

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Top Brass

National Guard Bureau chief travels to Nebraska in April to meet state's Soldiers, Airmen

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard had a rare chance to communicate directly with the National Guard's highest ranking officer and noncommissioned officer when the state hosted Gen. Frank J. Grass, National Guard Bureau chief, and Chief Master Sgt. Mitch Brush, National Guard Bureau senior enlisted advisor, April 2-4.

The visit was designed to give Grass, a former Missouri Army National Guard officer who now sits as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Brush an opportunity to meet with Nebraska Guardsmen and learn more about how they train during a drill weekend and the types of equipment they use during

state-side or overseas deployments. It was also designed to give Grass and Brush an opportunity to thank the Soldiers and Airmen for their service and their continued membership in the National Guard.

According to Grass, who is the first Guard officer to ever serve as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the visit was deliberately planned so that he could talk with Soldiers and Airmen during a drill weekend.

"We haven't made a trip out here to just go out into the field on a drill weekend," said Grass during a stop at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, where members of the Nebraska Army National Guard were competing in the annual 'Best Warrior Competition.' "That's where the Guard happens... on a drill weekend. You just can't beat it."



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

'Thanks For Being In The National Guard': Gen. Frank S. Grass, National Guard Bureau chief, shakes hands with Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jamie Harway, April 2, during a visit to the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., to watch the Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition. Also pictured is Chief Master Sgt. Mitch Brush.

During the course of their visit to the Cornhusker State, Grass and Brush watched the Best Warrior Competition, dined with the Nebraska Guard's senior leaders

and met with members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade as they prepare for their upcoming annual training and on-going transformation into a maneuver

enhancement brigade. The two Guard leaders also visited with Airmen at the 155th Air Refueling Wing and toured an upgraded

See GRASS on 5.

Airman makes history as first female Nebraska Air Guard general

By Tech. Sgt. Drew Nystrom
Staff Writer

Elba, Nebraska-native, Brig. Gen. Wendy K. Johnson made history April 2, when she became the first woman in the history of the Nebraska Air National Guard to pin on the rank of general officer during a promotion ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters.

Johnson will assume duties as the Nebraska



Johnson

National Guard director of the Joint Staff after serving as the Joint Staff chief of staff since 2014

A standing-room only crowd of hundreds of family, friends and Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen joined Maj. Gen. Daryl L. Bohac, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general, in celebrating Johnson's past accomplishments and the new opportunities and challenges that await.

"Wendy has established herself as a subject-matter expert in every assignment she has held ... and someone I trust implicitly to put the organization first, and who I have complete confidence in when it comes to leading this great organization," Bohac said.

Johnson's career began in the Nebraska Air National Guard as an enlisted administrative clerk with the 155th Combat Support Squadron in Lincoln in 1984. Within four years, after earning the support of her leader who saw potential and talent in the young Airman, Johnson was commissioned as a second lieutenant.

Johnson's subsequent assignments ranged from equal opportunity officer, to multiple command leadership positions at the flight, squadron and group-level including overseas deployments. For four months between 2007 and 2008, Johnson served as the deputy Air Reserve Component advisor for the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

During Johnson's remarks following the promotion ceremony, she thanked and acknowledged her many mentors. Johnson said she learned many life and career lessons from that group of leaders including the value of defending accomplishments and performance over individual attributes; supporting the decisions of those you lead; and the power that instilling confidence can have in creating high performing leaders and teams

While she recognizes her place in Nebraska Air National Guard history, the general said, "retired-Chief Master Sergeant Jody Urbauer was one of the first women to enlist in the Nebraska Air National Guard in 1972

See JOHNSON on 6.

Tails 'n Trails

Nebraska Guard environmentalists conduct deer population study

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Assistant Editor

What do raccoons, coyotes, owls, foxes, turkeys, geese, mallards, great blue herons, opossums, squirrels and deer all have in common, other than simply living in Nebraska?

They have all been captured on survey cameras stationed throughout Camp Ashland's various training areas.

The trail-cameras, which are weather and water resistant, have been set up at intervals across the area to capture the movements of animals that either live or are passing through Camp Ashland. The cameras are part of a solution for sustaining



Photo courtesy of Nebraska National Guard Environmental Office

Foraging: Deer are captured on camera as they search for food near a survey trail camera at Camp Ashland's training area. The trail cameras were placed as part of an environmental survey being conducted across Camp Ashland, Neb.

Camp Ashland's land as a training site, according to Amy Dirks, natural resource manager at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Environmental Office.

"Goals for the trail camera monitoring project include documentation of species presence throughout (Nebraska Army National Guard) training lands, evaluation of species group's abundance values,

See DEER on 7.

Navy's Blue Angels set to return to Lincoln nearly 70 years after inaugural demo in Nebraska

By Senior Airman Marshall Mauer
Staff Writer

On a sweaty July day, almost exactly 70 years ago, a crowd of 120,000 onlookers, dressed in their Sunday best, gathered to watch the first World's Fair of Aviation at Omaha's Offutt Field, unaware they were witnessing history.

World War II had ended ten months earlier—and the Wright brothers' first flight 43 years before that.

Children sat on their parents' shoulders; onlookers fanned themselves and gulped down iced teas and lemonades to combat the heat. Around midday, a trio of Hellcat fighter planes, painted navy blue with gold lettering, flew into view, while a fourth plane, painted like a Japanese Zero fighter, joined them in the sky. The planes climbed, looped, ducked and dove, and then repeated the maneuvers as the crowd oohed and awed.

The four planes simulated a dog fight—the crowd erupted. From the speaker's table those piloting the navy blue planes were introduced for the first time by a new moniker: the Blue Angels.

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Inside



Soldier, NCO of the Year crowned at Best Warrior Competition

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Nebraska Guardsman's spouse earns national honor

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NEWS DIGEST

■Carter praises National Guard Bureau chief nominee

WASHINGTON (DoD News) Defense Secretary Ash Carter congratulated Air Force Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, April 5, on his nomination to serve as the next chief of the National Guard Bureau and, if approved by Congress, to receive his fourth star.

Lengyel, now the Guard Bureau's vice chief, would succeed Army Gen. Frank J. Grass in the position and serve as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Over the course of more than three decades in the Air Force, whether in the cockpit of an F-16 or serving as a defense attaché overseas, Lengyel has demonstrated "strong and steady leadership," Carter said in a statement.

"During his most recent role as vice chief of the National Guard Bureau," the secretary



Lengyel

said, "he has helped to ensure our 470,000 Army and Air National Guard personnel are accessible, capable and ready to protect the homeland and provide combat resources to the Army and Air Force."

The secretary added that he is "supremely confident" that Lengyel will bring "the same visionary leadership and sound counsel" that Grass has brought to the position for nearly four years. He thanked Grass for his "distinguished service" as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and as the Defense Department's official channel of communication to the governors and state adjutants general.

"On so many occasions over the past 15 years, the men and women of the National Guard have gone above and beyond to meet their country's call, performing selfless service both at home and abroad," Carter said.

Under the direction of Grass and Lengyel, he added, "the men and women of our Army and Air National Guard have been able to count on having confident leadership and strong advocates at the highest levels of the department."

■Rice confirmed as Air Guard director, to receive third star

WASHINGTON (NGNews) – Air Force Maj. Gen. Scott Rice, the adjutant general of the Massachusetts National Guard, was confirmed April 28 as the next director of the Air National Guard by the U.S. Senate.

Rice will be promoted to lieutenant general. "I'm honored and humbled to be chosen to lead the outstanding Airmen of the Air National Guard," Rice said. "I look forward to working with Air Force leaders and the adjutants general to shape our force for the future."

In his new role, Rice is responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, plans and programs affecting more than 105,000 Guard members and civilians in more than 90 wings and 175 geographically separated units across 213 locations throughout the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

"Major General Rice's diverse career experience – and especially his time as adjutant general – uniquely qualify him to be an outstanding leader of our Air National Guard, with a deep understanding of state and territorial missions in addition to his federal experience," said Army Gen. Frank Grass, the chief of the National Guard Bureau. "I am delighted to hear the news of his confirmation for this critical role at a complex



Rice

and challenging time."

As adjutant general, Rice oversaw the administration and operation of the Massachusetts National Guard to ensure troops were trained, equipped and mission-ready to support national security objectives.

His tenure as adjutant general saw the 9,000-strong Massachusetts National Guard activated for state service multiple times, including for winter storms that brought record snowfall.

Rice was commissioned in 1980 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York. Following graduate school, he attended pilot training at Reese Air Force Base, Texas, receiving the pilot badge in 1982 and later serving in England, where he flew the F-111 Aardvark tactical attack aircraft.

Rice joined the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 104th Fighter Wing in 1989 to fly the A-10 Thunderbolt II low-altitude close-air-support aircraft. He then served as squadron commander, operations group commander, wing commander, and Air National Guard Commander.

He mobilized numerous times since 1995, including deployments to Bosnia, Kosovo, Kuwait and Iraq.

He also served as the commander, Air Force Forces, Exercise Eastern Falcon in the U.S. Central Command Area of Operations, where he supervised F-16 Fighting Falcon multi-role fighter aircraft units deployed to Kuwait in 2004, to Jordan and Oman in 2005, and to Pakistan in 2006.

■DoD launches new civilian performance appraisal program

WASHINGTON (DoD News) Defense Department civilian employees are getting a new, standardized performance appraisal program as part of the department's New Beginnings initiative.

Paige Hinkle-Bowles, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for civilian personnel policy, said New Beginnings represents a series of requirements that grew out of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010.

"For us, it has been the culmination of a collaborative process to institutionalize a culture of high performance in a variety of different ways," she said in a phone interview.

New Beginnings seeks to improve communication between supervisors and employees, provide more transparent processes and improve recruiting, developing and rewarding DoD employees, she said.

Part of this is the Defense Performance Management and Appraisal Program. Hinkle-Bowles said this is the critical element for the whole New Beginnings process.

The new appraisal program "will provide for a fair, credible and transparent" process that links bonuses and "other performance-based actions" to employee performance, she said. The goal is for the new appraisal program to be in place to cover the vast majority of the department's Wage Grade and General Schedule employees by October 2018.

The new program will have three rating tiers outstanding, fully successful and unacceptable. Key to the program is its emphasis on timely recognition and reward of employee contributions, which runs annually from April 1 to March 31, Hinkle-Bowles said. "Continuous feedback has to happen," she said. "This isn't about sitting down on the 365th day and giving feedback."

Supervisors must have at least three documented discussions with each employee during the rating year. "More is better," Hinkle-Bowles said. "We are encouraging

ongoing feedback and ongoing communication throughout the rating cycle."

A total of 14,500 employees from a cross section of organizations from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Navy, Army and some defense agencies are scheduled to transition into the appraisal program this month, she said. "We will phase the remainder of the employees into the program over the next couple of years," Hinkle-Bowles said.

The program will cover more than 600,000 employees when fully implemented. Some employee groups, such as senior executive service employees and intelligence professions will not be part of the new program. "They are already in a system covered by another statutory requirement," she said.

Employee unions have been an important part of the effort, Hinkle-Bowles said.

"The whole process started with three labor-management design teams that provided pre-decisional recommendations to the department in several different areas, but ultimately those recommendations covered everything from performance management, hiring flexibility, training and development, work force incentives and other automation," she said. "Unions continue to play a part as we move forward."

The enterprise-wide appraisal program should also benefit employees as they move around inside the department. They will no longer have to learn the requirements of a myriad of different appraisal systems as they move onward and upward, she said.

The appraisal program builds on New Beginnings processes including a hiring managers toolkit that was released in May 2015, a new DoD Instruction 1400.25 Volume 431 "DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Performance Management and Appraisal System" published in February, and train-the-trainer sessions launched in January.

■President proclaims National Former Prisoner of War day

WASHINGTON (DoD News) On National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, Americans "salute the selfless service members throughout our history who gave of their own liberty to ensure ours, and we renew our commitment to remaining a nation worthy of their extraordinary sacrifices," President Barack Obama said in his proclamation designating April 8th National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day.

"Under the flag of the United States, generations of women and men, united in a common cause greater than themselves, have served to defend the ideals that bind us together as a nation and that preserve our country as a beacon of hope and freedom around the world," the president said.

"In wars and engagements since America's founding, brave patriots have experienced indescribable suffering as prisoners of war," Obama said. "Often physically and mentally tortured, starved, and put through the worst most of us could imagine, these heroes are

owed a debt we can never fully repay, and their families -- who exhibited tremendous fortitude in the face of grueling uncertainty are worthy of our profound gratitude."

He added, "The values of honor, courage, and selflessness that drive our Armed Forces are particularly acute in those who have been taken as prisoners of war, sustaining them through days, weeks, and sometimes years of profound hardship endured for the sake of securing the blessings of liberty for all."

America's former prisoners of war, and all who don our uniform to keep us safe, have helped to make the United States the strongest and most prosperous nation in the history of the world, Obama said.

"Our eternal obligation is to care for them and uphold our everlasting promise to never leave our men and women on the battlefield behind," the president said. "Let us reaffirm our adherence to these ideals and honor our former prisoners of war by paying them the gratitude and respect they deserve."

Training prepares cyber-capable forces



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Shephanie Hargett

Warrant Officer Candidate Tyler Hightree, Nebraska Cyber Network Defense Team (CND-T) member, works with his teammates of Blue Team 18 during Cyber Shield 16 at Camp Atterbury, Ind., April 22. The Blue Team combated the opposing forces of Red Team during cyber attack scenarios. Cyber Shield is a two-week Army National Guard training exercise designed to develop and train cyber-capable forces. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Stephanie A. Hargett)

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Getting Back to Basics

Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Keeping An Eye Out: Spc. Frank Zakrzewski, an automobile mechanic, who serves as a Humvee gunner in Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, scans the terrain 360 degrees around his vehicle with a Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System that enables him to see distant objects, both at day or night, and determine their location using the system's laser designator.

Cavalrymen travel to Fort Riley to brush up on 'bread and butter' skills

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

When it comes to being an Army cavalry Soldier, nothing beats good, old-fashioned field training.

That was particularly the case on March 4-6 when 44 Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, traveled from the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, to Fort Riley, Kansas, for some much-needed scout training.

According to Capt. Daniel Sandoz, unit commander, many of Troop A's newest Soldiers have never worked on the traditional cavalry skills; bread-and-butter skills like conducting a zone reconnaissance, calculating the radius of a curve or the slope of a hill, or how to crest a hill using the unit's Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System optics.

Sandoz said the goal was to fix that problem.

"I wanted to very deliberately train a zone reconnaissance mission from start to finish, but along the way to also teach these young Soldiers those basic scout skills," said Sandoz.

At times it has been difficult to focus on these basics because of the unconventional nature of recent conflicts and other mobilizations, said Sandoz. Since 2001 the unit has trained for numerous jobs – such as guarding Patriot Missile Batteries in Kuwait, conducting peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, combat missions in Iraq or training indigenous police officers and security specialists in Afghanistan – that aren't 'traditional cavalry' missions. During recent assignments the unit has often focused reconnaissance on population centers, insurgent cells and cultural centers of influence.

Consequently, many young Soldiers have not mastered terrain-based reconnaissance, he added.

That's changing now as the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron sees its mission changing as part of the state-wide Nebraska Army National Guard transformation. Now, the cavalry soldiers will be responsible for supporting an Army infantry brigade combat team. That, in turn, means a return to basics.

"You can always train up to do your assigned mission when you deploy if it's not your (Mission Essential Task List) task," said Sandoz. "But the most important thing that you need to focus upon is that METL-based training. That way we can function as the reconnaissance element for an infantry brigade combat team."

"I want to make sure that my Soldiers are able to perform those skills that are the bread-and-butter of being a scout," said Sandoz.

While this is a challenging task, Sandoz said Troop A has a number of highly-skilled, veteran noncommissioned officers who have been sharpening their core cavalry skills for decades. Soldiers like Staff Sgt. Randall Barnason, a Troop A section leader and acting platoon sergeant, who first joined the unit



All Clear: Staff Sgt. Randall Barnason, a Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry squad leader and acting platoon sergeant, radios back to his vehicle after investigating a suspicious culvert during a mission at Fort Riley, Kan., March 5.



On The Road: A Humvee crew is framed by Staff Sgt. Randall Barnason's arm as he talks to his platoon on his radio.

in 2001 and has been with the unit through each of its subsequent overseas deployments.

According to Barnason, Troop A is fortunate that the core-group of NCOs are both extremely experienced and highly motivated to pass on their knowledge to the unit's younger Soldiers.

"When we looked at our training schedule, we realized that a lot of our newer Soldiers have never done things like determining the slope of a hill... how to conduct reconnaissance on roads and bridges... things that every cavalry Soldier really needs to know how to do," Barnason said. "We're really fortunate in Alpha in that we have a number of Soldiers who have been with the unit for years, so they really know their stuff to the 'T' and have the experience that we need to get our newer Soldiers trained up."

The March drill weekend training was designed to do just that. By moving from the unit's normal training area at the Greenleaf Training Site – a relatively flat and somewhat treeless facility in central Nebraska – to the much more rugged and wooded training lanes at Fort Riley in northeastern Kansas, the unit was able to challenge the young Soldiers to apply their classroom skills to an unknown field environment.

"The biggest advantage here is the terrain," said Sandoz midway through the Saturday training scenario. "At Hastings and Camp Ashland, we're limited on terrain. They're relatively flat and there are only so many roads, so many bridges, so many ravines to train on... the Soldiers figure them out pretty quickly. Going to Fort Riley gives us some slopes that we can calculate, it gives

us roads that we can classify, it has water crossings and bridges."

"The advantages of a taking them to a new site is that these Soldiers haven't seen them before. It enables them to practice these skills on a new environment," Sandoz added. "That's exactly what scouts do. Scouts are constantly assessing a new environment and pushing information back to commanders so that they can make decisions."

"We're the forward eyes and ears of the commanders," he said.

And that level of expertise doesn't come without practice.

Barnason said that one of the unit's primary tasks for the upcoming summer's annual training will be gunnery qualifications, which will test each individual Humvee crew to perfect its communications and teamwork capabilities. By conducting training at Fort Riley, where members of his platoon were often separated by more than a kilometer of hilly, tree-filled terrain, the teams had to work hard on their communications and trust.

"Crew cohesion is a key element of our training," said Barnason. "One of the hardest things to do within a Humvee crew is the ability of the driver and the gunner to be able to communicate to each other about what they're seeing and then communicating that to the



Ready For Anything: Spc. Frank Zakrzewski scans the terrain with a wary eye for potential dangers during a mission pause at Fort Riley, Kan., March 5.

vehicle commander. When you're on a combat patrol, the vehicle commander often can't see everything going on... he depends upon

See CAVALRY on 4.

Guard detachment incorporates with 1st Infantry Division as part of Total Army Force

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard received a new detachment to their books earlier this year as part of the Army Total Force.

The concept of the Army Total Force is to bring the three Army Components—active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve— together into a cohesive and more efficient Army.

The new detachment, the First Infantry Division's Main Command Post—Operational Detachment, mission is to provide expansibility and increase capacity for the Main Command Post and the Headquarters Battalion of the 1st Inf. Div.

"Our integration will significantly improve the division's ability to execute simultaneous missions, extended operations, and support forward deployment of their command posts," said Lt. Col. Vernon Chandler, commander of the 1st Inf. Div.'s Main Comm. Post Op. Det.

As part of the integration process, Chandler, wanted a phased approach that introduced more members of the detachment each time they participate in an exercise alongside the 1st Inf. Div.

"During command post exercise three, we brought the majority of the MPOD's section leadership and senior personnel to integrate with their respective sections, participate in the exercise, and conducted a more detailed, section-level assessment," said Chandler.

According to Chandler, it was a great opportunity for the 1st Inf. Div. to see what great knowledge the Guardsmen can bring to the table.

"The eleven Soldiers that participated in the command post exercise did an outstanding job and represented our organization well," said Chandler. "I received several positive comments from section officers in charge and noncommissioned officers in charge about the professionalism, knowledge, and work ethic of our Soldiers."

"They set the conditions for a successful integration of the remainder of the MPOD during the April warfighter and follow-on command post exercises," added Chandler.

There was clear value from both the active Army personnel and the Guardsmen coming out of command post exercise three.

"The integration process between the First Infantry Division and the National Guard was great," Sgt. William Cornish, knowledge management sergeant with the 1st Inf. Div. Main Comm. Post Op. Det. "We were able to learn from one another and bounce new



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Operation Integration: Capt. Matthew Bartling (center), the executive officer of the Main Command Post Operational Detachment of the 1st Infantry Division, works in the protection cell of the First Infantry Division during the division's Command Post Exercise 3, March 10, at Fort Riley, Kan. Command Post Exercise 3 was the first time the group of 10-plus Soldiers from the Main Comm. Post Op. Det. trained with the division as part of the integration process.

ideas off each other to help the success of the exercise."

Chandler agreed.

"The exercise went well," said Chandler. "As expected there were the normal day-one challenges but our Soldiers were able to work through them and quickly become contributing members of the command post."

"We had Soldiers integrated within the Intelligence Analysis and Control Element, Intelligence Operations, Knowledge Management / G6, Protection Cell, G35, G5, Battle Captain, and Public Affairs," added Chandler.

The detachment continues to build their ranks and be prepared for any mission that is ahead of them.

"The goals I have for the unit are to build and maintain a relevant and ready team capable of rapidly responding to First Infantry Division and Nebraska National Guard operational needs," said Chandler.

But without the support of both the 1st Inf. Div. and the Nebraska National Guard, leadership of the Main Comm. Post Op. Det. wouldn't be able to be where they are today in the process of building a brand new unit.

"With the new force structure, the Main Command Post Operational Detachment has been built quickly by taking good personnel and equipment from other units," said Chandler. "All G-Staff and major subordinate commands have worked diligently and unselfishly to make this a successful endeavor. We would have never pulled it off without the 'one-team' mindset."



Studying movements: Capt. Gary Hansen (left), a liaison officer with the Main Command Post Operational Detachment of the 1st Infantry Division, watches battlefield movements during the 1st Infantry Division's Command Post Exercise 3, March 10, at Fort Riley, Kan. This exercise was one of three that helped prepare the division for their Warfighter Exercise, a high-level training opportunity aimed at readying them for any mission.



Photo courtesy of the 1st Infantry Division

Teamwork: Retired Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, former commander of U.S. and International Security Assistance Forces Afghanistan, spoke to leaders from different Fort Riley units March 3 at Riley's Conference Center on Fort Riley, Kan.

Learning from one of the best

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

FORT RILEY, Kan. - Eleven Soldiers from the Main Command Post Operational Detachment of the 1st Infantry Division, based out of Lincoln, Nebraska, attended a presentation on the book, "Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World," by retired U.S. Army Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal.

McChrystal wrote the book with Tantum Collins, David Silverman and Chris Fussell, and is based on their experiences in Iraq and how they can be related to businesses, nonprofits and organizations.

McChrystal said a lot of his success was attributed to pushing down information and decisions to junior leaders within his organizations.

"What I found was, if you give them the big picture, they will mature," McChrystal said.

It's about junior leaders calling the shots as opposed to headquarters telling them to do something, McChrystal added.

In addition, McChrystal spoke a lot about working as team.

"Think about the dynamics that make a team work well ... Creating connections that bind those various teams together," McChrystal said.

"You no longer have a single person or place that's in control," McChrystal added. "We're in the era of the no huddle offense."

Soldiers at the presentation said it was a great opportunity to learn more about McChrystal's organization theories.

"It's a very good concept," said Sgt. William Cornish with the MPC-OD, 1st ID. "It helps break down the organization of singular units, and it helps us create a cohesive unit."

CAVALRY continued from page 3.

the input that the gunner and the driver give him. They might see something that I don't and they need to have the confidence in themselves to either let me know or to make decisions on their own."

A ride with Barnason's crew quickly demonstrates what he means.

A typical cavalry scout team consists of four Soldiers riding within an armored Humvee: vehicle commander, driver, gunner and dismounted scout.

As the vehicle commander, Barnason sits in the right front seat where he can monitor the various radio networks that connect him to rest of his platoon and higher headquarters. He also is responsible for giving commands to his individual vehicle crew while scanning his side of the Humvee for any possible danger spots or items of interest.

Driving the vehicle is Spc. Joseph Quail, who installs fire sprinklers in Kearney in civilian life. Here, his job is to navigate the heavy, four-wheel-drive vehicle through the uneven terrain, often broken by hidden boulders or man-made obstacles, while also scanning the landscape on his side of the vehicle and listening to the radio for the bits of information that Barnason might miss.

Riding above the two is the gunner, in this case Spc. Frank Zakrzewski, an automobile mechanic from LaVista, Nebraska. The gunner is responsible for scanning the terrain 360 degrees around the Humvee through the box-like Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System that enables him to see distant objects, both at day or night, and determine their location using the system's laser designator. If the cavalry is the "eyes and ears" of an Army infantry brigade, then Zakrzewski is the eyes and ears of the cavalry, as he must communicate precisely what he is seeing to his crewmates, alerting them to any potential dangers or advising them where the "friendlies" are located.

The final member of the crew is Pfc. Bryce Bohlender. Bohlender, a unit medic, works



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Practicing Communications: Staff Sgt. Randall Barnason monitors his platoon's communication network during a mission pause at Fort Riley, Kan., March 5. The drill weekend training was designed to give members of Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, the opportunity to brush up on their cavalry skills.

as a Harley Davidson motorcycle detailer in Grand Island. He is affectionately called a "dismount," the individual designated to assist Barnason in collecting information on foot in areas too rugged for the Humvee to traverse, such as creek beds and under bridges. When riding in the Humvee, he sits in the back seat, scanning the rear sectors for any potential dangers or items of interest.

Together the four Soldiers form a team, whose sole job is to collect information about their assigned sector while also providing collective security protection for each other.

Most of the time, they sound like an efficient machine, calling out important items as they drive along. At others, they sound like a group of college guys hanging out, with Barnason sounding like a protective

older brother.

For example, at one particular pause, at one particular pause, Barnason rounded the group together and went over the mission route. Then once everyone was in his assigned position, he quipped to the group: "Let's go explorin."

As the squad of two Humvees rattled along the prairie hills, following little more than a lightly-worn cow path at times, each of the Soldiers calls out information from their sectors, often pausing as the armored vehicle bumps noisily over ruts or scratches against hidden outcroppings of rocks. "Culvert there, sergeant," Quail calls out as they pass near a point that might bear more additional investigation. "I'll mark it on my map," Barnason responds between crackles of the radio.

A few moments later, Barnason calls back to his crew: "There's a pretty good trail there," as he looks out of his

window before adding to the chuckles of the vehicle mates. "Too bad it's going the wrong way."

In fact, it's probably the interface between Barnason and Quail that one notices first. As Quail navigates the vehicle down a surprisingly steep hill, the crew finds itself surrounded by a strand of trees, each the thickness of roughly two thumbs. As Barnason looks at his map, he mutters: "We've got to find a way through this #@#!... This map doesn't show me nothing."

"That's because the map is 20 years old," Quail responds, again eliciting chuckles from the rest of the crew, including Barnason.

Mostly, though, Barnason gently advises Quail on the best way to drive through the uneven landscape, telling him when to trust

the vehicle's capabilities and when to take a more conservative approach. "Push out driver," he says at one point. "Use that gas peddle."

"Watch out for that pipe, driver... watch out for that pipe, driver... driver, please tell me you're not going to drive over that pipe," he says a little later, at which point Quail deftly swerve the Humvee around a vertical metal post that might have caused significant damage to the vehicle if he had hit it.

Later, Barnason said the communications between the various crew members was just as important as the other training conducted that day... in fact, in some ways it might even be more important.

"I think this was a great opportunity," said Barnason. "A lot of great work was done in getting the crews - many of whom haven't worked together in this type of setting - out and learning how to work together in the field. This is something that you just can't train on in a classroom or in a setting like Greenleaf..."

"A lot of people have never been to Fort Riley before and seen or worked in this type of terrain or seen what a Humvee is capable of doing," he added. "This type of training has a significant impact."

Zakrzewski agreed, saying that he learned much from his experience at Fort Riley. "It's a lot bigger area, so you can really test your skills more," he said. "It's rougher terrain."

"There's a big difference from doing this in a classroom and doing this in the field. Now we have Humvees that are a (kilometer), two (kilometers) away. We can't really get that where we usually train, so this makes you rely on your comms that much more," Zakrzewski added.

That's music to Sandoz' ears. "The Soldiers loved it," Sandoz said about the weekend training. "This was terrain that they hadn't seen in four years. There were really able to practice their skills and put them to the test and really do their jobs... which is what they joined the military to do."

National Guard's First Lady meets Guard families, newest Airmen during visit to Nebraska

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Photojournalist

The First Lady of the National Guard, Mrs. Pat Grass, visited with military spouses, volunteer groups and young Airmen in the Nebraska National Guard, April 2-3, telling them she was inspired by their hard work and sacrifice as they go above and beyond to serve a cause much greater than themselves.

Grass made her first official visit to Nebraska with her husband, Gen. Frank J. Grass, National Guard Bureau chief, who is on a mission to visit all 54 all National Guard organizations before retiring in September. She met with Guard members, volunteers and spouses while participating in question and answer sessions during her two-day visit to Lincoln, Nebraska.

"Guard is family," said Grass. "It is family to Soldiers and Airmen, but also family to the spouses and children of Guard members."

She said it is important for family members to know there are also support services offered to family members. During her visit, Grass toured the Nebraska Army National Guard's East Campus Readiness Center in Lincoln where she received overviews of the organization's Warrior and Family Support

programs. She was joined by Kristie Bohac and Sherry Stevenson of the Nebraska National Guard in attending a luncheon with spouses of deployed Soldiers and Airmen and coordinators of youth programs.

Grass also took part in a military and veteran roundtable discussion at the student center on UNL's campus, spotlighting the importance of higher education for our Service Members.

The second day of her visit, Grass visited the Spirit of 76 Armory where she learned more about the Nebraska Army National Guard's Community Health Promotion Council.

She then moved to the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing where she met with the newest Nebraska Airman and received an overview the 155th's Student Flight Program. The platform offered students and new Airmen a chance to share their stories and highlight how the 155th ARW focuses on taking care of its new Airmen and their families.

According to Grass, one of her husband's main priorities is taking care of Soldiers, Airmen and their families. As the wife of the Guard's senior officer, Grass said she feels it is her responsibility to be a go out and visit with military spouses, organizations, support groups and family readiness personnel.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton

Top Level Discussion: Pat Grass (far right), the First Lady of the National Guard, and Kristie Bohac, the wife of Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, listen to Col. Chad Stevens, the military personnel officer of the Nebraska National Guard, as he discusses aspects of the Nebraska National Guard's Warrior and Family programs during a meeting at the Guard's East Campus Readiness Center, April 2.

"I am a member of the Missouri National Guard," she said. "It is important for me some listen to spouses and family support organizations so they know they are not alone in their efforts."

Grass said visits to the states give her the opportunity to get to know service members and their families on a different level.

"I think it's easier for members of these

organizations and even Guard members to approach me with a problem or an idea than it is for them to approach my husband," she said. "It puts me in a unique position to be the eyes and ears of these organizations and allows me to act as a conduit between my husband and military spouses and family support organizations. I will continue to do that until we retire in September."



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Honored Service: Col. David Zwart, U.S. Property and Fiscal officer for Nebraska, receives the Defense Superior Service Medal from Gen. Frank J. Grass, April 2, in Lincoln, Neb.

Nebraska U.S. Property and Fiscal officer receives award during National Guard Bureau chief's visit

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Nebraska's U.S. Property and Fiscal office received a pretty significant award during Gen. Frank J. Grass' visit to Nebraska, April 2-4.

Moments before the National Guard Bureau chief and Chief Master Sgt. Mitch Brush, National Guard Bureau senior enlisted advisor, began their April 3 town-hall meeting with Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Grass called Col. David D. Zwart to the front of the audience and then pinned the Defense Superior Service Medal to the Nebraska National Guard Airman's uniform in light of his service to the United States and the Nebraska National Guard.

Zwart, who is responsible for overseeing all federal funds and equipment as they relate to the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, was recognized for the work he has done since October 2005 until September 2015.

"During this period, the decisive leadership, superior professional skill, and ceaseless efforts of Colonel Zwart resulted in sterling operational and material readiness of the Nebraska National Guard, directly resulting in deploying Nebraska units providing pinpoint support to named campaigns in Southwest Asia, the Middle East, and the

Balkans," the award citation reads. "Colonel Zwart's overwhelmingly successful tour as the United States Property and Fiscal Officer was highlighted by the deployment of the 155th Air Refueling Wing and the flawless deployment of elements of the 135th General Support Aviation Battalion, elements of the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), as well as the 192nd Military Police Detachment."

"Colonel Zwart worked hand-in-hand with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency to deliver relief during the Missouri River flooding during the spring of 2014," the citation adds. "Colonel Zwart served admirably as the Chairman of the United States Property and Fiscal Officer Advisory Council."

According to Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general, the award speaks volumes about the role that Zwart has played during his tenure as the Nebraska USP&FO.

"The award of the Defense Superior Service Medal to Colonel Zwart recognizes the role that United States Property and Fiscal officers play in the mission effectiveness of the National Guard and specifically recognized that Colonel Zwart was the first among his peers in his role at the national level and within the National Guard Bureau," said Bohac.



Spreading the Message: Gen. Frank J. Grass, National Guard Bureau chief, addresses Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen during a townhall meeting at Nebraska's Joint Force Headquarters, April 2.

GRASS continued from page 1.

model of the unit's KC-135R Stratotanker that aircrews are using during overseas deployments.

During each of the visits with the Soldiers and Airmen, both Grass and Brush took time out to visit with the assembled Guardsman, frequently asking why they initially joined the organization, what they do in civilian life or why they continue to want to serve. Those visits were also seasoned with handshakes, backslaps and frequent, "Thanks for being in the National Guard."

Grass said the visits to the different states help him better understand the work that Guardsmen are doing around the country, what concerns they might have and how he might better serve them back in Washington, D.C.

"Just talking with folks out here today... and asking them why they joined the Guard and hearing their stories," said Grass, adding that he constantly hears a common theme from the Soldiers and Airmen that he talks to. "They want the challenge. This is something that you may not get in a civilian job."

"Getting that information helps us craft recruiting for the future and what we need to do to maintain these facilities and these opportunities," Grass said. "The other thing that I like to hear from them is how



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Thanks For Being in the National Guard: Gen. Frank J. Grass shakes hands with a Nebraska Air National Guard Airman from the 155th Air Refueling Wing during a visit to the unit, April 3.

their families are doing. My wife is meeting with a number of the families today to hear from them about what they need. This is a stressful, stressful time, either deployed or at home. The families are giving up a lot for their service members, so there are a lot of opportunities to hear from them and learn about what's important to them."

Again, Grass said, the themes he heard in Nebraska echoes those from other states.

"One of the universal themes across the Army and the Air Guard is - especially men and women joining today - they expect to be used. They expect to go somewhere. And they're ready to step up when

their nation calls, whether it be with the Army or the Air Force," he said. "And they also expect that when something happens here in the community or at home, they're going to be right there. Most of these men and women would step up and show up at their armories without even an alert if they know it's about one of their communities."

"We hear that across the board," Grass added. "This is a very talented team. They want to be challenged... they want to do the things that they joined (for)."

Probably the biggest event of the weekend was a town hall meeting at the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters where a capacity crowd of Soldiers and Airmen had the opportunity to listen as Grass and Branch talked about what the greater National Guard is doing and the jobs the two leaders are doing in Washington, D.C.

"You know, I'm a Missouri Guardsman and the town hall event is designed for me to come out to Nebraska and talk about where I work now," said Grass. "And of course, being a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, kind of sharing what the Guard is doing today and it means for the future... showing them that we've got 10,000 (people) deployed and some of the missions we're doing around the world."

Offutt Airman makes Nebraska Air Guard history

By Senior Airman Marshall Mauer
Staff Photojournalist

Paperwork exists briefly on his desk in a well-kept office down a dark hallway of this barely-lit building in neat piles of four to six sheets. No more, no less. Can't let work pile up and there's always something to do.

That the belief that Chief Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham, 170th Group superintendent brings with him to work each day at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. It's a belief that Bingham planted in his own mind as a child working in his family's western Kentucky fields. It's a belief that has created a path for him, even as he creates a path for others, as the first African-American chief master sergeant in the history of the Nebraska Air National Guard.

The man in whom the belief resides is diminutive but demonstrative, soft-spoken but eloquent, with caramel skin, dark eyes, a firm handshake, and stubble one-eighth-inch-long above his lip and forehead. Around Bingham, even the hair on his head has no chance to grow unattended.

That's a pattern that began nearly four decades ago when at eight years old and the second-youngest of 12 children, Bingham joined his older brothers before sunrise in the dew-soaked fields surrounding his family's homestead. Steering a tractor took more getting used to, said Bingham, so as a boy he would drive the tractor down a row, straight and steady, and hand over the wheel to an older brother to turn the tractor back around at the end of the plot.

Even today, as members of his family still farm the land. In a sense, it's what Bingham does as well: he keeps a powerful machine moving forward straight and steady, remaining ready and willing to share control with other members of leadership.

Bingham grew up in the tobacco hills of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, roughly 70 miles

northwest of Nashville. The town itself was a point of contention during the Civil War, changing hands six times between Confederate and Union forces, yet surviving to become home to a population in which one in three residents is African-American. In such a climate, Bingham said he became aware of the necessity for any organization to flourish.

"That's important, as leaders, to look out for people with a different mindset, different upbringing, or different thought process. So it's about opening a career path not only for people who look different, but for those who think differently," he said recently.

It was the Air Force's history of progress that made Bingham feel comfortable about enlisting in 1995, after graduating from Ferris State University in Michigan with a degree in Human Resources.

"I feel the Air Force has always been really progressive in the way we view and look at diversity," said Bingham. "The first and only African-American chief master sergeant of the Air Force was Thomas Barnes, in 1973, while the country was still healing from the Civil Rights movement."

Early in his career, Bingham exhibited leadership traits that others found substantive. Bingham recalls an instance many years ago, as he and other young Airmen performed



Photo courtesy of Tech. Sgt. Christine Tewes

First Of A Kind: Tyrone Bingham receives his stripes as a new chief master sergeant in the Nebraska Air National Guard from 170th Group commander, Col. Mark Hopson, in November 2015. Bingham made history as the first African-American chief master sergeant in the Nebraska Air National Guard.

base details under a civilian supervisor, who was himself a retired chief master sergeant. That entire day, the supervisor called Bingham, 'chief'.

"...So at the end of the day, I asked him, why did you call me 'chief'? I thought it was something where he couldn't remember my name. He said, 'I call you that because I see that.' So it always kept me thinking about (what was possible)."

Bingham also said he remembers another noncommissioned officer who instructed him to ignore the rank, position or achievement involved in his duties—instead focusing solely on the task at hand and his own contribution.

Bingham's winding path through the Air Force has led him to stops at Langley AFB, Virginia, Scott AFB, Illinois, Saint Louis,

Missouri, two Operation Enduring Freedom deployments, and finally to Offutt in 2005. .

Years earlier, driving through Nebraska on his way to Rapid City, South Dakota, Bingham passed through Omaha and considered it a pleasant place to someday live. A decade and a half later, it would be the site of Bingham's own slice of state history.

"I'm just a face and a time", said Bingham. "It feels good to be looked at as someone who is admired within the state based on commitment and loyalty, (but it's) really just sheer hard work."

Despite Bingham's recent recognition, however, he remains deflective of praise and most proud not of his own accolades, but of the trail he helped blaze for current and future Airmen to follow.

In fact, it's where he draws his inspiration. "The motivating factor is being able to set up the future of our force for success. As a senior enlisted person, you always want to make sure the next generation is prepared to be successful," said Bingham.

As Bingham looks to millennial Airmen, he believes they are better equipped to successfully lead the nation, via advances in technology, mindset and opportunities, than previous generations.

In the meantime, ever the good example, Bingham has made the most of his own opportunities: he recently earned his master's degree in Management from Bellevue University and he added mentoring in Tom Osborn's Teammates program to previous volunteer stints with Big Brother Big Sister of the Midlands and Lincoln's Open Door Mission.

"I think those things impact the future, any time you can be groundbreaking with anything or clear out the path for others in any way", said Bingham. "What's more important to me is it's the first time we've had a chief master sergeant in the 170th Group. Any time you open up the door, to be a first for anything, is admirable but it's really about the future. At one point, I was someone's future, too."

Nebraska Guard partners with Nebraska Methodist College for retirement ceremony

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Assistant Editor

Family, friends and coworkers of Sgt. 1st Class Leslee Mark Araujo gathered to wish him congratulations on his retirement from the Nebraska Army National Guard during a ceremony on Feb. 26 at the Nebraska Methodist College in Omaha, Nebraska.

The retirement ceremony came about as the result of a mistake on Araujo's paperwork. However, what might have started out as a mix-up, soon became an opportunity to make things right and cultivate a growing partnership between the Nebraska National Guard and Nebraska Methodist College.

This event also offered an opportunity for the two organizations to work together to thank Araujo for his nearly 25 years of service to the Nebraska National Guard and what he has accomplished in his civilian career at the college.

"I want to publically thank Mark for his active involvement and leadership in our 'Nebraska Methodist College - Military Friendly' initiative and his service as our ombudsman for our military students," said Dr. Dennis Joslin, president of Nebraska Methodist College. "In this role, Mark is able to bring his extensive knowledge of the military to his work with the students."

Araujo has worked at the college for the last 16 years. During his time as the college financial aid officer, he has provided support and insight into college's interactions with the military and students. It's a service the college greatly appreciates, said Joslin.

"Mark, these students really appreciate your presence in this role as you guide them and assist them in being able to simultaneously navigate the expectations associated with both their role as a college student and a member

of the military," said Joslin. "The wisdom and experience that you bring to this role and the resulting leadership you provide is valued and appreciated."

Col. Brett Anderson, Nebraska National Guard chief of staff, was deployed with Araujo in 2005 to Afghanistan. He said he knows firsthand the quality of Soldier and person Araujo is. "(He) never had a bad thing to say about anybody. And that's hard to do, to not tear the people down when you're not feeling so good. (He was) always an inspiration; a true team guy."

During the ceremony Araujo expressed his thankfulness to both his employers.

"I am humbled. I am grateful. I am honored," said Araujo. "I was thinking when this was all going to come about, how do you condense almost 25 years of memories into just a few lines, a few comments?"

Looking back on his years of service, Araujo told of the change it brought about in his life.

"My mom also said... 'You know son, you really look forward to the Guard because you get to do the things you love,'" said Araujo. "You get to drive big trucks and shoot guns. 'But it is evolving into much more. I have been blessed by God with just an absolutely incredible opportunity to serve others, to serve my state and serve my country. And I am a better man for it.'"

As part of ceremony retired Nebraska Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Paul Cohen, who now serves as the Nebraska chair for Employer Support of Guard and Reserve, presented the Patriot Award to Dr. Deb Carlson as a representative of the Nebraska Methodist College. The Patriot Award recognizes the noticeable support of citizen warriors by the supervisor of a reserve component member.

It is awarded based upon the nomination of the supervisor by that employee or service member.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

All Smiles: Wendy Johnson (center) smiles at her family members shortly after receiving her new star as a brigadier general in the Nebraska Air National Guard, April 2, at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb.

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... there is a core group of female enlisted Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen I have had the privilege to serve with ..., but suffice it to say, the enlisted corps of women are the real pioneers of female service in the Nebraska Air National Guard."

In her closing remarks, General Johnson paid tribute to the past and laid out her vision for the future.

"The leadership in Nebraska has created a climate of inclusion and valued service from all members of the team," Johnson said. "They have looked beyond gender to achievements and performance. Early serving females built a foundation for future generations and I had the good fortune of mentors who built on that foundation, in the form of encouragement, mentorship and



New Star: Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster and Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker, Nebraska National Guard senior enlisted leaders, unfurl Brig. Gen. Wendy Johnson's new one-star general officer flag.

removing barriers. Going forward, I look forward to encouraging, mentoring and removing barriers, and continuing to share my passion for

service with others, and shaping the minds and ideas of the next generation of National Guardsmen and women."



Photos courtesy of Nebraska National Guard Environmental Office

Not for Thanksgiving: A survey trail camera at Camp Ashland's training area captures turkeys as they wander through the area. The trail cameras were placed as part of an environmental survey being conducted across Camp Ashland, Nebraska.

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and the development management priorities when necessary," said Dirks.

Each trail-camera is set on a ten minute delay, taking two pictures at a time. They are motion-activated, which helps ensure that the pictures are of breathing creatures rather than tree branches. On a windy day, however, blowing grass can sometimes trigger the camera, resulting in a lot of images of the moving stalks, said Dirks.

Regular maintenance of the cameras is needed to keep them working well. This includes switching the SD cards once a week, sometimes more depending on how many critters were moving in front of it. Also, switching batteries as needed, which during cold spells, could mean Dirks is making the trip to Ashland every day.

"Inventory and regular survey of natural resources throughout (Department of Defense) lands is an expectation of each state environmental branch from (the National Guard Bureau)," said Dirks. "Trail cameras, which can be used to view several locations without time restraint, provide a cost effective method for viewing wildlife presence and activity, specifically, as opposed to contracted methods."

Population density and doe to buck ratio are a couple of the reasons behind the herd monitoring plan. Knowing this will help ensure that the area is not over-populated or under-populated by deer. This is the first year that the trail cameras have been in use at Camp Ashland. According to Dirks, they would like to start doing the surveys annually.

Hunting is allowed at Ashland, so Guard environmental officials use information gleaned from the trail cams to determine what affect they want it to have on the deer population. This may include such rules as how many deer visiting hunters are allowed to take or that they must take a doe before a buck, said Dirks.

"Population survey is an essential activity for any hunting program to evaluate any occurring impact on herd size and to determine if hunting targets or limitations are needed," said Dirks. "Hunting can be a very valuable management tool for land managers. For instance, landscapes experiencing an over-population of deer will typically exhibit high browse impact on vegetation which can be detrimental to overall ecosystem health if left unmanaged."

The population survey is not complete, but already much has been gathered from the project. Kaylee Wheeler, a senior environmental science student at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln who is interning with the environmental office, has the job of sorting through the hundreds of pictures that have been gathered from the cameras and counting the bucks, does and fawns.

"Sorting through the pictures has been long and tedious, said Wheeler. "Especially since we are trying to get a buck count and mid to late winter is when bucks shed their



Photo by Spc. Anna Pongo

Maintenance: Amy Dirks, natural resource manager at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Environmental Office, checks the batteries and SD card in a survey trail camera at Camp Ashland's training area. The trail camera was placed as part of an environmental survey being conducted across Camp Ashland, Neb.

antlers. So we have to look for a hole in their head or a spot where their antlers were to identify the sex of them. So, if their head is turned away from the camera or the photo is blurry it makes it difficult to determine one way or the other."

The internship has provided Wheeler an excellent learning experience - gaining knowledge that can't be found in a classroom.

"The internship has been good, there is definitely a lot to learn that was not taught in any of my classes or was only just briefly looked over," said Wheeler. "But this has been a good experience for starting my career within the environmental world."

Other natural resource groups, such as Cabela's, have conducted similar surveys to the one being piloted at Camp Ashland. Through looking at what these others did and learned, Dirks decided the best method for determining the deer population was a recommended 100 acre grid method. This places each camera 100 acres apart, which helps minimize duplicated counting.

Though limitations exist, and it is not 100 percent accurate, the information that is being gleaned from the trail monitoring will be very useful in the future natural resources management plans.

"For any species of special interest, early knowledge of presence and preemptive conservation effort is the best method to ensure no loss of training capability," said Dirks.

"As always, the primary goal of any Environmental Branch activity is the military mission."



Night Watch: A one-antlered buck is caught on camera as he munches on what little grass is left under the snow this last winter. This buck was one of the many counted during an environmental survey being conducted across Camp Ashland, Neb.



Morning Walk: A lone coyote walks across the ice of the Platte River and happens to get his picture taken by a trail camera right beside the river at Camp Ashland, Nebraska. This is the first year that trail cameras have been in use at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Competitors

Pfc. Samuel Vanderheiden

313th Medical Company (Grand Ambulance)
From: Norfolk, Neb.
Job: Student



Spc. Andrew Thomas

Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry Regiment
From: Omaha, Neb.
Job: Dolphins Car Wash

Spc. Alex Gould

126th Chemical Battalion
From: Omaha, Neb.
Job: Representative Relations, Securities America



Sgt. Calvin Koziol

Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry
From: Kearney, Neb.
Job: Student at University of Nebraska, Kearney

Spc. Eric Holmes

1057 Transportation Company
From: Scottsbluff, Neb.
Job: Correctional Officer



Spc. Cogan Thompson

376th Headquarters and Headquarters Company
From: Kearney, Neb.
Job: General Contractor

Sgt. Zach Smathers

Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry
From: Lincoln, Neb.
Job: United States Property and Fiscal Office, Central Issue Facility



Sgt. Andrew Eshleman

1074th Truck Company
From: Kearney, Neb.
Job: Corrections Officer

Sgt. Joshua Bowman

Troop B, 134th Cavalry
From: Gretna, Neb.
Job: Auto Technician



Sgt. Bryce Hinrichs

195th Special Operations Airborne
From: Omaha, Neb.
Job: Student

Staff Sgt. Josh Kushen

1st Battalion, 209th Regiment, Regional Training Institute
From: Lincoln, Neb.
Job: Basic Leadership Course instructor



Staff Sgt. Josiah Smith

734th Transportation Battalion
From: Kearney, Neb.
Job: Morton Buildings Construction

Sgt. Connor Alberts

72nd Civil Support Team
From: Lincoln, Neb.
Job: 72nd CST as Hazmat and Weapons of Mass Destruction Technician.



Ready, Aim, Fire: A competitor in the Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition shoots a 9mm pistol during one of the challenges at the Greenleaf Training Site, April 1-3.

Nebraska Soldiers give all in drive to become state's best

By Spc. William Schneider
Staff Photojournalist

In typical Nebraska early spring fashion, the weather for this year's April 1-3 Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Greenleaf Training Site ranged from near finger-freezing cold to stamina-sapping sun, all while a steady wind buffeted the 13 Nebraska Soldiers with gusts up to 46 miles-per-hour.

The competition was – as the planners had hoped – a true test of mind-over-matter. And, by the time the competition had ended, the Nebraska Army National Guard had crowned two new victors: Staff Sgt. Josh Kushen from the Camp Ashland-based 1st Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) who won the noncommissioned officer title, and Sgt. Calvin Koziol from Beatrice's Company C, 1-134th Cavalry (Long Range Surveillance), who took top honors in the enlisted category.

Both winners will now move on to regionals, which is a multi state guard competition hosted in Kansas.

"I'm ecstatic," Kushen said shortly after being presented with the hardware he earned during the NCO competition. "I honestly didn't know where I was going to end up."

Coming in second and third place respectively for the NCO division were Sgt. Joshua Bowman and Staff Sgt. Josiah Smith while Pfc. Samuel Vanderheiden and Spc. Andrew Thomas took second and third in the enlisted competition.

The competition is designed to showcase the Nebraska National Guard's top Soldiers, said Sgt. 1st Class Chad Rowe, Army Best Warrior Competition noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

"It's an opportunity to send the best of the best," said Rowe. "To show off skills, to take it to the next level and show what we can accomplish."

Rowe has overseen the competition for the past two years. He said a review board decides the competition's events. The events are designed to test multiple areas of a Soldier's knowledge, ranging from military history to weapon assembly. The competition also tests the physical endurance and strength of each competitor.

In the span of just three days, competitors were tasked with a 12-



Photos by Spc. William Schneider

Good Directions: Sgt. Connor Alberts uses his compass during the day navigation course challenge for the Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Greenleaf Training Site, April 1-3.

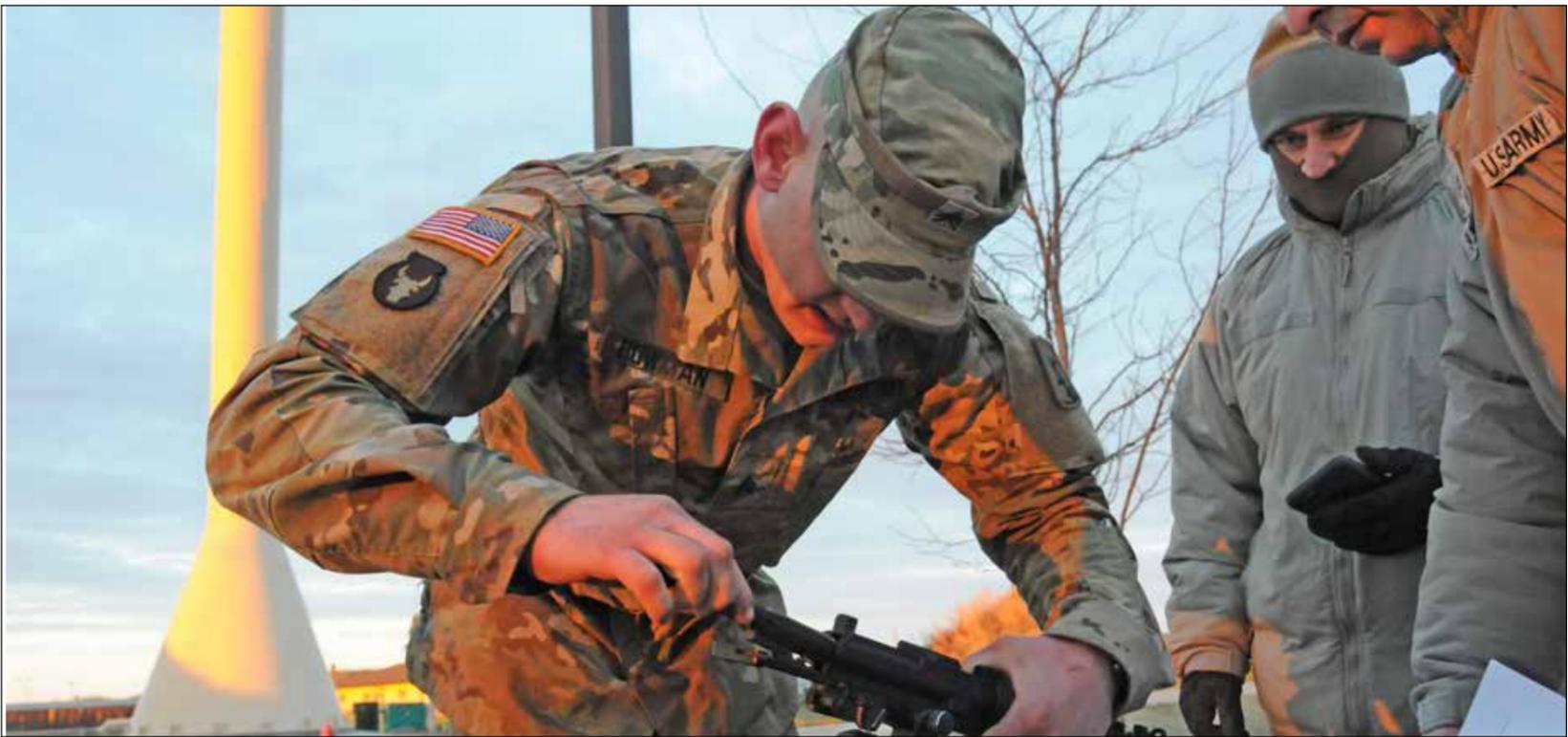
mile ruck march, an Army Physical Fitness Test, an immediate surprise half APFT after the first one, seven-mile land navigation course, three-mile night land navigation course, a five-mile run and obstacle course, and running sprints associated with the live fire weapon matches.

By the time the Soldiers had completed the competition, they had traversed more than 30 miles and participated in a total of 30 graded events that also included marksmanship events, an essay,

weapon disassembly and reassembly, oral tests, maintenance and written tests.

Medics were on standby throughout the event. The competitors were even required to stop by the medics a little over half way through the weekend to check out their feet. Most were fortunate to only have a few blisters.

"They're physically and mentally drained," Rowe said. "In the words of the adjutant general, 'They left tired, they left hungry and they



Getting to the Core: Sgt. Joshua Bowman, a competitor in the Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, disassembles and reassembles a weapon during one of the challenges at the Greenlief Training Site, April 1-3.



Run Forest, Run: The Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition is kicked off with an Army Physical Fitness Test at the Greenlief Training Site, April 1-3. Immediately following the test, the competitors were surprised with another half APFT, designed to test their physical endurance.



Photos by Spc. William Schneider

Aiming for Perfection: Competitors in the Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition aim down range as they compete in marksmanship during one of the challenges at the Greenlief Training Site, April 1-3.

want to come back for more.”

One of the more interesting tests was the grenade range scenario. Under a warming sun, a competitor would start about 30 yards away from his first cement bunker. His scenario stated he needed to be on the look-out for potential hostiles.

Once a Soldier got to the first bunker he had to eliminate his first targets by throwing two practice grenades. Then it was about a 50-yard dash under simulated artillery fire and actual smoke screens to his second bunker where another round of enemy targets awaited his grenade tosses.

After dispatching them, the Soldier then had to run to his next target under simulated rifle fire while smoke and artillery were still coming his way. Finding security behind a low two-and-a-half-foot cement wall, the Soldier then faced off against real simulated combatants near a gray truck. The truck was previously stated during the briefing to be the vehicle of choice for some targets of interest. Due to the low wall a different throwing motion was needed to ensure passing the checkpoint.

The final checkpoint involved moving a simulated casualty to

cover under a smoke screen and administering first aid before calling for an extraction.

According to the state’s senior Nebraska Army National Guard enlisted Soldier, the competition was truly designed to allow Nebraska’s best to compete against each other while also giving the Soldiers an opportunity to receive training they might not always get.

“It’s great training and shows what they’re made of,” said Command Sergeant Maj Marty Baker, state command sergeant major. “It’s great training to take back to the unit.”

Baker and Rowe agreed it is a tough competition, but ends up producing great results and stories that the competitors will probably re-tell for years to come.

“It provides advertising,” said Rowe. “The Best Warrior Competition creates that environment where they can take those stories, (and) go back to have other Soldiers want to do this in the future.”

The competition is also a way the Guard can help increase the pride in the individual Soldiers... especially when staring down a board of four sergeants major.

“It can prove something to your-

self. It’s kind of a ‘mano a mano’ thing,” said Baker “You match against other Soldiers and you match against yourself, too.”

Vanderheiden participated for the first time this year. He said he especially enjoyed shooting a variety of different weapons while also showing what this generation of Nebraska Soldiers can do.

“It shows leaders in the lower enlisted,” Vanderheiden said.

Soldiers from across Nebraska are encouraged to participate and take up the challenge for themselves.

This year’s competition had the limit of 20 Soldiers scheduled to compete.

Unfortunately, seven competitors had to drop out due to medical complications.

Any Soldier who wants to compete needs to check with his or her command. Then, study and train, said Baker.

“Watching these Soldiers, it motivates me,” Baker said. “Being interested is one thing, but participating is another.”

For any Soldier on the fence thinking about whether they should compete or not, Vanderheiden said, “Do it. It’s a lot of fun.”

NCO of the Year



First Place: Staff Sgt. Josh Kushen
- 1st Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute)

Second Place: Sgt. Josh Bowman
- Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance)

Third Place: Staff Sgt. Josiah Smith
- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion

Soldier of the Year



First Place: Sgt. Calvin Koziol
- Company C, 1-134th Cavalry (Long Range Surveillance)

Second Place: Samuel Vanderheiden
- 313th Medical Company (Grand Ambulance)

Third Place: Andrew Thomas
- Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance)



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Hopping Good Time: Lt. Col. Robert Kadavy and his daughter, Lily, take some time out of the Operation: Hidden Egg festivities to meet with the star of the event, March 19, at the Nebraska Army National Guard's East Campus Readiness Center in Lincoln, Neb.

Operation: Hidden Egg

Guard families gather together for holiday fun, games

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

A tiny army of egg hunters were out in force, March 19, when the Nebraska National Guard's Child and Youth Program hosted its annual "Operation: Hidden Egg 2016" event at the Nebraska National Guard's East Campus Readiness Center in Lincoln.

According to Karen Jordan, Nebraska Air National Guard Airman and Family Readiness Program manager, this year's event attracted around 135 patrons, who participated in a number of fun activities – such as taking a photo with a giant Easter Bunny, a bean-bag

toss, or creating multicolored art crafts – as well collecting some of the plastic, candy-filled eggs that were hidden by the hundreds in the grass behind the readiness center.

Anderson said organizers were pleased by this year's attendance, which was held on a somewhat chilly day that included multiple snow-bursts that caused the kids to collect eggs in light, swirling snowflakes that resembled soft ice pellets.

"It's been very, very good," said Anderson. "It's very well attended in spite of the fact that it's snowing."

This year's event was actually one of two "Operation: Hidden Egg 2016" events held in Nebraska. A similar event was held in Grand

Island, on March 13.

Anderson said the events are designed to get National Guard families out together in a fun-filled environment. "It is so important to be able to get parents out with their children and have that camaraderie and morale-building with other (military) families," she said. "And obviously it's important to have the kids come out and have fun with their parents, to be able to celebrate and have fun together."

"We heard nothing but positive comments and it was a really great event for families to get out and do," said Kristyn Frei, lead Child and Youth Program coordinator.

According to Frei, supporting this year's



On The Hunt: Groups of military kids descend upon a chilly East Campus Readiness Center in search of plastic eggs during the annual Operation: Hidden Egg event, March 19.

"Operation: Hidden Egg 2016" were: the Lincoln Legion Riders, Lincoln Legion Auxiliary, Family Assistance Center, Military OneSource, VetSet, VA, Blue Star Moms, and Elk's Army of Hope. Raising Cane's also donated drinks for both the Lincoln and Grand Island Hidden Egg events. Grand Island's event was also supported by the local 4-H Club, which brought out chicks, bunnies and other animals, and the local Woman's Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Senior chaplain retires after three decades serving Nebraska Guard

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
State Public Affairs Officer

The Nebraska National Guard's senior chaplain, Col. Rodney "Rod" Armon, was honored in front of his family, friends, senior military and church officials, and fellow Guardsmen at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Nebraska, March 5, as Armon prepared to retire after nearly 30 years of military service.

During his ceremony, many distinguished speakers spoke highly of the long-time Lutheran Church Missouri Synod pastor. "Thank you, Chaplain Armon, for 28 years of dedicated service," said Brig. Gen. David Graetz, the assistant to the Army Chief of Chaplains, during the ceremony. "That doesn't happen very often."

"It's really a joy and honor to be here to thank Pastor Armon for his faithful service to God and country," said retired U.S. Navy Chaplain (Capt.) Craig Muehler, director of ministry to the armed forces for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). Muehler said that because the military relies on churches to endorse qualified pastors, priests, or imams...to serve in the military and minister to service members. "The Missouri Synod

(Lutheran Church) gratefully has endorsed Chaplain Armon as a faithful pastor to, not only, the Missouri Synod—but also as one who will take care of the men and women of the armed forces. Your church thanks you for your service to God and country and we wish you God blessings in your future endeavors."

Another high ranking official with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod had many insightful comments about Armon's service to God and the nation.

"When asked about authority, Jesus replied: 'The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom,'" said Rev. Richard Snow, president of the Nebraska District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. "As we celebrate your retirement, we celebrate your service to the church and to the armed forces."

"The great misconception, of course, is that the higher your rank the more people who get to serve you. The reality, of course, is very much the opposite. The higher your rank the more there are for you to serve. Not everyone gets that straight as they get higher in rank," said Snow. "Chaplain Armon is one who got it right. His heart of service has been a great gift to the church and to the military. We thank you for your willingness to serve,



Photos by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

Recognition: Chaplain (Col.) Rodney "Rod" Armon receives the Legion of Merit from Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, for his dedicated service over the last 28 years during a March 5 retirement ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

and we give God praise for a heart of service."

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, spoke about the significance of the networking that has been accomplished due to Armon's dedicated work for the Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska Guard.

"Most recently, Chaplain Armon and I have been engaging with the leadership of various faith bodies; in fact, Rev. Snow gave me the opportunity to address his district gathering of his ministers and others associated with our ministry; and sir, thank you again for that opportunity," said Bohac.

"These are relationships that we deeply value. But it's through Rod that we've been able to do it. He's laid in a strong foundation, not only with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, but with the Catholic Church and with other various faith bodies that have provided their ecclesiastical support for those that have been willing to serve in the uniform as a chaplain. In part, that will be your ongoing legacy."

In an upbeat delivery of acknowledgments, Armon gave credit to his family, friends, superiors, colleagues and peers.

His message of thanks echoed the idea that a successful Soldier owes much to those who supported his or her career. "Julie, thank you for the love, care, concern and things you've done to take care of the family," he said. "So, for what you have done—thank you."

Armon also delivered a powerful message about service and giving back, when he spoke a little of his personal journey towards this day. "Back in 1986, my brother was killed in a military plane crash," he said. "Chaplain came to the door and my mom was comforted by his presence—she told me she was comforted by his presence. I wanted to give something back."

In his closing benediction, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Philip Houser, deputy joint force headquarters chaplain, delivered a meaningful message as the Guard and the State of Nebraska says goodbye to this much admired chaplain of Soldiers and Airmen: "Chaplain Armon, Julie, family members, brothers and sisters, the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you, the Lord life up His countenance upon you, and give you His peace, Amen."



Honoring a Career: A number of awards await to be presented to Chaplain (Col.) Rodney "Rod" Armon for his 28-year military career during the March 5 retirement ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel

Scott M. Sobota

Major

Elizabeth M. Davis
Viola L. Raschke
Mitchell H. Tessendorf
Michael G. Wieneke
Tony J. Woodruff
Amanda L. Young

Captain

Lisa M. Brand
Gregory J. Graham
David C. Lange
Josiah D. Unger
Jessica L. Wolff

First Lieutenant

Savannah R. Ericksen
Joshua L. Hruby
Colin M. Randolph

Chief Warrant Officer 5

John P. Ayers
Kenneth M. Henderson

Chief Warrant Officer 3

Peter D. Caffrey
Jamie L. Hanway
Waylon J. Petsche
Derek T. Whisler

Sergeant Major

Diane L. Lewis
Jeremy J. Preister

Master Sergeant

William T. Buettner
Sergeant First Class
Kelly S. Alexander
Jennifer D. Bos
Gary M. Broski
Scottie L. Davis
John M. Ferguson
Colleen M. Jeffrey
Robert G. Kercher
Jessie A. London
Nathan W. Meyer
Chad M. Pokorney
Jay M. Steadman
Lonnie L. Tenhulzen
Roberto R. Vega

Staff Sergeant

Aaron M. Aldridge
Travis M. Benda
Nathaniel A. Betts
Wade K. Bradley
Sean M. Carlson
Mario A. Chavez
Andrew W. Galloway
Paul B. Greenwell
Amanda L. Gross
Michael W. Iverson
Zachary J. Kaufman
Anna C. Knopes
Justin M. McBride
Daniel A. McCormick
Amanda J. Menke
Manuel S. Molina
Kyle D. Mostrom
Gray N. Pearson
Adam M. Pitts
Zachary C. Roth
Theodore A. Saunders
Dana E. Schuldt
Thomas M. Shirely
Charles W. Stierwalt
Leslie L. Suhr
Toni L. Towne
Leslie L. Suhr
John K. Whalen
Austin R. Williams

Sergeant

Matthew L. Abelein
Zed D. Adams
Keyle R. Alcorn
Jose L. Audelorios
Collin E. Baldwin
Andrew J. Berquist
Joshua S. Black
Trent A. Bottolfson
Thomas A. Brown
Jessie C. Budd
Jared J. Callahan
Joshua R. Coleman
Oualala Coulibaly
Justin R. Dekok
Justin T. Doerer
Zurisadai Fandrich
Michael L. Fischer
Cole H. W. Freudenburg
Casey S. Harris
Dillon C. Heilbrun
Ashton G. Henderson
Tate N. Higgins

Michael K. Hoffman
Britton A. Hulme
Yoni B. Izaguirre
Dustin L. Jacobs
John G. Jurgensmeier
Skylar R. M. Kellison
Ashley R. Kingham
Andrew J. Klein
Braxton C. Sawyer-Kociemba
Calvin J. Koziol
Kody J. Krantz
Jason C. Lenz
Allison J. Martin
Chad L. Mascari
Josia B. May
Isaac N. Opfer
Austin N. Pay
Caleb D. Pongo
Carter A. Quinn
Kathy H. Reyes
Kyle A. Russell
Nicolai T. Sawyer
Ernest W. Short
Zachary R. Smathers
Trevor M. Stahlecker
Tory L. Sukut
Christopher W. Suttles
Kyle A. Swartz
Casey R. Thompson
Jesus Trevino
Michael C. Trimble
Larry C. Vancura
Cheri D. Wadas
Levi J. White

Specialist

Anthony J. O. Aduloju
Sheldon Mackenz Bartholomew
Jesse F. Beeck
Joshua K. Brown
Colin A. Buckley
Joseph W. Burrows
Tanner W. Byrd
Dylan T. D. Case
Ashley K. Chinana
Wade M. Connot
Sierah R. Crable
Samuel M. Crane
Robert C. Czaplá
Zachariah L. Edmonds
Cody L. Emge
Paul M. Ferguson
Jacob R. Flynn
David M. Foley
Zacary L. Gottfrey
Arthur J. Hansen II
Tate K. Hanzlicek
James P. Hiatt Jr.
Brandon P. Kahnk
John L. Khong
Bret W. Kochanowicz
Corey J. Koelzer
James P. Long
Diana L. Lopezherrejon
Blake E. Mark
Nathan C. Martinez
Raul A. Martinez
Zachary D. McClintock
Cameron B. McPherson
Brett G. Menuey
Tara L. Millard
Abdulaay S. Ndiaye
An P. D. Nguyen
Bao H. Nguyen
Phuoc H. Nguyen
Aaron R. Oquist
Casey R. Ortman
Colton S. Oswald
Lucas J. Pistulka
Coltan J. Plock
Christian J. Posekany
Aspen T. Reifschneider
Elizabeth E. Revelo
Daniel A. Roland
Alexis E. R. Rowell
Lance J. Schmidt
Bailey A. Schoenhofer
Hope M. Shepard
Emma J. Smith
Garret A. Smith
Brian J. Sydik
Gavin J.D. Thorenson
Jerron M. Tiemeyer
Samuel R. Vanderheiden
Christopher N. Vasquez
Jordan L. Volden
Alexander J. Webster
Jason T. White
William F. Wiseman

Private First Class

Hunter J. Baumann
Logan D. Berck
Johannah M. Bergerson
Dustin E. Bertschinger
Connor M. Besse
Nathanielle A. Buckley
Jordan E. Consolver
Jared S. Czarnikow
Austin R. Duermeyer

Peter V. Duong
Kadin J. Eilers
Ethan J. Feltes
Tyler D. Gillotte
Joseph K. Hamilton
Justin L. Honn
Erik L. Jacobson
Kevin A. Jurgensen
Morggan. R. Key
Kiefer J. Kotrous
Manuel D. Lopez Jr.
Hadley A. McDaniel
Gabrielle J. Miranda
Oslay A. Molina
Kenneth B. Nielsen III
Benjamin S. Novotny
Hunter M. Randles
Marlena G. Raney
Mariah W. Robinson
Larry F. Santillan
Dylan G. Smith
Anothony E. Weyers

Private

Colton M. Dittman
Ryley G. Kellison
Jacob M. King
Michael A. Lange
Logan J. Paben
Anthony T. Red
Hunter T. Robinson
Xavier R. Sagaste
Joseph J. Vaska

Air National Guard

Brigadier General

Wendy K. Johnson

Lieutenant Colonel

Kent M. Leonard

Captain

Michael R. G. Brodersen
Douglas D. Carlson
Travis D. Carlson

First Lieutenant

Mark T. Durant
Matthew A. Trummer

Senior Master Sergeant

Mark A. Basel
Rhonda L. McClellan
Bryan J. Wright

Master Sergeant

Richard N. Anderson
Kyle B. Martin
Bradley R. Musick
Brian T. Welsh

Technical Sergeant

Michael J. Copich
Brent H. Frohner
Luciana C. Jarzynka
Andrew M. Lee
Anthony M. McLeod
Amanda M. Nelson
Brett G. Menuey
Tara L. Millard
Abdulaay S. Ndiaye
An P. D. Nguyen
Bao H. Nguyen
Phuoc H. Nguyen
Aaron R. Oquist
Casey R. Ortman
Colton S. Oswald
Lucas J. Pistulka
Coltan J. Plock
Christian J. Posekany
Aspen T. Reifschneider
Elizabeth E. Revelo
Daniel A. Roland
Alexis E. R. Rowell
Lance J. Schmidt
Bailey A. Schoenhofer
Hope M. Shepard
Emma J. Smith
Garret A. Smith
Brian J. Sydik
Gavin J.D. Thorenson
Jerron M. Tiemeyer
Samuel R. Vanderheiden
Christopher N. Vasquez
Jordan L. Volden
Alexander J. Webster
Jason T. White
William F. Wiseman

Staff Sergeant

Dustin D. Bowder
Devin T. Davila
Kyle D. Dougherty
Anthony R. Ewing
Dylan S. Exstrom
Victor A. J. Habib
Andrew M. Hoefler
Jennifer L. Johnson
Devyn E. Jones
Michael J. Morrison
Jordan A. Perkins
Richard L. Vath
Charlie A. Vega

Senior Airman

Joseph E. Ashmore
Tanner A. Boyle
David R. Coffin II
William J. Deardoff
Christopher A. Dornbusch
Jeffrey S. Hadley Jr.
Aubrey B. Hall
Bradley J. Halweg
Morgan R. Hurley
Corey J. Iltzsch
Sean G. Landkamer
Allen J. Seburg
Selena M. Semeno
Jonathan D. Sobetski
Taner D. Vodicka

Airman

Jewel L. Newsome

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Timothy P. Garner
Col. Lynn M. Heng
Lt. Col. Darin J. Mongeon
Maj. Jeremiah A. Afuh II
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Daniel N. Hill
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeffery R. Thomas
Sgt. 1st Class Steven R. Brewer
Sgt. 1st Class Scyler W. Foos
Sgt. 1st Class Andrew J. Hytrek
Sgt. 1st Class Danile R. Jamison
Sgt. 1st Class Donald K. Kemper
Staff Sgt. Christopher R. Jansen

Army Commendation Medal

Maj. Robert J. Mendez
Maj. Jonathan D. D. Wymen
Capt. Ryan M. Lemke
Capt. James M. Seibert
1st Lt. Jared L. Baker
Master Sgt. Gerald D. Bouska
Sgt. 1st Class Ryan G. Barrett
Staff Sgt. Brenda B. Erickson
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Franklin
Staff Sgt. Luke Katz
Staff Sgt. Bret A. Liermann
Staff Sgt. Gale A. Maberry
Staff Sgt. Dean P. Martin
Staff Sgt. Tuan M. H. Tran
Sgt. Justin L. B. Saner
Sgt. Trevor R. Wittrock

Army Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Jason J. Carpenter
Maj. Joseph Mangiameli Jr.
Maj. Kevin R. Reiners
Maj. Jonathan D. D. Wymen
Maj. Amanda L. Young
Capt. Amanda L. Homes
Capt. David C. Lange
1st Lt. Seana M. Maltezo
Sgt. 1st Class Jason A. McAtee
Sgt. 1st Class Michael B. Warrick
Staff Sgt. Christine L. Baack
Staff Sgt. Nathan J. Bornemeier
Staff Sgt. Debra E. Hansel
Staff Sgt. Zachary J. Kaufman

Staff Sgt. Corey J. Scheidemann
Staff Sgt. Andrew M. Siemek
Staff Sgt. Ray C. Underwood
Staff Sgt. John A. Youngblood
Sgt. David W. Burrus
Sgt. Nathaniel J. Coldiron
Sgt. Chad L. Mascari
Sgt. Rachelle L. Plock
Sgt. Aaron L. Wattenbach
Sgt. Anastasia B. Whisenhunt
Spc. Georgia G. Allen
Spc. Jessica J. Colegrove
Spc. Robert J. Rike
Spc. Chasen J. Welch

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

Sgt. Anthony J. Schuman
Spc. Jesse F. Beeck

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. Eric D. Hunsberger

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Col. Kevin L. Hittle
Lt. Col. Thomas W. Golden
Lt. Col. James E. Murphy
Maj. Robert J. Mendez
Maj. Brett E. Petit
Capt. Luke A. Holland
1st Lt. Matthew T. Broman
1st Lt. Aloma J. Moncrief
1st Lt. Nathan J. Reicks
2nd Lt. Sarah C. Filiaggi
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeffrey R. Thomas
Command Sgt. Maj. Monte A. Kerchal
1st Sgt. Denise Y. Kaiser
1st Sgt. Richard D. Schneider
Sgt. 1st Class David J. Austin
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Gerrert
Sgt. 1st Class Sean R. McMahon
Sgt. 1st Class Kyle R. Schramm
Staff Sgt. Tyler J. Anderson
Staff Sgt. Jamie Bartholomew
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Franklin
Staff Sgt. Jennifer L. Good
Staff Sgt. John A. Youngblood

Sgt. Edward Alvizar
Sgt. Jessie C. Budd
Sgt. Jarod C. Fuchser
Sgt. Bryce D. Hinrichs
Sgt. Andres Lara
Sgt. Shawna M. Tibbetts
Sgt. Ryan A. Yarnell
Sgt. Nevine Zaki
Spc. Colin A. Buckley
Spc. Caleb A. Dewey
Spc. Cody R. Hamling
Spc. Alex M. Hulewicz
Spc. James E. Kramel
Spc. Conner R. McHugh
Spc. Christian J. Posekany
Spc. Fernando Sanchez
Spc. Brian J. Sydik
Pfc. Cody J. Cramer

Air National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal

Maj. Karl Duerk
Maj. Gregory Goodwater
Master Sgt. Jason Whalen
Maj. Connie Holen

Air Force Achievement Medal

Col. Eric Teegerstrom
Senior Airman Tyler Johnson

Air Force Commendation Medal

Tech. Sgt. Jessica Peters

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Col. Rodney A. Armon
Capt. Shawn M. Robinson
Capt. Jacques S. Smith III
Command Sgt. Maj. Mark A. Felker
Master Sgt. Andrew J. Arellano
Master Sgt. John R. Rasmussen
Sgt. 1st Class Michael P. Freeman
Sgt. 1st Class Tonya S. Wagner

Shorttakes

Defense Department honoring military members' role in fighting terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria

■Carter announces newly created Operation Inherent Resolve campaign medal

WASHINGTON (DoD News) — Service members who serve or have served in Iraq or Syria as part of Operation Inherent Resolve will receive the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced in Tampa, Florida, March 30.

Carter announced the new award during the U.S. Central Command change-of-command ceremony. Army Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III transferred the command's flag to Army Gen. Joe Votel.

"It is fitting then, that as we mark the change of command between these two leaders, that we introduce the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal," Carter said.

"I am pleased to announce today, by the president's order and upon the chairman's and my recommendation, that our Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines serving in Iraq and Syria as part of Operation Inherent Resolve are now eligible for this medal and distinction."

The award is retroactive to June 15,

2014, and is for service members based in Iraq or Syria, those who flew missions over those countries, and those who served in contiguous waters for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days, officials said.

The award distinctly recognizes service members battling terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria.

Service members who were killed or were medically evacuated from those countries due to wounds or injuries immediately qualify for the award, as do members who engaged in combat.

Previously, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal recognized service in Iraq and Syria, and service members in neighboring countries such as Turkey will continue to receive that award.

The president establishes campaign medals for large-scale and long-duration combat actions or operations. Inherent Resolve meets the criteria, officials said.

The entire operational area has been subject to lethal combat operations. U.S. forces are executing an extensive air campaign in the region. A U.S. division-plus force is providing command and control, intelligence, and other advisory services.

The award is separate from the Iraq Campaign Medal awarded for service during operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn, officials said.



Obverse



Reverse

Street Talk

“If you could change your military job, what would you change it to and why?”



**Chief Warrant Officer 3
Jennifer Fotinos**
2nd Battalion, 209th Regional
Training Institute

“If I could change it’d be aviation. I would want to fly Black-hawks. Who wouldn’t want to soar through the air.”

Master Sgt. Shawn Burton
2nd Battalion 209th Regional
Training Institute
“12 series to go be an engineer. That way I can be more knowledgeable on plumbing, electrical etc. to learn more not just for the Army, but when I retire.”



Sgt. 1st Class Jenny Bos
3rd Battalion 209th Regional
Training Institute
“I wouldn’t change my MOS, because of the flexibility with family and work.”

Staff Sgt. Craig Peate
155th Air Refueling Wing
“If I had to do it over, I would have chosen to be a pilot”



Pfc. Bryce Bohlender
Headquarters and Headquarters
Troop, 1-134th Cavalry
(Reconnaissance and Surveillance)
I love being a medic. Being with Alpha Troop, I’m seeing what it’s like to be in the other (Military Occupational Specialties), but all in all, I love mine and I wouldn’t change it.”

Spc. Joseph Quail
Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry
(Reconnaissance and
Surveillance)
“I would be a light wheel mechanic because that’s more what I want to do in my civilian life.”



Prairie Soldier back in limited printed form after four-year break

This month the staff of the Prairie Soldier achieved a breakthrough. Nearly four years after funding shortfalls and cuts caused its printed demise, the Prairie Soldier was physically published this past month on a short-run, trial basis.

As the editor for more than 20 of its 66 years of existence, this was a professionally and personally satisfying event.

First, a little background. The Nebraska National Guard has physically published an internal publication since the early 1950s, which was based upon successful newspapers and magazines published during World War II for the benefit of troops fighting in Europe, North Africa and the Pacific theaters. The thought at the time was, if you want Americans to fight against a ruthless foe, they first need to know why they’re fighting and then they need to see their sacrifices and accomplishments documented.

For the most part, that has been the overriding philosophy of the Nebraska National Guard’s bi-monthly publication for the past six-plus decades. Granted, the paper (and sometimes magazine) took various forms over the years and was even called different names, to include the Cornhusker Guardsman, but by and large, the philosophy stayed the same.

Nebraska National Guard Soldiers, Airmen, families and employers needed to know the “why” behind what they were doing, and once they did it, they needed to see proof of their sacrifices and accomplishments in print.

Over the years, the Prairie Soldier took many forms. Along the way, it also became extremely successful, earning numerous “best newspaper in the U.S. Army” and a few “best in the Department of Defense” titles. Staff writers also won numerous

My Turn

State Public Affairs Officer

Kevin J. Hynes



in the first place. Additionally, the staff writers of the newspaper who met with the Soldiers and Airmen quickly began to realize that their stories weren’t being read, thus began to why they were writing stories in the first place.

Also, retirees – many of whom were uncomfortable downloading a newspaper on the computer – found the process overly cumbersome, thus making them feel further isolated from the organization.

There were many other issues as well; enough issues that we knew we had to come up with a better solution to getting the news out to those who need it.

So, after months of work, we now have a printed newspaper. The newspaper is being distributed to readiness centers across the state where they can be physically read by the Soldiers and Airmen who train there. They are also available to any retiree who would like to see a physical newspaper versus a digital copy.

There are still some issues – such as the fact that the paper will take approximately 30 days to receive after we publish it online – but we do feel that this is a good step to determine if the interest in a physical newspaper is still there.

Along with what the Nebraska National Guard Public Affairs Office is doing with its social media presence on Facebook and Twitter as well as our planned changes to the official department Website, we feel that this a good step toward providing, once again, the level of command information that our Soldiers, Airmen, families and retirees had grown accustomed to and deserve once again.

Please, let us know what you think. We’re looking for your feedback so that we can provide the absolute best product that we can possibly produce.

individual awards, including the first two Department of the Army Journalists of the Year awarded to members of the Reserve Component, and numerous other Army and Air National Guard journalist of the year awards.

Additionally, the newspaper – like papers often do – gained a sense of ownership by the Soldiers and Airmen it served. This was seen primarily in the tongue-in-cheek way the Soldiers and Airmen nicknamed it the “Prairie Chicken.” It was also seen in the way that families and retirees said they looked forward to its arrival in the mail because it let them know “what’s going on in the Nebraska National Guard.”

So, it was a pretty traumatic decision to suspend publication of the paper in 2012 when a combination of changing policies and funding shortfalls made publishing and mailing the newspaper next to impossible.

Instead, the focus turned to publishing a digital newspaper on the ne.ng.mil Website that would be available to be read or downloaded.

At the time, most of us knew that this change wasn’t going to be the best because of the impact that it would have on the Soldiers, Airmen, families and retirees because they now had to physically log on and download the newspaper. And the subsequent decline in readership numbers bore that concern out.

However, there were some unforeseen problems as well. New Soldiers and Airmen who had never received the physical newspaper at home had no idea that one existed

Life changes underline importance of one’s friendships, social support

The last few months have been very busy and stressful for me; transferring units, selling my house, looking for a new house, finishing my last semester of my undergraduate degree, annual training and the list could go on but I don’t want to bore you.

I’m sure I am not the only one that feels a little overwhelmed during times in their life.

And during that time, what do you do? Do you just let the stress bottle up? Do you vent to someone? Do you try to handle it the best that you can?

But what does support mean to you? Is it having someone that encourages you to achieve your goals? Works out with you to keep you motivated? Mentors you through tough decisions or missions?

After doing some research, I’ve learned that the social support can help in so many ways during times like this in our lives.

Social support means having friends and people in your life that you can turn to in times of need or crisis to give you a broader focus and even help with a positive self-image.

From my research, I learned that having friends and a positive social support can also enhance the quality of life and can provide that needed buffer against the different life events that take place.

And I can’t thank my friends

enough for helping me get through the craziness of the past few months and everything that has happened in the past. Those times are where I have leaned on them the most.

But there are a few friends in particular that I won’t mention their names (that know who they are) that have really helped me the past few months. And without their support I am not sure where I would be today.

Whether that’s been talking to me on the phone, texting me back, going out for lunch, letting me cry on their shoulder or simply talking to me when the times are tough.

Those friendships are so valuable to me.

And I hope I am that same support system to them that they are to me.

But all this talk about friendship and social support got me thinking about how as a leader, I can influence others.

As a leader and noncommissioned officer, I have Soldiers beneath me and around me that need

support too just like the support I have from my friends and leaders.

I want to be that leader that they can look up to, bounce ideas off of, ask for advice, be motivated from and push them to be a better Soldier. Just like the leaders I have had throughout my military

service. There is one noncommissioned officer that has helped shape me into the person I am today. They may not even know this but without their leadership, guidance, advice, mentorship and support I wouldn’t be half the person that I am today.

Whoever you are, whether that’s a leader, friend or an acquaintance, you can make a difference in someone’s life whether you realize it or not.

Here are some of my ways to positively influence others:

- Develop a positive attitude.
- Remember happiness is contagious.
- Smile even when you are down.
- Always say please and thank you.
- Be respectful of others.
- Be strong for others.
- Be yourself.

So if you learn anything from this editorial, I hope you learn the important of social support and how your actions as a friend have an impact on anyone.

Another Voice

Staff Sergeant

Heidi McClintock





U.S. Air Force photo

Airpower: A pair of U.S. Air Force F-22s fly in formation. The upcoming “Guardians of Freedom” air show and open house will feature, for the first time, a demonstration by an F-22. The Guardians of Freedom will take place May 7-8 in Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Taking Flight: A UH-72 Lakota helicopter flies during a training exercise. As part of the 2016 Guardians of Freedom Air Show a UH-72 Lakota helicopter and other Nebraska Army National Guard aircraft and equipment will be display during the air show that will take place May 7-8 in Lincoln, Neb.

GUARDIANS OF FREEDOM continued from page 1.

On May 7-8, for the first time since 2011, the U.S. Navy’s famed Blue Angels will return to Lincoln, Nebraska, when they headline the “Guardians of Freedom” Open House and Air Show.” The event is being hosted jointly by the Nebraska National Guard, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Lincoln Municipal Airport.

In the seven decades since the Blue Angels were first introduced to Nebraska, the Navy’s elite demonstration team has introduced itself to nearly a half-billion more roaring spectators from around the world. They’ve made fans the world over with a smorgasbord of stunts, like flying as close as eighteen inches wingtip to canopy.

As the Blue Angels make obvious, Bernoulli’s principles of flight have remained constant since that hot, muggy July day. Today, however, everything else is bigger, louder, quicker, and costlier.

The Blue Angels now fly three times faster than they did in 1946. The Lincoln airshow could potentially double the crowds that attended 70 years ago. And the team’s turbo engines pulsate with 140 decibels, as opposed to the Hellcat’s 88 db, which cost roughly \$35,000 apiece in 1946 versus the \$150 million it costs to produce a single F-22 today.

The crowd is expected to be so large, in fact, it could fill Lincoln’s Memorial Stadium—but then many thousand onlookers would be left with standing room only. Put another way, the airshow will, for a weekend, challenge Lincoln as Nebraska’s second most-populous city.

It’s that massive size that restricts the open house and air show, and the Blue Angels, to one appearance every five years. But that hiatus will come to an end in grand fashion this May. According to “Guardians of Freedom” planners, among the aircraft expected to participate in the airshow are F-22 fighter jets, B-1 bombers, the Air Force Academy Wings of Blue jump team, and even a silent pyro sailplane manned by German aerialist Manfred Radius. They will be joined by a bevy of heritage planes, including a P-38 Lightning, B-25

“This is really an opportunity for us to give back to the community. Admission is free and the parking is free, because the taxpayers have already paid for this event—by supporting us. We are doing a lot all over the world, and we need to tell people, ‘Hey, we’re not just flying around the flagpole with these great airplanes.’ We’re actually executing the defense policy of this nation and providing security to (other nations) and our allies.” - Col. Bob Stevenson

Mitchell, P-51 Mustang and a P-40 Warhawk.

Beyond the planes in the sky, attendees can check out Air National Guard, Army National Guard and Army 1st Infantry Division equipment displays on the ground as well. These displays will include a UH-60 Blackhawk, CH-47 Chinook and UH-72 Lakota helicopter displays, displays of the various trucks and weapon systems used by the Nebraska Army National Guard and other combat equipment used by both the Nebraska Army National Guard and the active Army’s 1st Infantry Division.

According to Col. Bob Stevenson, 155th Air Refueling Wing commander, the event is a way for the Nebraska National Guard to say thanks to the local and state community for their support, particularly over the past two decades that have been filled with near-constant deployments overseas in support of the United States’ commitments.

“This is really an opportunity for us to give back to the community,” says Stevenson. “Admission is free and the parking is free, because the taxpayers have already paid for this event—by supporting us.”

“We are doing a lot all over the world and we need to tell people, ‘Hey, we’re not just flying around the flagpole with these great airplanes,’” said Stevenson. “We’re actually executing the defense policy of this nation and providing security to (other nations) and our allies. So it’s a big event. The Blue

Angels provide the draw; we provide the information and our community benefits.”

As a result, the open house is beneficial to the entire Nebraska National Guard and fellow members of the United States military, according to Stevenson.

“We are using it as a recruiting and retention tool, (and) a community support event to educate citizens about who are and what we do. (Some) people have no idea that there are members of this unit engaged in the fight against ISIS, right now. But we will have the opportunity to tell (them) our story.”

Lt. Col. Christopher “Kipper” Hesse, 173rd Air Refueling Squadron commander and Open House and Air Show director, finds the process and behind-the-scenes work all worth it the moment the event kicks off. 2016 marks the fourth time Hesse will be involved, but the first time he will oversee the 900 or so Airmen and Soldiers assigned to make the vision of the show a reality. That dedication is augmented with a little help from his friends.

“It’s a great partnership: Army and Air National Guard. We’re both bringing assets, along with the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and Lincoln Airport Authority.” Meetings between the four organizations began almost two years ago.

The partnership has proven so good, in fact, that the team won the Schram Award for excellence in community involvement by the International Council of Air Shows



U.S. Navy photo

Precision Teamwork: Four U.S. Navy Blue Angels F/A-18s fly in formation in this undated photo. The May 7-8 “Guardians of Freedom” air show and open house will mark the third straight time that the Blue Angels have appeared in Lincoln since 2006.

in 2001.

In post-recession America, amid sequestration and after 15 years of costly overseas conflicts, Hesse says budget constraints are the most daunting aspect of the process. A large portion of the event’s bill, however, has been subsidized by the Chamber of Commerce, along with local businesses, including Duncan Aviation, says Hesse.

“It costs a lot of money – a significant amount – but it’s worth it. It’s recruiting, retention, community relations. We generate a lot of leads.”

Master Sgt. Jeremy Dean, 155th ARW Recruiting and Retention manager, knows a thing or two about following up on those leads. Like Hesse, he attended air shows as a boy growing up in Nebraska.

“(The open house and air show builds) awareness in the community, as far as what we do, where we’re at. Maybe it doesn’t have a direct impact that year, but (maybe it does) in the years to come. Maybe parents have children, who will remember as a young kid going to the air show”, said Dean.

Regardless of whether those children someday serve their country, the event still makes memories that will last a lifetime.

The 2016 Guardians of Freedom Open House and Air Show takes place May 7-8, at Lincoln Airport in Lincoln, Neb. The gates open each day at 9:30 a.m. and close at 5:00 p.m. More information is available at www.lincolnairshow.com. Admission, like America, is free.

National Guard Spouse of the Year



Photo courtesy of Cara Loken

Tops in the Nation: Cara Loken, spouse of Maj. John Loken of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, poses for a photo with her family (not pictured are Cara's son and granddaughter). Cara was recently named the 2016 Armed Forces Insurance National Guard spouse of the year.

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

Well-known Nebraska Air National Guard spouse and family program volunteer was recently named the 2016 Armed Forces Insurance National Guard Military Spouse of the Year.

Cara Loken is the wife of Maj. John Loken, a 155th Air Refueling Wing maintenance officer based out of Lincoln, Nebraska. John nominated Cara for all the hard work she puts into helping other military families as well as for everything she's done for him over the past 16 years of their marriage.

Loken is one of six military spouses who are competing for the overall Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year 2016. According to the mother of two,

volunteering is something that has just come simple for her.

"I'm a jack-of-all-trade," said Loken. "I just like to volunteer."

According to fellow Nebraska Air National Guardsmen, Loken is always at the base helping with some type of new project or program to help military service members and their families. They say the impact she has upon Nebraska Air Guard families is immeasurable.

"Cara has done a terrific job as a key volunteer within our organization," said Col. Tami Thompson, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Mission Support Group. "She is passionate about helping military families and is always seeking ways to 'give back' to the military community."

"I really enjoy helping service members and their family members

after deployments," said Loken. "One of my goals is to educate military spouses and family members about Post-Traumatic Stress and the sometimes insidious onset of symptoms months and even years after military members return from war."

Loken is the first Nebraska National Guard spouse to win the National Guard Military Spouse of the Year title. Loken, who had already won a state-level military spouse of the year title, said she was surprised to win the National Guard-level as well.

"I love our military and I love helping them," said Loken. "I don't like getting recognition. I just love helping others."

In fact, no matter where Loken is, she is always helping others. Even though her husband is temporar-

ily assigned away from Nebraska, Loken continues to help others while stationed in Alabama as her husband attends military schooling. She set up an arts and craft program for military families and teaches classes to international students and spouses.

"It's all about helping others," said Loken. "I've even gotten the nickname 'Momma Cara' from people down here in Alabama."

Loken said her husband loves what she does for others. "He always hears great things about me and that makes him happy," she said.

For example, among the programs Loken started for the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing was new-comers orientation for members of the wing's maintenance units and their families. "It's an excellent program

for the military members and their families as they come to the section," said Loken. "They even asked me to work on a program like this for the whole wing too."

Thompson said that orientation has had a very real impact on the 155th Air Refueling Wing. "This event is based on a very successful program she developed for the 155th Maintenance Group. Cara's dedication and commitment are remarkable and I have no doubt the wing will continue to benefit from her efforts well into the future."

Loken will attend a ceremony in Washington D.C. in May where she will find out who won Military Spouse of the Year 2016. According to Loken, no matter what happens she hopes to learn from the other spouses and bring new ideas back to Nebraska National Guard families.

Schell promoted, sworn in as newest Nebraska Air National Guard commander

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Keith Schell and his family had a lot to celebrate, Feb. 7, but it had little to do with the Denver Broncos or the Carolina Panthers who were meeting that day in the National Football League's championship game.

Instead, the Schell family, along with friends and several hundred fellow Nebraska Airmen, celebrated Schell's promotion to brigadier general and his assumption of command as the assistant adjutant general of the Nebraska Air National Guard during a ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Nebraska.

According to Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general who officiated over the promotion and assumption of command ceremonies, he has enormous trust in Schell's ability to take the organization to the next step of its journey.

"Today is not about what he has achieved," said Bohac about the former commander of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing. "It's about my confidence in Keith to achieve even more; about what he will do in service to his state and nation as a general officer."

Schell, a native of Malcolm, Nebraska, first joined the Nebraska Air National Guard as an enlisted Airman in June 1985. Five years later he received his commission after graduating from the Air National Guard's Academy of Military Science at McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base at Knoxville, Tennessee.

During the course of his military career,

Schell flew both the RF-4C Phantom II and the KC-135R Stratotanker while also serving in numerous leadership posts. These include aircraft commander, flying training officer, deputy chief of Current Operations, evaluator pilot, chief of Standardization and Evaluation, squadron director of Operations and the Air National Guard's lead KC-135R instructor pilot-in-charge of the Global Air Transportation Management (GATM) System modification.

In 2006, Schell took command of the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Maintenance Group before assuming command of the 155th ARW from June 2012 until September 2014.

Schell is a veteran of numerous deployments including assignments in Spain and South Korea. He has also flown combat missions in the KC-135R in support of Operations Decisive Endeavor, Deliberate Guard, Deliberate Forge, Allied Force, Southern Watch, Northern Watch, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

According to Schell, who was presented with the Legion of Merit for the accomplishments he made while serving as the 155th ARW commander, he feels humbled to move on to this new step of his military career.

"General Bohac, I am honored and humbled by your confidence and trust in me to serve as assistant adjutant general for Air in Nebraska," said Schell, who received his new rank insignia from his wife and two of his three sons. A third son, Ben, watched the ceremony via Skype from his current assignment in Florida where he was training as a new member of the U.S. Air Force. "You have my pledge that I am committed to serving the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

New Command, New Opportunities: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, presents Keith Schell with the Legion of Merit moments before Schell was promoted to brigadier general and installed as the assistant adjutant general, Air, Feb. 7.

Airmen of the Nebraska Air National Guard, and that I will focus on our missions and the health, safety and welfare of our members."

Schell said he takes on his new assignment fully realizing that it will take the entire Air National Guard team to meet the new challenges of the ever-evolving strategic environment.

"I am honored to take command of the Nebraska Air National Guard. My reasons for this are quite simple. First, because of our excellent reputation and second, because of our relevancy to the nation," he said.

"As we sit here today, we have members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing and the 170th Group deployed around the world

servicing our great nation," said Schell. "They are engaged, they are committed and they are relevant. They do not do this without the support of each and every member of the Nebraska Air National Guard. It truly takes our entire team to be successful... and we are successful."

"Our world is changing. Our enemies are changing. Our enemies are evolving. We must ensure that what we are doing keeps us ahead of what are enemies our doing," he added. "I challenge each and every Airman and Soldier to work hard, be prepared, focus on the mission, be innovative, take care of each other and finally, take pride in all you do... I am inspired by each and every one of you."

26.2 miles rucked for remembrance, reflection

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Staff Photojournalist

Blisters. Rotten toe nails. Aching knees, feet, shoulders and back. The physical pain was torturous at times and mentally unbearable at others, but no matter what he put his body through, it was nothing compared to what the Soldiers before him have endured. It was all worth it.

Maj. Edwin Davis with the Army National Guard's 1167th Brigade Support Company recently participated in his third consecutive Bataan Memorial Death March, having tackled and overcome 26.2 miles of rugged terrain at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.

"I don't think I've ever done anything in the military that's as physically challenging as the Bataan Memorial March," Davis said. "And the mental portion was even worse."

The Bataan Memorial Death March started in 1989 when about 100 people participated in a march hosted by the Army ROTC Department at New Mexico State University to honor approximately 75,000 American and Filipino World War II prisoners of war who were forced to march some 65 miles in scorching heat through the Philippine jungles to prison camps in 1942. While actual numbers vary, thousands of Filipinos and Americans died during – and after – the forced march from captor brutality, dehydration and starvation.

In 1992, the New Mexico National Guard, from which many of the World War II Soldiers came, began sponsoring the memorial march. It soon moved to the Missile Range where now more than 6,500 marchers from the United States and several foreign countries converge in the rugged desert landscape to honor of those who suffered through the original Bataan Death March.

"Until you experience it for yourself, it's hard to fathom," Davis said. "To just keep going...it's phenomenal."

Davis said he first planned to participate in the Bataan Memorial Death March more than six years ago when Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Davis introduced him to the event. They trained vigorously for the march over the next couple of years, but never went.

In 2013, the pair committed to traveling with the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team to the event, but their plans were axed last-minute due to budget constraints. Still determined, they set out that year to complete their own 26.2 mile ruck march around Lincoln.

"It wasn't the same by any means, but I think it was the per-



Photos Courtesy of Maj. Edwin Davis

Heavy Pack: Soldiers march a marathon length memorial march each year to honor approximately 75,000 American and Filipino World War II prisoners of war who were forced to march some 65 miles in scorching heat through the Philippine jungles to prison camps in 1942.

sonal push we needed to finally get down to New Mexico – by any means necessary," Davis said.

The following year they finally attended the march with the Marathon Team with just one goal in mind: to cross the finish line in under the enforced 14-hour cutoff. But they did much more than that.

At the starting line, more than a dozen Bataan Death March survivors greeted memorial marchers with handshakes and stories that echo with Davis still today.

"To put it bluntly, there aren't words that can explain the magnitude of that moment, shaking hands with those men," Davis said. "What they went through? A 60 mile march, not because they wanted to, but because their lives depended on it. Even after all of it, I can't really imagine. But that feeling lingers with me."

With the faces of the survivors fresh in their minds, both Davis' and a friend – a former Marine – set out to complete two marches that day: their first and their last.

"It was beyond challenging," Davis said. "It was nothing like the 26.2-mile march we did in Lincoln. This was a different beast. Physically strenuous and mentally exhausting; you never know when something is going to go wrong. You don't want to be the one to slow anyone else down, so you keep trying to attack it, but the whole weight of everything really wears on you."

The trio crossed the finish line after nearly nine hours of volunteered mental and physical anguish.

"Blisters are superficial. Toe nails fall off – but they'll grow back. Your traps go numb. The weather is different every year, but always finds a way to beat on you," Davis said. "You want to quit, but you don't. You know you can't. You know, that no matter what you feel, it's worth it – because it will never be as hard as what the survivors – and those we lost – went through. So you keep going, one foot in front of the other, until you *finish*. Not for yourself. For them."

While recovering at the finish line – sitting in the sand completely drained, Davis said their initial thoughts were to never do anything so strenuous again. But after a brief moment of decompressing, they looked to one another and knowingly nodded. They would *have* to do this again.

The following year they had a new goal, to finish in under eight hours. They had trained more for their second round, having gone on multiple 19-20 miles rucking around Lincoln over hills, rocks and gravel. There isn't much sand to train with in Nebraska, but they did their best. They thought the second time around would be easier, but they still hadn't trained their minds.

"You really can't train mentally," Davis said. "Everyone will hit their own personal black hole at some point, when the mental part of the march really gets to you, and it slows the whole group down. But we started the event together, so no matter what we were going to



Thank You: At the starting line of the Bataan Memorial Death March, more than a dozen Bataan Death March survivors greeted memorial marchers with handshakes and stories.

finish together."

One of the most inspiring parts of the memorial march for Davis was the Wounded Warriors. He said whenever he'd start complaining about his own knee pain or his shoulders hurting, he would spot a Soldier battling on through the same heat and sand – sometimes without legs at all. Completely impressed, he and his comrades would always cheer those Soldiers on, and some would smile and reply with a thank you for the motivation – when really they were the ones continuing to motivate Davis and his group.

"Until you experience it and see it with your own eyes, it's hard to fathom," Davis said. "How everyone just keeps going is truly phenomenal."

This time the trio completed the march in eight hours, 30 minutes – just a half-hour over their goal. When they returned this year with a fourth marcher – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cory Languis – they decided they didn't need a goal other than the usual: just finish.

"The march makes you appreci-

ate what you have, in life and in the military," Davis said. "Trudging through the sand in full uniform makes me reflect personally on why I wear it in the first place. It makes me remember what I am proud of, and what I need to be proud of, because of the men who wore it before me. After 20 years in the military, they are why I do what I do."

The four crossed the finish line together after eight hours, three minutes – barely over their previous goal to complete the march in less than eight hours.

Now they're already planning for 2017. Davis encourages any Nebraska National Guard Soldier or Airman who would like to participate in a future Bataan Memorial Death March to learn more by visiting bataanmarch.com, or by contacting him.

"The march is a great opportunity for service members to enjoy comradery while taking it all in," Davis said. "It's a time to reflect on history, on the survivors and on yourself. I'll keep doing it until I can't do it anymore."

Giving back: Warrant officer instructor discusses training

By Spc. William Schneider
Staff Photojournalist

Passing the torch, handing off a baton or leaving a legacy are all ways to describe what is at the heart of what this warrant officer aims to do.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steve Steinike with the 2nd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), will have officially started instructing at Warrant Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland this past April.

"I wanna give back a little bit at the end of my career," Steinike said with a smile. "I've done some things wrong and some things right."

Steinike, who started his Army career in the Army Reserve in 1991, has had many years to learn various things about working in and with the Army. Now he endeavors to impart his wisdom to new warrant officer candidates.

"I hope they can learn something from my experiences," he said.

One of the biggest lessons a student could learn, Steinike said, is networking or connecting with others in the state of Nebraska,

especially through the WOCS.

"The WOCS is a unique tool for information," he said.

WOCS gives the candidates multiple opportunities to interact with other warrant officers across the state and some from other states as well. Those connections build on the camaraderie experienced from attending in the school.

Steinike said the Guard's school is no slouch either saying they are on par with their regular Army counterparts.

"They follow the same guidelines as full-time Army," he said.

Being held to those high standards is helpful since Steinike said a warrant officer is often looked to for information from their unit from the commander to the newly enlisted Soldier. So, knowing who to ask is valuable.

"Warrant officers are very good at helping each other out," he said.

The benefit of being a warrant officer allows an individual some perks of being an officer in the Army, but staying in the military occupational skill of one's choice. This is otherwise known as homesteading. Being a warrant officer is an option for those who want to consider leadership but do not

like the idea of floating around MOS's as a standard officer can often do.

"As a warrant officer you get homesteaded to do what you want to do for the rest of your career," Steinike said.

Warrant Officer Jennifer Fotinos, 2-209th RTI said she enjoys being a warrant officer and working in Human Resources at the same time.

"Where can I go in my point in career to continue leadership skills without getting stagnant?" Fotinos said. "I want to be that subject matter expert. Whether planning ops or getting info, and stay in my MOS."

Like many before him, Steinike appears ready and able to take on the new role of instructor. Yet with all the confidence of many years of experience, he pointed out only one wise fear.

"(My) biggest fear is letting them down," he said. "If I somehow miss a point or something, I just want to see them succeed."

It seems Steinike's heart and passion are going to be well forged in a new generation of solid new warrant officers. They will be ready to take the torch or baton well into the future for more generations for the state of Nebraska.



Photo by Spc. William Schneider

Learning Leadership: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steve Steinike with the 2nd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), endeavors to impart his wisdom to new warrant officer candidates through instructing at Warrant Officer Candidate School near Ashland, Neb., this past April.

Nebraska team prepares for National Guard Marathon

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Staff Photojournalist

This year's Lincoln National Guard Marathon and Half Marathon will mark the 38th straight year that a marathon has taken place in Nebraska's capital city, and the 32nd straight year that the National Guard has come out in force to both run and support it.

The marathon is one of the most anticipated events of the year for many Nebraska National Guard members, as more than 160 Soldiers and Airmen will attend the race in supportive roles. The races, which are put on primarily by the Lincoln Track Club, will include approximately 13,500 competitions including runners from 42 of the 50 states and two of four U.S. territories. Nearly 140 official National Guard participants will be running, including four from Nebraska.

The mission of the National Guard Recruiting and Retention Marathon Program is to utilize "All Guard" Marathon Team members to promote the National Guard to enhance and increase its strength. The Marathon Program works with the National Guard Recruiting and Retention Force at both local and national levels to promote the Army and Air National Guard.

"The marathon is a great venue for finding quality leads," said Sgt. 1st Class Christine Raftery, National Guard Marathon coordinator. "Marathon runners are usually health and fitness disciplined, with incredible drive and determination – all qualities we look for in Soldiers and Airmen."

Raftery said while directly related recruiting numbers aren't available, she is aware of multiple instances where civilian runners were recruited directly into the National Guard based on their interest in being part of the "All Guard" team.

"The runners we've recruited love the program," she said. "It gives them a chance to compete beyond high school and college, and even outside of their local communities. They're already out there running, so why not do it for the military?"

Nebraska National Guard members supporting the marathon will assist with two water stations along the course, moderate start and finish line activities, organize the bag drop location and provide field litter ambulances. They will also present medals to runners finishing the marathon and half marathon on the 50-yard line of Memorial Stadium, on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

This is Raftery's second year as the National Guard Marathon coordinator, and she said she's excited for all the out-of-state competitors to arrive at the starting line.



Photo by Spc. William Schneider

On the Run: The Lincoln National Guard Marathon, one of the most anticipated events of the year for many Nebraska National Guard members, has more than 160 Soldiers and Airmen who will attend the race in supportive roles. The races will include approximately 13,500 competitions including runners from 42 of the 50 states and two of four U.S. territories.

"The best part of the race is watching the runners compete for their own state at this event," Raftery said. "I hope all the participants take away a sense of pride in their accomplishment of competition, and renewed motivation to instill health and fitness objectives in their units or wings to help other Airmen and Soldiers reach their fitness goals."

Air National Guard Capt. Avery Sides, 155th Medical Group physician, is the Nebraska marathon team coordinator. Sides joined the Nebraska team two years ago after making a qualifying time – at least under 4.5 hours for females – at an Omaha marathon six months prior to the Lincoln marathon in 2014. Sides then went on to qualify for the "All Guard" team. In 2015, Nebraska placed ninth out of the participating Guard teams, with an average time of 3 hours 20 minutes.

"Of course we'd like to come in first," Sides said, "but the goal is always to just go out there and do our best."

The Nebraska team currently has seven qualified runners, and four plan on participating in this year's race – though illness and injury can always lower that number further. There are also other Nebraska Guard members using this marathon as a tryout to qualify for this year's state team. If they meet the time requirement, they can run with the team at future events.

"The marathon and the marathon team are great ways for us to get our name out there and interact with the community," Sides said. "People have heard of the National Guard and they've seen our brochures, but they don't always understand what we do. The marathon is a great opportunity for the Guard

to be present in the community supporting others, and for the community to recognize that and support us in return."

A four-time marathon runner, Sides said there's nothing quite like running for the National Guard and the Lincoln marathon is her favorite because of all the support along the way.

"At the marathon, while you're running, you have nothing but time and your own thoughts to work through," she said. "You can reflect on why you joined in the first place and really renew your oaths. I wanted to be part of something bigger than myself and you really feel that at the marathon. It's invigorating and energizing, and just something different to do with other great athletes – all while continuing to serve."

Sides said she's proud to wear her Nebraska team jersey and listen to the crowds cheer her on, even past "the wall" she typically hits around miles 21-22.

"Do I ever feel like quitting?" she said. "I don't think that's ever crossed my mind. It's not an option, just like in the military. You never quit. You push through with everything you have until you reach the finish."

The National Guard Marathon Program encourages and enhances the retention program by instilling physical fitness, self-discipline and spirit de corps among National Guard members from all 50 states and U.S. territories. The Marathon Program provides for quality of life and better well-being for Soldiers and Airmen alike. If you are interested in learning more about how to join the Nebraska National Guard team, you can contact Sides at avery.sides@us.af.mil.

Air Guardsman plans to ruck for Fallen Warriors

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Staff Photojournalist

For the past couple years there has been at least one person participating in the National Guard half-marathon dressed in full-uniform, lugging a rucksack on his back – and this year will be no different.

Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Mark Forster, the Nebraska State Command Chief Master Sergeant, plans to continue what former Nebraska State Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela started in 2013. Forster will ruck 13.1 miles Sunday, May 1, in what he calls the "Fallen Warrior March." The march will run in conjunction with the National Guard Marathon and Half-Marathon in Lincoln.

"Ruck marches aren't usually the way of the Air Force," Forster said. "Our unofficial motto is, if it's more than 100 feet away, drive. And if it's more than 100 miles, fly."

Forster has volunteered with the National Guard at the marathon in the past, usually by distributing water, Gatorade and fruit at an aid station. He appreciates what the National Guard does at the marathon already, but he would like to see it evolve beyond just banners, branding and aid support to be something more.

"We don't look back a lot or memorialize things efficiently," Forster said. "If we let a tradition die out, it's like it never happened. I don't want to see this go. It's the least I can do to honor those we've lost. And it's one time a year for the community to see the National Guard out there honoring and reflecting on past sacrifices."

This is Forster's final year in the National Guard, so he's looking forward to completing this march before his 33-year career comes to an end.

Primarily a cyclist, Forster said he doesn't have much experience running or rucking beyond what's been required of him by the military in the past, but he feels rucking the half-marathon creates more awareness than just running like the other competitors.

"There's just something about putting on the uniform, wearing your boots and carrying that extra weight that shows you're willing to sacrifice a little of yourself to honor those who sacrificed everything," Forster said.

Forster is looking forward to seeing his wife and kids cheering him on at the half-way point. His goal is to complete the ruck march in under three hours.

"Hopefully we are starting a new tradition," Forster said. "I'd like to see the Command Sgt. Maj. or Command Chief always pick up the banner and run with it. One day it will no longer be something Command Sgt. Maj. Valenzuela started anymore. It will be an expected routine that we'll always deliver at the National Guard Marathon; forever recognizing our fallen warriors."

Best Ranger Competition



Photo by Sgt. Jason Drager

Pushing Against the Nation's Best: Staff Sgt. Luke Katz of the Nebraska National Guard competed in the 2016 Best Ranger Competition in Fort Benning, Ga. April 15-17.

Look for his story in the next *Prairie Soldier*.

Cycling in Peterman Armory

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Assistant Editor

Do you need to get in shape for your upcoming PT test? Do you want to get your cardio in without the hard impact running can put on your joints? Then maybe cycling class is right for you.

The cycling class, which is instructed by a group of certified RealRyder instructors, uses RealRyder stationary bikes. These bikes are unique from other stationary bikes in that they tilt while in motion, which imitates the movements of regular bike.

This motion of turning and tilting uses a more diverse group of muscles than a regular stationary bike would; muscles such as your core and arms says Sgt. 1st Class Clifford Poessnecker, one of the RealRyder instructors.

"You get more of an all-around work out compared to what you would with a stationary bike where you're just sitting there," said Poessnecker. "The main thing I find is that your core is more involved."

The cycling class meets in the Peterman Armory in Lincoln, Nebraska on the south end of the drill floor near the 92nd Troop Command supply room. The classes happen each week in the morning Monday through Friday at 6 a.m., and in the afternoon Monday and Wednesday at 4:15 p.m. and Thursday at 4:30 p.m.

The cycling classes provide a great opportunity for anyone who is interested in fitness.

"Anyone in the Nebraska Military Department would benefit from the classes," said Lt. Col. William Prusia, commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion and main force behind getting the cycles ready to ride. "Soldiers and Airmen alike would benefit from cycling classes in order to maintain overall fitness and readiness. Even the most dedicated runners will benefit from taking a RealRyder cycling class to improve overall length strength."

Poessnecker agrees that running can greatly be improved by joining the cycling classes.

"I'm a firm believer in any form of cross training," said Poessnecker. "So any time, you know, if you're preparing for the PT test you shouldn't just run. You should also try other things. And so for instance, earlier this summer I wasn't necessarily a strong runner, but I did a lot of cycling while helped get me in a little bit better shape so when I went running it was much more enjoyable."

"The RealRyder group cycling classes are important because they are fun; a great aerobic and anaerobic workout," said Prusia. "Oh, did I mentioned the classes are fun? Please come join us for a RealRyder workout. You will sweat, a lot, so we require you to bring a bottle of water and recommend bringing a towel."

Join the Facebook Group: Nebraska National Guard RealRiders. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NENGRiders>