff Sgt. Kelly A. Reese

Aerial Achievement Medal
Capt. Edward M. Conner

Air Force Commendation Medal
1st Lt. Virginia L. Witulski
Master Sgt. Shandra K. Buser
Tech. Sgt. Alex R. Salmon

Joint Service Achievement Medal
Lt. Col. Mary A. McGahan

Air Force Achievement Medal
Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Robert K. Barnhill
Capt. Edward M. Conner
Airman 1st Class Janay M. Raim

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard
Col. Thomas E. Schuurmans
Master Sgt. Kent L. Ropers
Sgt. 1st Class David J. Erickson

Air National Guard
Col. Robert A. Athan
Lt. Col. Wanda L. Carter

Chief Master Sgt. Bradley R. Novak
Senior Master Sgt. James F. Koelzer
Tech. Sgt. John A. Frohner

Shorttakes

Soldiers graduate from career counselor course

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Thirty-three Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers took their place on the retention lines, March 5, when they graduated from the two-week Battalion and Unit Career Counselor's Course at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Taught by recruiting and retention officials from National Guard Bureau, the course focused on providing the new career counselors with the tools and resources they need to successfully battle to keep the Nebraska Army National Guard's trained Soldiers in the organization.

According to Sgt. Ronnie Larmeu, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb., the course left her with some lasting impressions on how important the job she and the other Soldiers are taking on is to the health of the Nebraska Army Guard.

"The main thing I got out of the course is how important retention is to the unit and how it builds the strength of the unit," she said. "And that it's not only my job as a unit career counselor, but everyone's job, to keep people in the unit, because once they get out it's very hard to get them back in."

As unit and battalion career counselors, the Soldiers are now responsible for meeting with Guardsmen who are approaching the end of their enlistments and talking to them about the benefits and incentives available for reenlisting. They're also important, said Lt. Col. Jim Murphy, State Recruiting and Retention Command commander, in helping assess the morale climate within their units.

"You need to be the eyes and ears of the commander out in the unit," said Murphy, keynote speaker for the graduation ceremony. "You need to find out what the morale in the unit is. You need to find out what the Soldiers are thinking and doing."

"And take care of those Soldiers," Murphy added, saying the Soldiers may also be faced with a difficult decision in which they have to rec-



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

New Job, New Badge: Spc. Derrick Jackson, a member of Company D, Recruit Sustainment Program, at Norfolk, Neb., pins on his new career counselor's badge after graduating from a two-week Career Counselors Course, March 5, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

ommend that the Soldier transfer to a different unit if that means they'll be retained. "We'll be keeping them in the National Guard - that's okay because even if it hurts your unit slightly, it's going to help the Nebraska Army National Guard."

Murphy also told the new career counselors that in order to be successful, they need to honestly believe that the Nebraska Army National Guard is a "great product" and that the experiences people gain in the organization will help them out tremendously in the long run.

"You really have to believe in your heart of hearts that it is the right thing to do; that it is going to benefit

that Soldier to stay in the Guard for four more years and get a 20-year retirement," said Murphy. "That it's going to benefit a Soldier to go on a deployment, qualify for the G.I. Bill and get extra experience (to) go out into the job market and have the ability to bring a better life to his (or her) family."

"I believe in the product that we have and that it's an unbelievable product," Murphy added. "I believe that the respect that I receive when I walk down the street with this uniform on is twice the amount of respect that I would receive if I didn't have it on... So, when you wear this uniform, wear it with

pride."

According to the recent graduates, the course was more difficult than they expected it to be yet they're glad to now have the tools they need to make a difference.

"It was a really good course," said Spc. Glenn Cox, a member of Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion from Grand Island. "It gave us the tools we needed to know to be able to work with our Soldiers, educate them about the incentives and benefits that are out there for them and help us understand their mindset - where it's going and why they might be trying to get out and what we can offer them to try and keep them in."

Sgt. William Carlson, a member of Kearney's 1195th Transportation Company, agreed. A member of the rear detachment of a company that is just completing its tour in Iraq, Carlson said he knows he will be busy trying to keep as many recently returned Soldiers in the Guard as possible.

"Unfortunately, sometimes there's some real bad tastes in your mouth after a deployment, so it's going to be vital for us as unit career counselors to get in contact with those Soldiers right after they get home, especially after that initial 90-day period," said Carlson, who has also graduated from a Guard recruiter course.

He said it will be especially important to talk to those Soldiers who will soon be at their end of enlistments. "Those are going to be our most experienced guys and we definitely want to keep them, because we've got 30-some brand new guys back in the rear detachment waiting to meet the unit. They need to be trained."

Ultimately, say the new counselors, they know that they're an integral part of the battle to keep the Nebraska Army National Guard's strength up so that it can continue to successfully meet all its continuing commitments.

"We're the difference-makers between a lot of Soldiers and their careers," said Spc. Derrick Jackson, a member of Norfolk's Company D, Recruit Sustainment Program.

Army Guard officer earns MacArthur award for leadership

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The commander of an Omaha-based Nebraska Army National Guard chemical company has been named the recipient of a prestigious U.S. Army leadership award.

In earning Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award, Capt. Charles "Chuck" McWilliams, commander of Nebraska's 754th Chemical Company, joins six other Army National Guard officers from across the United States who were recognized for their outstanding leadership accomplishments.



McWilliams

McWilliams is also the morning meteorologist for KETV in Omaha in civilian life.

"Captain McWilliams is an outstanding leader in our organization," said Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons in announcing McWilliams' selection. "As one of only seven Army National Guard officers in the nation to receive this prestigious leadership award for calendar year 2009, (he) truly represents the best of the Nebraska Army National Guard."

"I am personally extremely proud of him for his exemplary leadership and grateful to his family and his employer for supporting him in these most challenging times where leaders like him truly make a difference here at home and wherever the Nebraska National Guard is called to serve," said Lyons.

McWilliams will receive the award during a May ceremony.

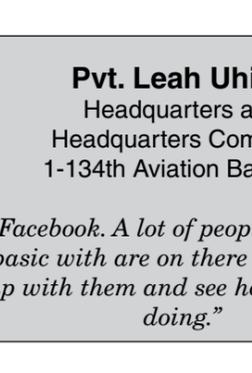
Street Talk

“Do you use social networking Websites? If so, which ones and for what?”



Sgt. Matthew Tacha
1195th Transportation Company

“I started using Facebook when I was deployed to Iraq to keep in touch with my family and friends.”



Pvt. Leah Uhing
Headquarters and
Headquarters Company
1-134th Aviation Battalion

“Facebook. A lot of people I went to basic with are on there and I keep up with them and see how they are doing.”



Pvt. Eduardo Sandoval
189th Transportation Company

“Facebook and MySpace primarily, just to keep in touch with friends that I met at basic training and other friends and family.”



Spc. Leah Lowe
1195th Transportation Company

“I use Facebook. Lately it’s been to talk to my fiancé in Iraq. If it wasn’t for Facebook, God help us!”



Pvt. Michael Murray
189th Transportation Company

“I use Facebook. I don’t really use it to talk to people, I use it more for the games on there.”

Worth Repeating

“Leadership in a democratic Army means firmness, not harshness; Understanding, not weakness; Justice, not license; Humaneness, not intolerance; Generosity, not selfishness; Pride, not egotism.”

— General of the Army Omar N. Bradley

Get committed to fitness

I would like to share my thoughts with you on a topic of tremendous importance to our National Guard.

The catalyst for this is our continued emphasis to improve the quality of our force.

Most of you should be familiar by now with our Quality Boots Initiative (QBI) that was rolled out last summer. I want to address one key component of what I consider to be “Quality Boots”: Physical Fitness.

I have had the opportunity to hear our commanders brief their Yearly Training Briefings both in March 2009 and again in March 2010. I asked each commander to include their Physical Fitness Test (PFT) pass/fail statistics. The results clearly show that there is significant work to be done in this area.

Your commanders and non-commissioned officer leadership are addressing the issue through increased command emphasis, including things like dedicated time at drill for PT, the Air Guard’s SPRINT program and counseling on resources available to those in need of assistance. These are critical and necessary measures in my view and are a key component of caring and adaptive leadership.

I charge leaders at all levels of the organization to stay focused on this quality indicator and to do their part in setting conditions that will help our Soldiers and Airmen meet physical fitness standards. Our leaders must be visible during PT and take the PFT with their Soldiers and Airmen.

The main message I am communicating, through this column today, to all members of our Nebraska

The Adjutant General

Brigadier General

Judd Lyons



winter behind us and the natural inclination for many is to jump right into or back into physical fitness routines (which is not the preferred situation, but I suspect is sometimes the case), we need to be safe and prevent injuries.

For those who are struggling to meet standards, but make the personal commitment to meet their individual responsibility, avail yourself of the tips and techniques for beginning such programs safely. If you aren’t sure where to begin, ask your unit fitness monitor, first line leader or NCOs in your unit. They will help you!

If you are moving your indoor program to the outdoors, particularly running or bicycling, be safe and wear the proper personal protective equipment. Compliance with policies on military installations is a given, take the same care when exercising in your home area also.

No problem is unsolvable when we address it together. I applaud those who continue to meet or exceed the standards of physical fitness. I am confident that we can reduce the numbers of those not meeting fitness standards through effective leadership, strong teamwork and a personal commitment to physical fitness on the part of each member.

I am also committed to encouraging commanders to use the tools available to ensure we have quality Soldiers and Airmen who are physically fit. This includes action on those who are not committed to meeting the standards. Wearing the uniform is a privilege and meeting physical fitness standards is the expectation for all members of the Nebraska National Guard.

As always, I am proud to serve as your adjutant general.

National Guard is that I believe there is also a personal responsibility requirement on the individual Soldier or Airman that is the key to the solution and for which I hold them accountable. Our Soldiers and Airmen who may be struggling to meet standards have to own their issue as well.

It takes action, both in the figurative and literal sense, on the part of the individual, to improve physical fitness. You have to implement a fitness routine and execute it year round faithfully.

When conditions permit, get outside and exercise. If they don’t, modify your exercise for indoors.

The point is, do something!

If the only time you exercise is at drill or when you take your PFT, none of us, neither your leadership nor you, will be successful and the outcome will likely be negative. It takes time, effort and perseverance to improve physical fitness.

The payoff is great though, personally and professionally. The physical fitness of our force is a readiness issue and we are going to improve together.

I am asking all of us to take a personal interest in assisting those who are struggling but have accepted their personal responsibility to address their issues as well. Enforcement of standards is part of our QBI and will continue to receive focus as we endeavor to sustain a quality force.

Finally, as we now have the

Community involvement great way to refine leadership skills

“Get involved in your local community.”

Over the course of my military career, I don’t know how many times I’ve heard a leader – be it military or civilian – talk about the importance of getting involved in one’s local community. But, safe to say, it’s been a lot.

Obviously, it’s hard to understate the importance of community involvement as it pertains to military service.

We in the military exist to serve our fellow citizens. And we cannot exist if we do not have the support of our communities, starting at the local level.

It’s also been my experience that military people – especially members of the Nebraska National Guard – do an extremely good job of getting involved. It’s almost as if it’s part of our DNA as Guard Soldiers and Airmen to want to be involved at our local levels, to be part of making a difference.

But, when it comes to determining why or how people become involved, that’s something that’s hard to put a finger on. From what I can tell from talking with people over the years, community involvement is usually a very personal undertaking and usually takes many different, diverse forms.

I can definitely attest to that fact.

Over the years, I’ve gotten involved in a number of different civic organizations from time to time. However, over the past few years,

My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes



better communicator and you often have to learn ways to lead on the fly when the best-laid plans go awry. You also have to be a motivator, a positive disciplinarian and above all else a good listener.

You also quickly learn that people are always

watching you and that if you want to be a good mentor you’d better live the example you’re trying to teach.

In short, what I learned from this past year’s experiences are all lessons that I can apply to making myself a better officer, a better Nebraska Guardsman and a better person.

At this point, it’s hard to know whether anything I’ve done over the past year will ever have a real impact on these young boys. But I do know that the impact they’ve had on me has been very real and extremely noteworthy.

Which brings me back to my original thought.

When I think about all that I’ve received by simply getting involved, I also can’t help but think about how much we’ve gained as an organization through the very simple process of thousands of Nebraska Guard Soldiers and Airmen getting involved, by volunteering their time to help make our state a better place for all of us, and how the lessons they’ve learned through these voluntary efforts have paid dividends that we can’t even begin to fully appreciate.

In short, getting involved as individuals has made our Nebraska National Guard a better and more capable organization.

my involvement has become much more defined.

The reason is really quite simple. I’ve now got two school-aged sons who are becoming more and more involved in youth athletics and other civic organizations and another one who most likely soon will be also.

Over the past six years or so, I’ve helped coach my sons’ basketball teams, I’ve helped out in their elementary school, I’ve taught classes, I’ve even spoken to high school and elementary school assemblies about the importance of military service and honoring this nation’s veterans.

This past year that involvement became even deeper as I not only continued to help coach my middle son’s youth basketball team as a volunteer assistant coach, I also volunteered to help out as the Webelos Scout leader for our local community.

The experience has been something that’s hard to put into words, but I have learned two very important lessons.

One, it’s much harder than it looks when you’re on the outside looking in; and two, I’m learning much more than I’m teaching.

Being a volunteer leader for a group of fourth-grade boys forces you to redefine your leadership skills. You have to become a much

Hitting His Target

Nebraska Soldier earns rare shooting badge during competition in Georgia

By Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

Nebraska Army National Guardsman and resident of Papillion, Sgt. 1st Class Marc Sheehan joined an elite group of Soldiers by earning the distinguished rifleman badge at the 2010 All Army Small Arms Championship at Fort Benning, Ga., Feb. 27.

Sheehan was a member of the Nebraska marksmanship team that competed against more than 300 active Army, National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers from across the country at the 2010 All Army Small Arms Championship, an advanced combat live-fire training event.

"Outstanding," Sheehan said about receiving the badge. "(It's) a goal that's been met. It's not a one day goal...I thought it would take forever."

The distinguished marksmanship designation badges are the ultimate achievement for a service rifle and pistol shooter. They are awarded to members of the armed forces in recognition of "a preeminent degree of achievement in target practice with the service rifle or pistol," according to Army regulations.

The distinguished marksman badge (later to be renamed the distinguished rifleman badge) was first approved by the Secretary of War in General Order Number 1 dated Jan. 3, 1887.

Since its inception, only a few more than 3,200 Soldiers have earned the rifle badge,

with only a little more than 600 of them being Army National Guard Soldiers.

The Army badge is awarded after the shooter earns 30 'leg points' from state, regional, All-Army and inter-service Excellence In Competition matches. 'Leg points' are earned by placing in the top 10 percent of the shooters in the EIC matches and are accumulated over a lifetime until the distinguished designation is achieved.

Sheehan, who serves as the Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Candidate School training sergeant, earned his first rifle 'leg points' at the 2006 Adjutant General's Marksmanship Shoot at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. Since then Sheehan has shot at local and regional matches. He's also competed in the Winston P. Wilson All Guard Match, the 2008 U.S. Army SAC, and an international match in Germany.

During the 2010 U.S. Army SAC competition Sheehan, team captain for Nebraska, shot the M-16A2 rifle, M-9 pistol, M-24 sniper rifle, and an AK-47 assault rifle, firing over 600 rounds in 16 matches during the eight-day competition. At the end of the competition Sheehan placed first in the combined EIC non-distinguished match and 9th in the overall Combined Arms competition.

Nebraska placed third in the Rifle Team EIC, fourth in the Rifle Team Overall and fifth in the Combined Arms Team Championship.

Sheehan was presented the distinguished rifleman badge during the award ceremony at the end of the championship by Lt. Col. Daniel Hodne, commander of the U.S. Army



Photo by Mark Roland

Achieving A Major Milestone: Sgt. 1st Class Marc Sheehan (right) receives his distinguished rifleman badge from Lt. Col. Daniel Hodne, commander of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, after earning the badge during the 2010 All Army Small Arms Championship, held at Fort Benning, Ga., in February.

Marksmanship Unit.

Sheehan said he will now focus on attaining the points for the distinguished pistol shot badge. Less than 400 Army Soldiers have ever earned double distinguished badges

Sheehan has already received the Excellence in Competition Badge (bronze) for pistol and earned four pistol leg points and was awarded the Chiefs 50 Badge at previous competitions.

Warrior Challenge

Guard's newest Soldiers put newly-learned skills to test during April event

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Usually, when the month of April hits Nebraska most high school seniors like Tessa Harding are focused on things like final exams, spring proms and graduation ceremonies.

Harding, however, isn't like most high schools seniors. Along with balancing the demands of her final days of high school, the Bridgeport High School senior is also preparing herself mentally and physically for the challenges that await her this coming summer during her advanced individual training.

For a day in early April, Harding and 47 other new Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers preparing for AIT competed in the annual Recruit Sustainment Program's Warrior Challenge at Camp Ashland, Neb.

According to Drill Sgt. (Staff Sgt.) Dominik Chase, drill sergeant assigned to the RSP at Camp Ashland, the event was designed to prepare the Soldiers - all of whom have already attended basic training - for AIT by having them participate in a team-oriented warrior task competition.

"The goal is to keep them focused on the skills they learned at basic training and have been working on ever since they returned to their respective RSP sites in Nebraska," said Chase.

RSP is a relatively new program that Soldiers join after enlisting into the Nebraska Army National Guard. The program is designed to prepare the new enlistees for the challenges of basic training, AIT and military life in general.

The April competition pitted

RSP Soldiers from across Nebraska in a day-long series of events based around the basic warrior skills the Soldiers learned at basic training. The Soldiers who competed were all in the final phase of the RSP program.

Chase said along with the competitive nature of the event, the Warrior Challenge gave the new Soldiers an opportunity to see how ready they actually are for AIT.

"This basically reasserted the importance of the training they've been conducting in RSP and how it will apply both in AIT and when they get to their units," said Chase.

Harding, who competed as a member of the Scottsbluff RSP team, said she enjoyed getting to see how well she measured up to the other Soldiers.

"It's fun," said Harding, shortly after she successfully threw a grenade into a bunker from approximately 25 feet away during the grenade event. "It takes you back to basic training."

Nicholas Jones agreed.

A senior from Potter, Neb., Jones is preparing to complete his AIT this summer before joining the Beatrice-based Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance), as an airborne infantryman. He said he enjoyed catching up with some of the other Nebraska Soldiers he met at basic training last summer.

"It's fun to see some of the buddies you went to training with from units across the state. It's a lot of fun to come out here and train," he said, adding that he was also looking to see how he 'measured up.' "You want to prove that you're better than them."

That was a comment echoed numerous times throughout the April 10 event.

"It's really fun to compete and show what you have," said Jeremy



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Moving Forward: Pvt. Anna Cleveland (foreground) provides a protective guard as her fellow Norfolk Recruit Sustainment Program teammates move a "casualty" during the Warrior Challenge held April 10. Cleveland is preparing to attend her medical Advanced Individual Training course later this summer.

Lute, who will soon join York's Detachment 1, 1075th Truck Company, after completing his truck driver's training this summer. Lute was competing as a member of the Kearney RSP team. "(I want) to see how we stack up... to see how I compare to everyone else."

"It's (fun,)" added Anna Cleveland, a soon-to-be medic who was competing as a member of the Norfolk RSP team. "We're much smaller than the other (teams,) but we know that we can do it. Being able to keep up with everyone else helps us be our best and strive to do our best... and that's what they're looking for."

This year's event was won by Omaha's Company E #2, made up of Nathan Clash, Colton Luchsinger, Daniel Roesenau, Eric Moseman, Jeremy Scarf, Christopher Stenger, Michael Wiederspan and Alexander Peterson, which earned 714.95 points out of a possible 820.



On The Lookout: Pvt. Tessa Harding takes a peak around a wall to see if she can spot any potential enemy activity during the grenade portion of the Warrior Challenge held April 10 at Camp Ashland, Neb. Harding was a member of the Scottsbluff Recruit Sustainment Program team that competed in a variety of tasks designed to prepare them for Advanced Individual Training.

Event winners were: State Board: Tessa Harding; High Army Physical Fitness Test: Martin Gomez; Fastest Disassembly of an M-16A2 rifle: Patrick Green (31 seconds); Fastest Assembly of an M-16A2 rifle: Megan Reynolds

(41 seconds); Qualification on the Engagement Skills Trainer: (tie) Braxton Kaceimba, Martin Gomez, Eduardo Sandoval; Written Test: Nathan Gay; 3-Mile Road March with 20-Pound Ruck Sack: Martin Gomez.