

Prairie Soldier

Happy Holidays!

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Ribbon cut for Guard's new Joint Force Headquarters

■ New building brings Nebraska Army, Air National Guard, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska State Patrol dispatch center under single roof for first time

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

As Nebraskans have witnessed over the past few years, tornadoes, floods, and most recently wildfires, are an ever-present threat to the state.

The response to those state emergencies can now be coordinated more efficiently with the completion of the new Joint Force Headquarters building on the south side of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Gov. Dave Heineman joined Nebraska governmental and military leaders for a ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opening the newly-constructed Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters building, Oct. 2.

The new headquarters is a \$28 million, 140,000 square-foot facility that brings together elements of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and a dispatch center from the Nebraska State Patrol. It will serve as the primary state headquarters for the Nebraska National Guard forces, bringing together the Adjutant General's operations, training, administrative, communications and logistical staffs into one facility.

The new headquarters will also house the state emergency operations center and the Nebraska National Guard's joint operations center.

"This is an exciting day as we celebrate the opening of the Joint Force Headquarters and begin a new chapter of Nebraska's history," said Heineman.



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

New Digs: Nebraska state and military leaders officially opened the new Joint Force Headquarters during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Oct. 2. The new headquarters is a \$28 million, 140,000 square-foot facility that brings together elements of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and a dispatch center for the Nebraska State Patrol.

"This headquarters replaces several aging, 1960-era buildings including the Adjutant General's headquarters building and NEMA's underground bunker."

"Our state has always prided itself on its ability to strategically plan for a wide array of potential emergencies and then effectively manage the consequences of such an emergency when it does occur," added Heineman. "Our citizens depend upon us to coordinate and quickly respond when lives and properties are at risk. This facility will allow closer coordination of services to provide immediate and faster response times."

The new facility, which is the product of nearly a decade of planning between federal and state-level agencies, was designed to achieve multiple milestones.

"In developing this new Joint Force Headquarters we set out with a couple goals in



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

It's Official: Gov. Dave Heineman is joined by Nebraska governmental and military leaders as they cut the ribbon during a ceremony officially opening the newly-constructed Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters building, Oct. 2, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

mind," said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general. "First we wanted to replace aging facilities with an energy-efficient and technologically capable Joint Force Headquarters. We also wanted to build a

See JFHQ on 7.

Norfolk firefighting team welcomed home

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Melissa Leaver had been helping her fiancé, Spc. David Buller, a firefighter with the 181st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team from Norfolk, Neb., remodel his house in Wayne, Neb., where they both attend Wayne State College, but when Buller and six other members of the Norfolk-based firefighting team left for a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan in October 2011, the home remodeling was put on hold.

So Leaver decided put her extra wall space to good use.

"I had a blank wall and each week I printed off a word that reminded me of him and I stuck it up there to count the weeks down," said Leaver.

See HOME on 4.



Photo by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Proud Papa: Staff Sgt. Shawn Sullivan, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 181st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team from Norfolk, Neb., is welcomed home to Nebraska after a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan by his 8-year-old daughter, Trista, and 9-year-old son, Dusty, at the South Omaha Readiness Center in Omaha, Neb., Sept. 6.

Contracting team returns home following deployment to Kosovo

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

After having spent nearly a year separated from friends and family, one would've thought that members of the four-person 1969th Acquisition Team would've been chomping at the bit to get to their welcome home ceremony at the South Omaha Readiness Center, Sept. 7.

Don't get them wrong. They were definitely eager to be reunited with friends and loved ones. However, according to the four Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who had just completed a long deployment to Kosovo where they'd been responsible for writing and

administering a mind-boggling amount of contracts in support of American service members currently stationed there, the Guardsmen realized that they still had one more mission to successfully accomplish before the ceremony.

They needed to get flowers. "It was actually my idea," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Rupprecht, who served as the team's contracting officer. "I tried to coordinate it before we got here, but the driver didn't know about it. We had to get flowers."

"That was something that I wanted to do for my spouse and everybody else was on board with it. It worked out really well," said Rupprecht, smiling about the

See TEAM on 4.

Inside

Medics test talents during grueling competition

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Nebraska Air Guard civil engineers train Norwegian Army cadets

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NEWS DIGEST

■ Defense Department installs new flight cancellation policy for temporary duty travelers

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The Defense Department is working with airlines to implement a new flight cancellation policy that will affect air travel for temporary duty travelers, a Pentagon official said, Sept. 27.

Andrea Carlock, chief of the program management branch, which serves as part of the Defense Travel Management Office, discussed the genesis of these changes and the potential impact on DoD travelers.

“Effective October 1, 2012, any authorization that has airline reservations associated with it will be canceled if not approved and ticketed at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled flight departure,” she said.

“Airlines expressed to GSA, as the program manager, that many of our government travelers were making reservations and were not canceling those reservations,” Carlock explained. “Because of the lack of cancellations (for) those reservations, the airlines were losing money. So with that, GSA implemented this new policy.”

According to Carlock, the new policy governs the time requirements for travelers and authorization officials to make and approve arrangements for flights before travel occurs.

“The government employee needs to keep in mind that when you make a reservation, be it through (Defense Travel System) or the Commercial Travel Office... you’re doing just that, making (a) reservation,” she said. “If your approving official does not approve that authorization, that ticket cannot be issued,” Carlock said. “So it could impact your mission and it could increase the cost of travel.”

“How could it impact your mission?” she continued. “You could get to the airport and there are no more flights available for that particular timeframe.”

Or it could increase costs, Carlock said, if the original flight was booked in a lower class of service and now only a higher class is available. This could generate increased costs to the department if authorizations aren’t approved and ticketed in a timely manner.

Carlock explained requirements for short-notice travel service members and their authorization officials should be aware of. “If you’re going TDY on short-notice travel, and you’re traveling within 72 hours of your flight departure time, you need to ensure that your (authorizing official) approves that authorization and (it is) ticketed,” she said.

“If they do not approve it within 24 hours of creation, the reservation will be canceled,” Carlock advised.

For travel departing within 24 hours, she said, individuals need to ensure that they get their authorizations approved and ticketed six hours prior to scheduled flight departure time to prevent cancellation.

Carlock noted this information is available through the Defense Management Travel Office website, and the Commercial Travel Office will provide information on travelers’ itineraries regarding cancellations.

A pop-up system is also being imple-

mented for the Defense Travel System, she said, advising those intending to make flight arrangements of these new requirements.

“It’s very important for travelers to ensure that they’re monitoring their authorizations,” Carlock said. “The onus is on the traveler to ensure that the approving official approves the authorization and that they actually have a ticket that’s been issued.”

■ Marines charged in Afghan desecration incident face trial

QUANTICO, Va. (AFPS) — Charges against two Marines were referred to trial by courts-martial Sept. 21 for their alleged involvement in urinating on deceased Taliban fighters and for posing for unofficial photographs with human casualties in Afghanistan.

The incident allegedly took place during a counterinsurgency operation near Sandala in the Musa Qala district of Afghanistan’s Helmand province on or about July 27, 2011. The charges were referred to courts-martial by Lieutenant General Richard P. Mills, the Commanding General of Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

Marine Corps Staff Sgts. Joseph W. Chamblin and Edward W. Deptola also were charged for other misconduct that allegedly took place during the same operation, including being derelict in their duties by failing to properly supervise junior Marines, failing to require junior Marines to wear their personal protective equipment, failing to stop and report the misconduct of junior Marines, failing to report the negligent discharge of a grenade launcher, and failing to stop the indiscriminate firing of weapons.

Deptola also is charged with failing to stop the unnecessary damaging of Afghan compounds and wrongfully and indiscriminately firing a recovered enemy machine gun.

In August, three Marines received nonjudicial punishment for misconduct that came to light during several investigations into the desecration incident, shown in a video that became public and circulated widely on the Internet in January.

Disciplinary actions regarding other Marines will be announced at a later date, officials said.

The charges are accusations against the individual Marines, officials emphasized, and the accused are presumed innocent and are guaranteed the right to due process under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

■ Roth contributions now open to all active duty troops

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Beginning Oct. 1, active duty members of the Army, Navy and Air Force became able to contribute to the Roth Thrift Savings Plan as part of their investment planning, Defense Financing and Accounting Service officials said, Sept. 28.

The after-tax contributions will be electronically deducted from service members’ pay accounts.

Active duty service members also can start

Dempsey: Leadership, trust essential to battling suicide

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Military leaders have changed the way they approach suicide prevention, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said during a recent interview with American Forces Press Service.

Driven by awareness of the cumulative effects of 10 years of war, leaders are working to build resilience in the force from the moment a service member enters the military, Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey said.

“This is not something we can switch on and off like a light switch,” Dempsey said. “These programs have to be enduring, they have to be pervasive and we have to have leaders committed to it.”

It’s important for people who feel overstressed to realize that it’s OK to feel that way, he said. But it’s also important for them to “understand the number of programs that are... available to help young men and women make their way through the different stresses in their lives.”

Ultimately, he said, the chain of command has to be as attuned as possible to troops’ needs and commit to helping service members deal with the stresses in their lives.

Suicide prevention is a significant challenge, the chairman said, and solving the challenge will require awareness, commitment and understanding from leaders, service members and veterans.

Trust is the foundation upon which the military profession is built, Dempsey said, and developing and maintaining that trust is crucial to making progress against the military’s suicide problem.

This demands time and dedication from leaders, he said, and might mean simply being present in the barracks at certain times of the day or night, stopping by the motor pool to talk with a young mechanic or whatever else it takes to be visible and supportive.

“If we get to the point — and we’re trying — where young men and women trust each other enough that if they feel these impulses, that they will approach a battle buddy or wingman or shipmate — whatever we happen to call them — with their fears, their anxieties, their stresses, and that the battle buddy cares enough about them to

trust the chain of command to deal with them, then I think we’ll make a difference,” Dempsey said.

In its search for ways to get out in front of the military’s suicide problem, the DoD also is examining the roles science and medicine play in the issue, he said, looking at everything from enzymes to chemical imbalances.

“I would describe this as an effort to literally approach this issue in all of its complexity,” the chairman said. “I think maybe the most important thing that we’ve identified over the last ten years certainly is just how complex this issue is.”

The recognition of the problem’s complexity is what allows the military to attack it from multiple angles, he said, “from the resiliency aspects of it to the team building aspects of it to the leadership aspects to the medical aspects of it, and to keep learning as we go. That’s the important thing; we have to keep learning about this.”

The suicide prevention effort “is all about balance, it’s all about commitment, it’s all about trust and it’s all about leaders taking ownership of this — from the most senior leaders in the uniformed force to the most junior,” Dempsey said.

“But we’ve got to keep at this because it’s not just a military problem; it’s actually a societal problem,” he added. “I think we have made significant progress in addressing the medical aspects of suicide and suicide prevention — depression, post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury — we’re partnered not only with military medicine, but into the civilian sector as well with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Affairs hospital system.”

Dempsey said increased cooperation between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense “is beginning to make a difference in our ability to manage these issues.”

The chairman noted DoD is also partnering with the National Football League, which has had similar issues with concussions and their long-term effects. That partnership, signed earlier in September, is intended to raise awareness of traumatic brain injury and to further research into its causes, he said.

their Roth TSP contributions now through their online MyPay accounts, which offer the fastest, easiest and most secure method to manage both Roth and traditional TSP contributions. The second option open to service members is to submit a TSP-U-1 form to their finance office.

Active duty Marines, Guardsmen, reservists and civilians paid by DFAS were able to begin making contributions to the program in June, officials said.

Additionally, the other branches of the National Guard and reserves will be able to make Roth TSP contributions by mid- to late 2013.

The timeline difference between active-

duty and other service members resulted from an interim solution for reserve component members, which didn’t meet Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board requirements, according to DFAS.

While work continues for options that will be available more quickly and satisfy the law and FRTIB requirements at the same time, the new schedule will allow time to make systems changes and electronic deductions that meet all requirements. DFAS officials said.

To begin making Roth TSP contributions, service members should determine how much of their pay is eligible.

A Roth TSP worksheet can help make the calculations.

Guardsmen support state wildfire response

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Summer of 2012 ended pretty much the way it began when members of the Nebraska National Guard were called up to state emergency active duty to help fight several major fires in northwestern Nebraska.

A total of five Nebraska Army National Guard helicopters — including the organization’s newly arrived UH-72 Lakota — helped provide aerial firefighting support to local and regional firefighters battling a number of wildfires located in Dawes and Sheridan Counties in late August and early September. Also assisting in the effort were ground “red-card” trained firefighting crews from Chadron’s 1057th Light/Medium Truck Company, who integrated in with local firefighters battling a massive blaze near Rushville, Neb.

The Guard’s 72nd Civil Support Team and Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) also supported the operation.

According to Nebraska Emergency Management Agency offi-



Photos by Jodie Fawl, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

Fire Briefing: Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons speaks to federal, state and local fire responders during an evening meeting at Crawford, Neb.

cial, the fires burned nearly 74,000 acres in what became known as the Region 23 Complex fire and 44,354 acres on the Nebraska side of the border with South Dakota in what became known as the Wellnitz Fire.

The fires were part of a historic outbreak of wildfires in Nebraska affecting approximately 300,000 acres this summer as of mid-October. The Nebraska National Guard was involved in providing aerial firefighting support to a number of these fires.



Smokey Smile: Capt. Timothy Buskirk, 1057th Transportation Company, smiles after returning from duty on the fire line.

Prairie Soldier

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

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

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Creating Realism: Staff Sgt. Shawn Humphrey, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, puts the finishing touches on Cadet Travis Clarke's "bullet wound" before the start of the "Squad Medic Challenge."



Through The Underbrush: Pfc. Jacob Harrer, Spc. Tony Steinhauer, Sgt. Dustin Wondercheck and Spc. Christopher Mercure attempt to negotiate a litter through the maze of Camp Ashland's eastern training area underbrush, Sept. 7.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

First Aid: Sgt. Jason Dillon, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), conducts an evaluation of an "injured" Spc. Christy Collins, during an improvised explosive device detection lane, Sept. 7, at Camp Ashland, Neb., during the annual "Medic Squad Challenge."

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

While most Nebraskans' attention was centered on the University of Nebraska Cornhusker's upcoming matchup with UCLA out in Los Angeles, Calif., a group of 32 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers spent Sept. 7-8 focused on a competition a little closer to home when they participated in the annual "Medic Squad Challenge" at Camp Ashland, Neb.

According to Capt. Christopher Hansen, support operations officer for the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, the goal of the two-day competition was to give Soldiers assigned to the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) an opportunity to test their skills against their unit mates while allowing unit leaders to gauge their company's technical expertise and military readiness.

Hansen said the challenge pitted teams of three to five Soldiers against each other during a multi-hour competition to determine bragging rights from within the 313th Med. Co. over who was the top medical squad in the unit.

The challenge presented the competitors with nine separate lanes consisting of everything from treating gunshot wounds and responding to a mass casualty incident, to delivering a baby or identifying an improvised explosive device and successfully reporting it to higher headquarters without suffering a casualty.

Hansen said the lanes, which were chosen from a series of tasks that each medic must be able to successfully do in order to keep their emergency medical technician certification, was designed to be a fun way to see how the teams of medics – many of whom had never worked with each other before – would react under pressure.

"We want to see how they're going to react," Hansen said. "Even though (some of the tasks) aren't something that they see very often during exercises, we wanted to see if they're still training in all of the areas."

"It was a good opportunity for the commander and the command staff of the 313th to see where the training needs of the unit lie," he added.

For the Soldiers who participated, the challenge provided a good way to bring some competitiveness to a unit exercise while also

Bragging Rights

Medic Squad Challenge lets Nebraska medics pit skills against fellow Guard Soldiers



Working Together: Pfc. Sherry McBride and Spc. Lawrence Lind, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), work together to patch up a 'civilian' injured by an accidental gunshot, under the ever-present eyes of an evaluator during the medical company's annual "Medic Squad Challenge," conducted at Camp Ashland, Neb., Sept. 7-8. The challenge required the unit's medics to tackle a number of military and medical tasks.

practicing some of the many critical skills that medics may be called upon to respond to during overseas or domestic operations.

"It's time well-spent on our training," said Pfc. Sherry McBride, a 313th Med. Co. medic, as she treated a "gunshot wound" alongside of a roadside trail that zig-zagged across the tree-strewn east Camp Ashland training area. "It's been fun working with other people who aren't with your regular squad."

McBride, a stay-at-home-mother of two daughters in civilian life, added that it was



On Guard: Spc. Tessa Harding, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), provides security while two members of her squad attempt to treat the victim of a gunshot wound, Sept. 7, during her unit's annual "Medic Squad Challenge" at Camp Ashland, Neb.

also exciting getting out of the armory and practicing skills in a field environment.

"Being outside and being able to use our skills to accomplish tasks is a lot of fun," she said, adding the skills she was practicing – particularly treating a gunshot wound – are critically important. "Gunshot wounds can vary, from what I've been told, and (this competition) gives you a taste of what it could be like. It gives you an idea to maybe prep you... you'll never be fully prepared, but just the idea of it and practicing is good."

Sgt. Andrew Jarvis, an emergency care sergeant who works as a firefighter and EMT in civilian life, agreed.

"It's all good information for them to keep up their skills," said Jarvis shortly after his squad successfully completed the IED identification lane. "Being National Guard, we don't get to do this all the time. It's something to keep their minds fresh."

"It's kind of a perishable skill if they don't keep up on it," Jarvis added.

Fellow squad mate Sgt. Jason Dillon, a health care sergeant who works as a civilian machine operator in Seward, echoed that thought.

"This is my first time doing (the challenge.) I'm enjoying it. It's fun," Dillon said, adding the competition not only allowed the Soldiers to be able to be competitive with their fellow comrades, it also allowed them to individually improve their skills.

"It makes us competitive with the rest of the company, but at the same time, it helps us hone our skills where we can make mistakes here and learn from them so we don't make those same mistakes in a real world situation," he said. "Mistakes can be corrected when no one's life is on the line, unlike when we're deployed where you can't erase a mistake or fix a problem."

According to Hansen, that's exactly the type of environment unit officials hoped to create.

"I think that's why people join the Guard," he said. "They want to be challenged. It's a break from their everyday reality. It's a challenge that not everybody gets to do... it's a chance to be somebody else and be part of something bigger than what they're already doing in their civilian lives."

As to who earned this year's bragging rights? According to Hansen, the team of Sgt. Dustin Wondercheck, Sgt. Jerry Rhein, Spc. Christopher Mercure, Spc. Tony Steinhauer and Pfc. Jacob Harrer claimed the title as the best medical squad. Hansen added unit officials envision future challenges involving all of the Nebraska Army National Guard's medics competing in both team and individual competitions.

"We're really looking to build that medical community within the Nebraska Army National Guard that will allow us to become even more proficient in collective and individual skills while also giving the state's medics the opportunity to really put their skills to the test against their fellow medics."

TEAM continued from page 1.

temporary pause to the start of the ceremony caused by the impromptu stop at an Omaha flower shop during the Soldiers' final journey from Omaha's Eppley Airport to the welcome home ceremony.

Nobody seemed to mind, however. In fact, several of the governmental leaders who had gathered at the readiness center to thank the Soldiers and their families for the sacrifices they made during the deployment, kidded the Guardsmen about their stop.

"Tonight, I have to say you guys are the coolest bunch of guys," said Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, who represented Gov. Dave Heineman at the ceremony. Referring to the flower stop, Sheehy said: "I don't think that we have ever seen that before."

According to Capt. Justin Pederson, team commander, the flowers were simply a small token of the Soldiers' appreciation for the sacrifices their families and loved ones made to help them succeed in an important mission.

"It's been an outstanding team," said Pederson as he addressed the crowd gathered to welcome his Soldiers home. "Everytime I would turn around, people were telling us we were the best contract team that had been there in about four rotations."

"We did our jobs quietly in the background, didn't make a lot of noise," he said. "But we supported the troops... we supported the mission in any way that we could... and all of the U.S. Army requirements, saving money when we could."

According to Spc. James Kahl, a team contracting specialist who kept a journal during his deployment, he was having a hard time fully comprehending how much his team accomplished in Kosovo.

"I know it's a span of a year, but once it's over you look back and think, 'I did a lot of stuff,'" said Kahl, who said he paged through his journal during the flight back to Omaha.

Kahl, who admits he had probably the least amount of experience on the team, said he was able to learn a tremendous amount about contracting such services as vehicle leases, media airtime and updating gym equipment.

"We cut a lot of money and we



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Moment To Treasure: Hands filled with flowers and gifts forgotten for a moment, Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Rupprecht hugs his daughter, Sophie, after he and members of the 1969th Acquisition Team arrived back in Omaha, Sept. 7, after a yearlong deployment to Kosovo.

saved a lot of money," he said. "We also changed a lot of processes that were outdated."

Rupprecht said the team's mission was simply huge. "Every year, approximately \$150 million goes through Camp Bondsteel and we managed a significant piece of that," he said. "Our team, we de-obligated a lot of money and decreased contracts. It saved taxpayer money."

That work received numerous congratulations from the govern-

mental leaders during the formal welcome-home ceremony.

"It's pretty amazing when you read through (your) accomplishments," said Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, assistant adjutant general, Army. "We've been in Kosovo for many years and this is the unit that took a contract for vehicles and reduced it by \$500,000. That's pretty amazing."

"The citizens of the country need to thank them for a job well done..."



Congratulations: Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, assistant adjutant general, Army, congratulates Capt. Justin Pedersen on a job well done while Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy applauds. Pedersen led a four-person contracting team to Kosovo where they were responsible for a wide array of contracts designed to support for U.S. service members currently serving there.

and they did it efficiently and effectively," he added.

Sheehy echoed those thoughts. "You have prepared for your mission, you have executed your mission and your mission is now complete," he said. "I want to congratulate you on a job well done."

According to Rupprecht, the biggest satisfaction he received was being able to finally hug his wife, Melissa, and their two children, Sophie, 3, and Jaxson, 20-months.

"It's a good feeling," he said. "I've deployed before, but I didn't have kids then. So it's much more special this time."

His wife agreed. "I think the best part was just watching (Sophia) run up to him," said Melissa Rupprecht. "We kind of rehearsed what she was supposed to do, but she did just instinctively anyway. It wasn't anything that I had done, so that was pretty neat."

According to Melissa, she and the kids counted time by filling a jar with Skittles candies and then taking a candy out for each day Jeremy was gone. Initially, Sophia was the sole participant of the daily routine, however as months went by, Jackson also began to participate.

"I had to double the number of

Skittles in the jar," Melissa said, laughing.

"Today, we got to eat the last one," she said, adding that she was "tremendously" grateful the deployment was over.

According to the leaders, the families deserve the thanks of the entire state and nation for the sacrifices they made during the Kosovo mission.

"I want to say thank you to the mothers, fathers, wives and grandparents for you have done to serve our state and nation while your loved one was over in theater," said Sheehy. "You, too, have sacrificed the last year while they were gone."

Navrkal echoed those thoughts, adding that the Nebraska National Guard is committed to helping the Soldiers and their families successfully transition back into the lives put on hold.

"Even though you are back from Kosovo, I want you to know that we still think of you as being deployed here for the next few months because we want to make sure that you, even though you're back home, take the time to reintegrate back with your families and that you take time to utilize the services that we have back in Nebraska," said Navrkal.

HOME continued from page 1.

Some of the many words she chose included brave, courage, love and faith.

"Those were some big ones," she said. "My wall was covered with words."

On Sept. 6, Leaver no longer needed the word-wall to remember Buller. That's because he and his fellow Soldiers were welcomed home during a ceremony at the South Omaha Readiness Center in Omaha, Neb.

Also waiting for her loved one was Kate Sullivan, wife of Staff Sgt. Shawn Sullivan, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the seven-man team.

"It's been hard to contain the excitement, so now that the day is finally here it's nice to have some emotion about it," said Kate.

Kate was joined by the couple's two children and multiple other family members. She said the year apart was challenging, but she was able to lean on their family for help when needed.

Finally a van carrying the seven unit members arrived, to the delight of the crowd, and the Soldiers were reunited with their loved ones.

After Sullivan got what his 8-year-old daughter, Trista called a "big fat hug," he struggled to put his emotions into words.

"I'm just ecstatic to be home," he said. "My family means the world to me... it's just nice to be home to get back and make up for lost time."

Following the happy reunions, the Soldiers were formally welcomed home by multiple dignitar-



Marked: Melissa Leaver brushes makeup off of her fiancé, Spc. David Buller, a firefighter with the 181st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team from Norfolk, Neb., during a welcome-home ceremony at the South Omaha Readiness Center, Sept. 6.

ies. Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy thanked the Soldiers for their service. He also thanked the family members for taking care of the homefront while their loved ones were away.

"As I travel around the state of Nebraska, I want you to know how proud Nebraskans are, and I am, of the service you provide to our state to our nation and to others in other countries," said Sheehy.

"You trained for your mission, you executed your mission and this afternoon your mission is complete," he added.

Sullivan was then called to the podium for remarks before the Soldiers were released to their families. "I know we could not have been near as successful overseas if

we hadn't had the strong support of our families here on the homefront," said Sullivan.

"I had the honor and privilege to take six of the best Soldiers I've known overseas to accomplish a mission and we did just that," he added. "They handled every situation that they were presented with, with the utmost of ease."

While in Afghanistan the 181st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team provided an array of firefighting and emergency response services at a small base. According to Sullivan, they built their own facility from which to operate and then were responsible for manning it at all times.

"With minimum manning the guys were on 24-hours, seven-days-a-week," said Sullivan. "So they really didn't have a lot of down time - they were always on-call for duty."

"It's been an honor and a privilege to serve as the station chief for these guys on deployment," he added. "It's an experience and an opportunity that I'll cherish for the rest of my life."

And now that the Soldiers are home, they can get back to the things they've missed while they've been gone.

For Sullivan, it was simple. He said he looks forward to time with his family. He said he also missed green landscapes and the smiles of children - neither of which were abundant in Afghanistan.

For Buller, he said this day has been a long time coming and it's hard to believe it was finally here.



Photos by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Welcome Embrace: A member of the 181st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team from Norfolk, Neb., gets a long-overdue embrace from loved ones during a welcome home ceremony at the South Omaha Readiness Center Neb., Sept. 6, following a yearlong deployment Afghanistan.

He will once again start planning a June 2013 wedding with Leaver, watch some Nebraska Cornhusker football, and start college again in January.

And as for the last word Melissa

Leaver printed off and stuck to that once-empty wall, now filled with inspirational words, to count down the time until her fiancé came home?

"Finally."

Nebraskans in Norway

Air National Guard engineers help train Norwegian military cadets

By 155th Air Refueling Wing

Public Affairs Office

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Civil Engineer Squadron traveled to Rygge Air Base, Norway, for a two-week training exercise, Aug. 11-25.

The deployment was part of a NATO exchange program in which U.S. air base engineers train in Norway in the summer and then host the Norwegians later in the United States.

This year's projects included building a storage facility for canoes, mobile storage for a golf course, two environmental stations, and repairing roadways used for counterimprovised explosive device training.

The Nebraskans also helped build small house-like structures for the IED course, fixed poles and netting at a paintball course, and created a new office space in the military working-dog building.

The projects were designed by Norwegian Military Academy cadets who are pursuing degrees in Military Civil Engineering, with the stipulation that the projects had to be completed within a five-day timeframe.

"I'm impressed, really impressed," said Norwegian Army Maj. Anders Weel, an operations officer with the 137th Air Wing's Force Protection Squadron, about the work that was completed this year. He said the projects were quite ambitious, but his cadets were willing to put in the extra work.

Still, Weel admitted that while he knew the cadets had the willpower, he wasn't sure that they had the necessary experience or working knowledge to successfully complete the projects. So, Weel said he relied on the knowledge and experience of the 155th CES, and wasn't disappointed.

On the first Monday of the exercise, the members of the 155th CES got down to business, finishing all of the projects by the following Wednesday.

The second week also provided an opportunity for six 155th CES firefighters to train with their Norwegian counterparts and examine several controlled burns and simulated emergency scenarios. The training included a flash-over simulation in which the trainees started a fire next to a shipping container and then observed from the bottom floor how the fire travelled through the layers overhead.

Next the Guardsmen participated in a simulated automobile extraction, helping pull victims from a vehicle and treat their "injuries." The Nebraskans and Norwegian firefighters also conducted a close-line and nozzle pattern technique where a three-man crew uses a fire hose to enter a building, under live fire conditions, and learn how to use patterns with the hose to extinguish the fire.

Finally the two combined to perform an urban search and rescue exercise in a two-story building. Again, under live fire conditions that caused smoke to minimize visibility, they searched and extracted "victims" from the building.

"Our firefighters got to do some training in their environment that we can't do on our base," said Maj. Barry Veen, 155th CES commander. "They would have to travel to a simulated training site to get the training they received."

155th CES Airmen also had an opportunity to learn NATO counter-IED strategies from the Norwegian Force Protection Squadron. This two-day training incorporated classroom and course training, and included a counter-IED lane, basic operational techniques, search patterns for finding IEDs, and recognizing items out of place in the normal terrain or environment.



Photos by Senior Airman Bristol Prai

Level Best: Tech. Sgt. Ryan Buck (left) and Capt. Ryan Watson (center), 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, work with a Norwegian Army cadet to level a base plate prior to the erecting a new pole to hold perimeter netting for a paintball course on Rygge Air Base, Norway, during an August deployment. The deployment was part of a training program to assist the cadets who are working toward degrees in military civil engineering.



Cabin By The Lake: Norwegian cadets work alongside members of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron to erect the first wall of a new canoe storage shed on Rygge Air Base, Norway, during 2012's Operation Impeccable Glove. The canoe shed was one of seven projects planned by the Norwegian cadets to be completed with help from members of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron.

Veen said it was a good opportunity to take advantage of a training environment.

According to Veen, the Norwegian cadets put together the projects as a part of their academic course work, formulating the design of the structures, while the Nebraskans worked with the Norwegians to better understand each others' design and construction procedures.

Additionally, the Nebraska Airmen had to use foreign tools and equipment to build the structures while providing the cadets hands-on training, said Veen. While a language barrier was an obstacle, both the cadets and Airmen learned a lot from each other, he added.

Master Sgt. Thomas Thompson, 155th CES water and fuel systems maintenance superintendent, said he didn't know what to expect as far as what projects his crew would be taking on, but regardless of the challenges, he knew they would get the work done.

"We had people from multiple shops that had no experience. We brought them together and got them to realize that they could do something like that," said Thompson. "We had several people who never had any experience with any type of framing or construction whatsoever... we got together and



Trial by Fire: A firefighter from the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron participates in a practice burn during training on Rygge Air base in Norway during an annual training in August.

figured out what our strengths and weaknesses were and made a project."

"I think for me, being a small town farm boy, it wasn't that big of a stretch, but for other people I know it was... to come in and do something that they had never done before, it was pretty tough," added Thompson. "But one thing about the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, nobody quits. If they can't get it done quickly, they will not stop until they get it done. The cadets in Norway, I think we pretty much exceeded their expectations."

Thompson said there were some challenges during the deployment, but nothing they couldn't overcome.

"In the United States we usually have an overabundance of tools



By The Book: Tech. Sgt. Travis Laframboise, 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, goes over plans for an environmental station with a Norwegian Army cadet during a deployment to Rygge Air Base, Norway, in August. Nebraska's engineers were participating in an exchange program where U.S. base engineers train in Norway for two weeks then Norwegian conscripts travel to the U.S. later to receive further training.

when we're working on stuff and they pretty much gave those cadets nothing to work with," said Thompson. "So that was quite an undertaking trying to drive a 16-penny nail with a finishing hammer."

Airman 1st Class Matthew Cook, a Nebraska Air Guard water and fuel maintenance specialist, said his first overseas deployment didn't give him a lot of opportunities to use his specialty. Still, he added, the work was rewarding.

"I thought it was really fun," said Cook, who worked on the counter-IED course. "The first week we worked a lot, but it was fun work. It wasn't my job, so it was something new and it was cool to work with people that weren't from our culture."

"It was kind of just a refresher on working with wood again... and the metric system, we used a lot of that, so that was different," said Cook.

Nebraska Air Guard boom operator named Air Guard's top enlisted aviator

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

It all started with an eighth grade school project: what do you want to be when you grow up? A junior high student and Boy Scout, Mathew Ellison decided he wanted to work in aviation and as he grew up he spoke about his idea with his Boy Scout leader, Dick Johnson, who, at the time, was a recruiter with the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Johnson helped Ellison participate in a Boy Scout-sponsored program at the Nebraska Air National Guard base for several years, allowing him to get acquainted with pilots and other service members within the unit. Those experiences helped Ellison decide the Nebraska Air Guard was where he wanted to plant his career.

Ellison visited the base and developed professional relationships with the flyers. He began the enlistment process as soon as he turned 17. And although becoming a pilot was not exactly what he wanted to do after years of observing the unit members, he knew he had to work as close as possible with the aircraft.

Now a part of the Nebraska Air Guard for nearly 21 years, Master Sgt. Ellison, a boom operator at the 155th Air Refueling Wing, was recently recognized when he was named the recipient of the Air National Guard's Henry E. Erwin Outstanding Enlisted Aircrew Member of the Year Award. Created by the U.S. Air Force, the annual award recognizes the top enlisted aircrew member in the active Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard.

In earning the award, just the second in the history of the Nebraska Air National Guard, Ellison was chosen over 3,000 Guard aviators.

Ellison said his family told him they were happy someone finally recognized him and his shop for what they've always done.

"It's been a bigger deal to my family than it has to me. I don't see anything different this year than what I tried to do the other 20 years," said Ellison, a native of Lincoln, Neb., who originally enlisted into the Nebraska Air National Guard as a RF-4 Phantom II crew chief in 1991. "Things just kind of fell into place this year. It validates not what I have done, but what the whole boom shop, what all 20 of us have done."

"It's still kind of surreal the fact that there are 19 other guys who do the same thing I do out here, and then the other 3,000 who are in the Guard," said Ellison. "I mean, everybody is gone from home for months-on-end and don't normally get a whole lot of recognition for it."

According to Ellison, who transitioned to a boom operator in 1993 when the 155th ARW moved into the KC-135R Stratotanker aerial refueling mission, he is particularly grateful to receive an award named after a legendary enlisted Airman.

"My grandfather flew back in World War II," said Ellison. "He was in the Air Corps. You look at what those guys had to do compared to what we do when we deploy. Those guys were away from home two years at a shot. If they lived through 25 missions, they were lucky."

"I just got finished flying 21 in



Photo by Senior Airman Mary Thach

The Hardware: Master Sgt. Mat Ellison, a boom operator with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, poses with the Red Erwin Award at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Ellison was chosen over more than 3,000 other Air Guard aviators for the award, which recognizes his dedication to the unit and his career, leadership, flying skills and personal sacrifices.

36 days," said Ellison who returned from an overseas deployment on Oct. 9. "To listen to what Erwin did, it's completely different. What those guys did is so far above and beyond anything we've done or will ever do. It's hard to even compare yourself to them."

"Red" Erwin was a radio operator of the aircraft, *City of Los Angeles*, a B-29 Superfortress, during World War II. Erwin's duty on his last mission, April 12, 1945, was to drop phosphorus smoke bombs from the aircraft's bomb chute onto a chemical plant at Koriyama, Japan. After pulling the pin and releasing a bomb into the chute, the bomb malfunctioned and the phosphorus ignited in the aircraft, burning at 1,100-degrees and filling the plane and cockpit with smoke.

Erwin, blinded and severely burned, felt his way through the aircraft as he tucked the bomb between his bare right arm and rib cage toward the only accessible exit in the aircraft, the co-pilot's window. He managed to throw the bomb out the window and then collapsed.

His crew extinguished the fire on Erwin's body and flew him to Guam where he received immediate medical attention. Erwin suffered life-threatening burns, but survived the horrific injuries.

Erwin was awarded the Medal of Honor within hours of the incident to ensure he received the award while he was still alive. But Erwin ultimately survived and was presented many awards following his recovery in honor of his heroism.

The Air Force created the Red

Erwin Award, or Henry E. Erwin Outstanding Enlisted Aircrew Member of the Year Award, in 1997 to honor Airmen, noncommissioned officers and senior noncommissioned officers in flying career fields who have demonstrated selflessness and dedication to their service, much like Erwin displayed.

Ellison, who said it's normal to be away from his family at least three months every year, received the award during a formal ceremony Oct. 13, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Presenting the award was Chief Master Sgt. Steve Pyszka, the career enlisted aviator career field manager from the National Guard Bureau.

Ellison was recognized for his dedication to the unit and his career, leadership, flying skills, and even personal aspects of his life.

Ellison said that while appreciative of the award, he really hasn't done much more than the 19 other boom operators in the unit, all of whom have been highly deployable since 1995.

"The base, as a whole, has no idea how much time the people in this building spend on the road every year. It's constant," said Ellison. "We come in and out under the radar and people don't have any clue that we are gone a third of the year and have been since 1995. It's always when the big groups of people go and go do something for six months you hear all about it."

Ellison said in addition to receiving the Erwin Award, he was honored to have his wife coin him with a golden eagle coin.

"I am honored to have received it and honored to represent all the booms, especially the 155th. It showcased to everyone what we do on a daily basis around here."

155th Air Refueling Wing awarded Maj. Gen. Stanley Newman award

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing was recently awarded the Airlift/Tanker Association's Maj. Gen. Stanley F.H. Newman Award. The award recognizes the 155th ARW for its contributions to the accomplishment of the Air Force's mobility mission and its efforts over the past year.

"It honors the best ANG unit from the airlift or tanker unit," said Col. John R. Anderson, 155th ARW vice commander. "Any of the units across the ANG that are Air Mobility Command assigned can compete. The award is judged by a panel at AMC. The criteria submitted (are) mission impact, deployments, awards, and inspections."

According to Anderson, the AMC judge panel saw a few things made the 155th ARW stand out.

"The two biggest things that put us over the top were operation contributions—we flew more in the last year; we came close to doubling the amount of hours we flew in support of operations," said Anderson. "That was clearly significant. The thing along with that making it more impressive was the community engagement."

The 155th ARW's community involvement is extensive. It participates in the annual Paint-a-thon, where members of the Nebraska Air National Guard volunteer to paint homes of those who lack the ability or resources to do it themselves. In September the Nebraska Air Guard hosted the 2011 Guardians of Freedom Air Show with the help of the community, which drew in more than 200,000 people. The Lincoln/National Guard Marathon is also hosted annually in Lincoln, Neb., where Airmen from the 155th ARW volunteer to provide marathon support, with many actually participating in the marathon to show their unit pride.

Also, for the last several years a 155th ARW KC-135R Stratotanker showcases a Nebraska community worldwide thanks to nose art submitted by members of that community.

Anderson said the unit's history of outstanding inspection results also weighed heavily with the judges.

Air Guard honors Seward with nose art

By Staff Sgt. James Lieth
Staff Photojournalist

A native of Seward, Neb., and current freshman at Concordia University will have his artwork displayed around the world on the nose of a 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker, after his artwork was unveiled during a ceremony, Sept. 8, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

The artwork is part of the 155th ARW's annual nose art program, an annual tradition in which members of the Nebraska Air National Guard nominate a Nebraska town or city and a contest is held by local high schools students to create a design that represents their community.

Crayton Noe, the artist behind this year's winning entry, is a Marketing major at Concordia University in Seward. He created a design that involved a bulldog and bluejay, mascots of Concordia University and Seward High School, breaking through a brick wall. There are a few other structures in the background representing Seward that inspired his design.

Col. Keith Schell, commander of the 155th ARW, explained the



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Winner: Nebraska's 155th Air Refueling Wing was recently awarded the Airlift/Tanker Association's Maj. Gen. Stanley F.H. Newman Award.

"We have a history of excellence as far as inspections go," said Anderson. "Those things made us stand out in the eyes of the judges."

The people of 155th ARW are responsible for the wing's significant accomplishments, statistics, deployment numbers, and mission impacts, he said.

"It's not an honor for me, it's an award for the wing," said Anderson. "It's the strength of the team across the base and what they have done that has allowed us to win this award. There isn't one individual who has won this award, it's the whole."

"It's great to be singled out amongst our ANG peers and across all the mobility forces to say, 'Yes, what you have done is truly outstanding,'" he added. "I think it's another point of pride for the unit in that we not only do our business how we should, but we do it well and we excel."

Anderson said receiving the award was only the beginning of what the members of the 155th ARW can accomplish.

"I think it serves not only as a motivational point from what we have accomplished, but what we need to continue to strive to do to move to further heights in the future."

The wing was formally recognized with the award during a banquet in Anaheim, Calif., Oct. 31.

significance of the ceremony, and the history behind nose art: "The aircraft nose art has a long tradition within the military and the Air Force," said Schell. "Gaining popularity during World War II, nose art was created by ground crews and supported by pilots. Aircrews depended on the aircraft for their survival during these trying times."

"The art was a way to come together as a team, both ground and aircrew, to ensure the safety of all aboard," added Schell. "It unified the crew and it's like what we are doing here today—we're unifying the Air National Guard Nebraska with the state of Nebraska and with the city of Seward."

Noe said he was honored to have the opportunity to display his artwork on the aircraft and work with the Nebraska Air National Guard.

"I feel ecstatic. Now that I'm here and it's actually hit me and I'm realizing what's happening, it's just phenomenal," said Noe. "You guys do so much for us, it's nice to give back and do something as small as making an art design for you."

Noe's artwork will be kept on the nose of the aircraft for one year and will be seen by people across the country and the world.



Championship cuisine

■ 1167th Brigade Support Company aims for Nebraska Army Guard's second national cooking championship

By Spc. Riley Huskey
Staff Writer

Tasked to prepare a meal for 100 hungry Soldiers training in a tactical field environment on a blustery autumn day, 19 members of a Nebraska Army National Guard unit set out to do far more than that...they set out to win a national championship.

The field service section of the 1167th Brigade Support Company competed in the national level of the 45th annual Philip A. Connelly competition, Oct. 27, at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. The unit is one of seven National Guard field kitchen teams from across the United States competing for the coveted award.

If the Nebraska team is successful in winning the championship, they would join fellow Soldiers from the Guard's 267th Maintenance Company, who won the award last year, as the only two Nebraska Army Guard unit winners in the history of the competition.

"This is the Superbowl of the field service sections," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Teresa Domeier, who led the state evaluation team that selected the 1167th BSC to compete for the regional competition, which the unit won, qualifying it for the national championship round.

"They have worked hard to perfect this meal—tweaking the recipe for tastes and presentation. At this level, we have to step back and let them do it," she said. "This is their chance to compete and excel."

Evaluated by a committee of two senior Army officials from the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence, headquartered at Fort Lee, Va., and one civilian from the International Food Service Executives Association, the Nebraska Army Guard kitchen section Soldiers were graded and scored on a 1,000-point evaluation. From food preparation, sanitation and safety, to presentation, portion size and adherence to the recipe card, every aspect of operations was assessed.

"The standardization of the



Photos by Spc. Riley Huskey

Dinner is Served: Soldiers from the 1167th Brigade Support Company served a meal for 100 Soldiers during the national-level competition of the 45th annual Philip A. Connelly competition at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., Oct. 27. The menu including chicken parmesan with pasta, tortellini soup, green beans, salad, parmesan bread and white cake.



Gobble, Gobble: Soldiers from the 1167th Brigade Support Company put their knife skills to the test when they made a turkey out of peppers.



Sweet Ending: Spc. Matthew Plantenberg, a food service specialist with the 1167th Brigade Support Company, squeezes strawberry glaze over white cake for the dessert during the national-level competition of the 45th annual Philip A. Connelly competition at Greenleaf Training Site.

their work cut out for them: burying lines, installing latrines, erecting maintenance tents and heaters, and beyond.

A positive attitude and a great team eased the effort, he said.

"For me it's pretty cool because prior to going to the field sanitation course, I knew nothing about it at



Whisky Business: Spc. Marisa Martinez, a food service specialist with the 1167th Brigade Support Company, whisks strawberry glaze during the national-level competition of the 45th annual Philip A. Connelly competition at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., Oct. 27. The 1167th BSC was competing to join the 267th Maintenance Company, who won the award last year, as the only two Nebraska Army Guard units to win the national award.

all," Prather said. "It's really cool just to learn something new and be a part of the entire event. And now that we've made it this far, it's awesome and I really hope we win."

Seven members of the team were responsible for preparing and serving the meal to Soldiers and the evaluators. Each task was carefully delegated and timed with precision as the meal was also graded for being served on time and at the correct temperature levels.

"I think the experience was great," said Spc. Marisa Martinez, a food service specialist. "I definitely learned a lot and it taught us how to work better as a team. Honestly, I think we will win."

Win or lose, 1st Sgt. Jason Grams, 1167th BSC first sergeant, said he couldn't be happier with his team's effort. He said the team's accomplishments over eight short months, including qualifying to compete in the Department of the Army-level contest, speaks volumes about their drive for success.

"That is amazing," Grams said. "It just shows they have the drive and the determination to excel in this organization for sure; it was an opportunity for them to learn and grow in ways that they never imagined."

The top two National Guard teams will be notified in early next year.

JFHQ continued from page 1.

headquarters that would represent the best in interagency cooperation and response to the needs of our fellow Nebraskans and our nation, and I believe we've been successful in both of these goals."

The new facility has also been recognized for being energy efficient. "This new building includes a number of energy conservation innovations and we're particularly proud of the building's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification, which is a nationally accepted benchmark for design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings," said Lyons.

Beyond the building's energy savings, this year's wildfires displayed the value of having the state's emergency response agencies under one roof, along with much of the state's aviation assets a stone's throw away.

"The ability to literally be within steps of each other, from what the National Guard brings to bear, upon the orders of the governor, like we did in the wildfires. You have aviation literally right across the street," said Lyons.

"To have the command and control here, aviation right across the street, State Patrol dispatch center, state Emergency Operation Center — where a lot of the state agencies come in during an emergency, just makes us that much more responsive and helps us collaborate in a much quicker manner in this new facility," added Lyons.

"As one of the people who will work in this facility, I'm excited to be here today as we begin an exciting new chapter in the Nebraska Military Department's history," said Lyons.

After touring the facility Heineman said he was impressed.

"I wish I had my office out here," said Heineman. "This is great."

Heineman said it's the people who make



The Hardware: Scissors await Gov. Dave Heineman and numerous Nebraska governmental and military leaders to cut the ribbon during a ceremony officially opening the newly constructed Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters building Oct. 2, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. The new headquarters is a \$28 million, 140,000 square-foot facility that brings together elements of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and a dispatch center from the Nebraska State Patrol.

the difference during any emergency and they deserve world-class facilities from which to work.

"I'm very proud of the work of these dedicated teams of Nebraskans for what they do for our neighbors and friends," said Heineman. "I've seen them in action almost every day and particularly this summer they did an incredible job in the many challenges that we faced with the various emergencies across our state."

"This Joint Force Headquarters will provide the resources to fully support the state-wide collaboration that is an essential element in our success as a state."



Photos by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Moving In: Sgt. Eric Wolford, a human resources specialist with the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, puts away boxes of military awards, Sept. 17, after moving into the Guard's new headquarters. The new Joint Force Headquarters now brings multiple Guard offices together under one roof.

Two days, three airborne operations



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Checking The Wind: (From left) Sgt. Justin Saner and Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Johnson, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply), take a careful reading of the winds, Nov. 2, in preparation for an airdrop exercise at the "Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb.

Rigger unit practices critical skills during airborne cargo exercise

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's airborne rigger community had the opportunity to practice a different aspect of their military specialty in November when they conducted an aerial cargo drop at

"Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb., Nov. 2.

According to Sgt. Justin Saner, an aerial delivery sergeant with Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply), it was the first time that the unit, which typically prepares parachutes for paratroopers' use during an airborne opera-

tion, practiced dropping cargo in some time.

"The last time that we got to drop (cargo delivery systems) was last January," said Saner. "This is the first time that we've dropped high velocity in the entire history of Detachment 2, 165th... so it's kind of a mile marker for our unit."

Saner said the goal for the day's



They're Away: A pair of cargo pallets drop from the rear cargo door of a Minnesota Air National Guard C-130 cargo airplane, Nov. 2, at the "Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb. The drop was part of an exercise by the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply), to demonstrate its ability to successfully deliver supplies via parachute to Soldiers operating in remote environments.

operation was fairly simple. They wanted to practice dropping one cargo delivery system that weighed approximately 1,200 pounds utilizing a low velocity parachute, and two cargo packages – weighing approximately 1,000-1,100 pounds – using high velocity systems.

"The higher velocity ones are designed to get to the ground faster," said Saner. "So, if you have an aircraft that is coming into an unsafe dropzone, they can drop less fragile things like sleeping bags, clothing, food and water. We use lower velocity for ammunition and items that are more sensitive."

Saner said it took a crew of four Soldiers approximately two-and-a-half hours to prepare a single CDS. It takes an additional 30 minutes to pack, prepare and inspect the accompanying parachute and then, prior to loading onto a Minnesota Air National Guard C-130 for the final delivery, each of those systems

had to be inspected again by the Air Force loadmasters and Army Guard riggers.

Needless to say, hours are invested into ensuring that each cargo system is ready to be dropped from the aircraft, said Saner, which adds to the level of anxiety that each member of the team feels just prior to the drop.

"You really are hoping you see a parachute come open and the load slow down," he said. "There are a lot of factors that go into this: aircraft speed, wind and everything else that comes into play. There are a lot of moving parts that you don't see on the ground. There's a lot of things that are breaking apart in the process that are supposed to break."

"Being a parachute rigger, seeing it come out... you know everything that is going on, but you are definitely hoping to see a parachute come out, open up, completely

See **CARGO DROP** on 9.

Omaha Soldiers spend November drill conducting unique airborne jump

By Capt. Andrew Nelson
Staff Writer

Not many airborne units in the U.S. Army are allowed to jump directly out the back of a C-130. The Nebraska National Guard's 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) is one of them.

It's not a bad way to leave a perfectly good airplane mid-flight, compared to going out a door on the side – the traditional Army way of parachuting.

"You get the shock of the 'chute, but you don't get the blast from the (propeller)," said Sgt. Andrew Dale, a medic. "I liked it a little bit better, actually, because you have more room."

The Omaha-based 195th FSC conducted a tactical combat equipment parachute jump over Husker Drop Zone in eastern Saunders County during its November drill.

The 195th FSC is one of three airborne units in the Nebraska Army National Guard. It conducts its jumps the same way, by and



Aircraft Instructions: Sgt. Justin Saner, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply), provides pre-jump instructions to fellow unit mate, Pfc. Johnathan Rhodes, Nov. 2, at the North Omaha Readiness Center prior to an airborne exercise scheduled to take place the next day at "Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb.

of the Fort Bragg based 528th Sustainment Brigade, which supports Army special forces units around the world.

onto a smaller target.

That's why the 195th FSC jumped using SF-10 parachutes, which are steerable and specifically designed to deliver paratroopers "onto small, rugged drop zones at high elevations," according to the website of its manufacturer, Airborne Systems.

For the members of the Omaha-based 195th FSC, drill started on Nov. 2, at the unit's armory, the North Omaha Readiness Center northwest of the city. It was a day of rehearsals and refresher training, required because the unit only jumps once a quarter, or four times per year.

The Soldiers were required to stay overnight in the armory on Friday and had a 3:15 a.m. wake-up-call Saturday.

"We don't want people to go out and get stupid," said Sgt. 1st Class Edward Whitehill, readiness

"I wanted to be in a high-speed unit with a high-speed first sergeant... along with the excitement of jumping out of an airplane."

— Sgt. 1st Class Bryce Preister
195th Forward Support Company
(Special Operations) (Airborne)

This has to do with its connection to the active Army's special operations community. The 195th FSC is part

of an airplane is all about precision – getting fewer paratroopers



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Getting Ready: Spc. Shawna Tibbets, 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), makes final adjustments to her pack, Nov. 2, at the North Omaha Readiness Center. Tibbets was scheduled to participate in an airborne exercise at "Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb., the following morning.

sergeant for the 195th FSC. "We want them to stay focused."

By 4:30 a.m., the Soldiers were on the way to the Nebraska National Guard's 133rd Airlift

Neb., where they put on their parachute harnesses, loaded onto a C-130 from the Minnesota Air National Guard's 133rd Airlift

See **JUMP** on 9.

Two days, three airborne operations

Paratroopers get back into harnesses in November

By Spc. Jason Drager
Staff Writer

With a slight chill in the air, almost no wind and the sun setting on the horizon, the conditions were near-perfect, Nov. 3, for a late-day airborne jump by Soldiers assigned to Troop C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-167th Cavalry.

This particular exercise was conducted from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter over "Husker Drop Zone" near the Mead Training Site. The jump helped satisfy the requirement that a Soldier must conduct at least four jumps per year to remain on jump status.

Having just recently returned from deployment, this was the first opportunity for a lot of the Soldiers in the unit to perform a jump in quite a while. For Spc. Joshua Moldrup it was his first jump since graduating from Airborne School more than two years ago.

"Jumping is always really exciting," said Moldrup. "It's always a relief when your chute opens, but then you quickly realize that you still have to land."

Moldrup wasn't the only one overjoyed with the idea of jumping out of an aircraft. Excitement and eagerness was the consensus among all the Soldiers.

Lined rows of Soldiers milled around and chatted next to the drop zone. On order, they carefully donned their nearly 60 pounds of gear and then waited for one of the jumpmaster pre-inspectors to make sure their gear was properly positioned. The inspectors carefully examined each jumper; the smallest oversight could lead to catastrophe.

Once everyone had been inspected and approved, the crew of the helicopter was given the thumbs-up and its two engines roared to life. The deafening noise put smiles on the faces of the Soldiers because after waiting all day, conducting pre-exercise tasks, getting inspected and then waiting some more, the moment had finally arrived for the first group of jumpers to board the aircraft and ascend into the early-evening sky.

The Chinook flew off to the west and out of sight. A short time later, the Chinook returned overhead.

One-by-one, the jumpers walked off the back-end and into a free fall 1,500 feet from the ground.

In an airplane, like a C-130, Soldiers will usually jump from a side door. However, in a Chinook, paratroopers line up and walk



Photos by Spc. Jason Drager

Sunset Jumpers: A pair of Troop C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-167th Cavalry, Soldiers drift toward the ground during a late afternoon airborne exercise at "Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb.

out the back door.

"Being my first time out of a chopper, it was a little scary," said Spc. William Jones. "But it was by far the smoothest jump I've had."

"The free fall is about 4-6 seconds," said Sgt. Andrew Cook. "You float down, you hit and it hurts no matter what. But it's a lot of fun."

Nearing the ground, jumpers released the bulk of the gear strapped to their midsections. It dangled from a rope beneath them to ensure the equipment hit first and also so the jumpers didn't land on it.

During the landing, a jumper must cover their head with their arms, keep their feet together and knees slightly bent. Upon impact, the jumper rolls with the drift of their parachute to absorb the impact.

There are five points of impact, according to Moldrup. First, the bottom of the feet hit, followed by the side of the calf, then the side of the thigh, then the buttocks, and then



Final Adjustments: Staff Sgt. Matthew Spalding (left) receives some assistance with his parachute pack from 2nd Lt. Stephen Marten prior to the Nov. 3 airborne exercise.

lastly the under arm.

Once landing successfully, the jumpers packed their parachutes, gathered their

equipment and carried on with the mission, which on this night was a long-range surveillance patrol. Soldiers were especially excited about this particular jump because of the mission that followed it.

"Usually we just jump and then leave," said Staff Sgt. Matthew Spalding. "So today being different is exciting and also a good training opportunity."

There were anywhere from 8-10 jumpers per pass. The helicopter then circled back a short time later for the next group of jumpers.

Once the Chinook was empty, it landed to pick up the next batch of anxious paratroopers.

Summing up the adrenaline rush that is parachuting out of an aircraft, Cook compared it to riding a rollercoaster. "The anticipation leading to the top can be nerve-wracking. Walking-off the edge, just like getting to the top point, can be scary. Then it's all fun on the way down."



On Target: A pallet of "supplies" nears the ground during an airborne supply drop exercise, Nov. 2, by members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply).



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

All Together Now: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Seward-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Airdrop Supply), tip a pallet of "supplies" upright following an airdrop exercise. The pallet was filled with a variety of items, such as sandbags, to simulate the weight of an actual cargo pallet while also allowing members of the unit to gauge whether they had successfully delivered it to the ground.

CARGO DROP continued from page 8.

inflate and slowly descend," he added. "It's very, very satisfying to see them come down like they are supposed to and when you get up to the load and find out nothing is broken, everything worked as it was supposed to and the unit that received it got their equipment."

According to two other members of the unit, watching the cargo drop out of the C-130 and then safely land on the ground beneath a huge, billowing parachute was an "awesome experience."

"It's amazing," said Pfc. Kaio Uhing, a 2011 graduate of Seward High School who is now studying Civilian Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"I love watching stuff fall out of planes and hit the ground," Uhing added.

"I think it's really awesome," added Spc. Dakota Kingham, a fellow parachute rigger who recently joined the unit after graduating from Norfolk High School in 2011. "When it comes close to the ground, you think that stuff is going to break, but then it lands pretty

good. It's fun. Not a lot of people get to do this."

Saner said missions like the November operation are part of the reason why the unit has attracted so many new Soldiers to its ranks: the opportunity to do something few others get to on a drill weekend.

"It instill confidence in our Soldiers. They have seen (the parachutes) open, seen them come down to the ground, which instills pride in them," he said, adding: "It also gives them a great satisfaction."

JUMP

continued from page 8.

Wing and took off.

As the plane droned toward Mead, excitement blended with fatigue.

"You get your eyes closed, thinking about the steps you're going to make," said Sgt. 1st Class Bryce Preister, water purification team leader.

The back ramp dropped as the C-130 neared the drop zone. There was no blast of cold air like in the winter, or of hot air like in the summer; the paratroopers would later describe the weather as perfect, with the wind at only a few knots. The open ramp offered a sweeping view of the eastern Nebraska farmland. Whitehill, who served as a jumpmaster, compared it to being in the front row of an IMAX theater.

Leaving the aircraft is like being sucked through some giant airborne vacuum, until one's parachute opens and the noise stops, allowing the paratrooper to drift toward earth. But the calmness can be deceiving, for things remain dangerous.

"I'm not really afraid of jumping or hitting the ground," Dale said. "I'm afraid of running into another jumper or having someone steal my air... It's harder to control other people."

About 200 feet off the ground, paratroopers dropped their packs and then the carrying case holding their weapons; both were still attached with lowering lines.

In the last few feet Soldiers are taught to put their feet and knees together and prepare for a solid five-point landing.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Checking It Out: Staff Sgt. Gregory Wortman makes last-second corrections to his rucksack prior to a Nov. 3 airborne exercise conducted by members of the 195th Forward Support Company (Light Airdrop Supply).

"I just hope I'll be able to get up after I land," Preister said.

Everybody did. There were only a handful of sprained ankles. But when upwards of 150 people jump out of an airplane, that is to be expected.

Sunday was spent recovering from the jump, including shaking out the parachutes.

The jumping, while exciting, is not the only thing drawing Soldiers to the 195th FSC. Being airborne requires an extra level of motivation, and if spending a long weekend every few months to do a risky activity is what's required to Soldier with such quality people, the troops here are willing to do it.

"It seems like airborne Soldiers are more disciplined and willing to go the extra mile," Dale said.

But for many the thrill of being a paratrooper is part of it too.

"I wanted to be in a high-speed unit with a high-speed first sergeant," said Preister. "Along with the excitement of jumping out of an airplane."

Reliving Old Memories

Nebraska Air Guard legend tours bomber he piloted during World War II

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

Staff Writer

In 1942, Clarence Christensen, Jr. was a 20-year-old mechanic working in his father's garage; World War II was gaining momentum and the U.S. Army was short on B-24 Liberator pilots.

So when Christensen received his draft notice, he decided to take fate into his own hands and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, where he trained to become a U.S. Army Air Corps pilot.

"I got my draft notice and decided if I was going to be a pilot I better enlist," said Christensen this past summer. "So, I enlisted in the flight training program."

"The first thing they did (was send us) to Manhattan, Kansas, and they had some light aircraft — the piper-cub vintage — to see if you had any aptitude at all," he said. "I flew a little bit in-flight... I got through to pre-flight in San Antonio."

Back then, Army flight school took a couple of years complete and involved "a whole lot of flying" before a pilot candidate was deemed sufficiently ready to pilot an aircraft, said Christensen. For Christensen, the work paid off as he successfully completed his training in 1944 after finishing B-24 transition school at Fort Worth, Texas. Christensen graduated in Class 44b, the second class in 1944.

Soon after graduation, Christensen found himself assigned to the U.S. Army's 15th Air Force, flying bombing missions for the 464th Bombing Group out of Pantanella, Italy.

According to Christensen, who became simply known as "Chris," he and his crews flew 35 combat missions over Italy and southern Germany, striking the Axis' industrial and supply routes. According to the World War II veteran, he and his crew had some close calls as they flew through the heavily-contested, flak-riddled skies of Europe, however they were never shot down.

This past summer, 67 years since he'd flown his final combat mission in the venerable four-engine bomber that he came to trust, Christensen — now a retired Nebraska Air National Guard lieutenant colonel, had the opportunity to climb aboard a B-24 again when the aircraft made a visit to Lincoln, Neb.

Sitting in front of the cockpit controls that he knew so well, the 89-year-old Christensen pointed



Nebraska Air National Guard photo

Hall Of Fame Pilot: Then-Capt. Clarence Christensen poses in front of his Nebraska Air National Guard jet shortly after winning the 1958 Ricks Trophy.

out several gauges, dials and knobs, adding: "It was all coming back."

Although Christensen's early flying career was undoubtedly defined by the skills and experiences he had in the B-24, his legacy of service wasn't confined to World War II, however. One of the early founding members of the Nebraska Air National Guard, Christensen joined the Lincoln-based 173rd Fighter Squadron in 1949, transitioning from the big four-engine bomber to the smaller, single-engine aircraft the unit flew. Christensen soon proved himself again as a capable flyer. In fact, his crowning achievement may have come in 1958 when he won the Ricks Trophy.

According to the book, "*Nebraska's Militia: The History of the Army and Air National Guard (1854-1991)*" by retired Capt. Doug Hartman, the competition combined maintenance, speed and gunnery.

"Christensen and his crew trained for the competition for several weeks to prepare for the contest. The maintenance crew even put a new engine in Christensen's plane. 'We turned that engine inside out,' said retired Senior Master Sgt. Ken Orr, 'and polished it from front to back to ensure we got the best performance out of it.'"

"By the time Captain Christensen entered that competition," said Orr, "he knew his limits and he knew the limits of his aircraft."

According to Hartman, on Sept. 21, 1958, Christensen flew his F-86 Sabre over an 850-mile course, which included the interception



Photo by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

Proud Veteran: Retired Lt. Col. Clarence Christensen poses in front of a vintage World War II B-24 bomber, July 17, in Lincoln, Neb. Christensen, who flew a similar aircraft during 35 combat missions over Italy and southern Germany, had the opportunity to visit and tour the visiting airplane and relive some of his memories of World War II. The visit was coordinated by retired Lt. Col. Chuck Ranta, a fellow veteran of the Nebraska Air National Guard.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

All Coming Back Again: Retired Lt. Col. Clarence Christensen peers out of the pilot's window of a B-24 bomber, much as he did before each of the 35 combat missions he flew during World War II.

of an enemy target near Panama City, Fla., ground refueling at New Orleans, and a dash to the finish line at Dallas, Texas.

"He beat his nearest competitor by eighteen seconds, with a total elapsed time of one hour, forty-eight minutes and twenty seconds," wrote



Photo by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

Ever The Pilot: 67 years after flying a B-24 bomber into combat, retired Lt. Col. Clarence Christensen inspects a similar bomber on July 17 in Lincoln, Neb. Following World War II, Christensen would continue to make history as one of the early members of the Nebraska Air National Guard.

Hartman.

Christensen continued to serve in the Nebraska Air National Guard until his retirement in 1978. He was named to the Nebraska Aviation Hall of Fame in 1993.

Following his tour of the B-24,

Christensen, ever the consummate professional, gave this piece of advice to the current generation of military pilots and aircrew: "Fly safe," he said. "A lot of lives are lost because of screwing around and not using your head."

Camp Ashland truck driving instructors greet new boss

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

One of the smallest battalions in the Nebraska Army National Guard gathered at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall, Sept. 14, to welcome a new commander to its ranks.

During a formation made up of Soldiers responsible for helping train active, Guard and reserve Soldiers to become truck drivers, Lt. Col. David Rasmussen took command of 3rd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

According to Col. Mark Stockstell, commander of the 209th RTI, Rasmussen joins the organization at an important moment in the organization's history.

"3rd Battalion has always stood up well and set the bar," said Stockstell, adding that the unit will continue to be responsible for responding to major changes in the way the Army trains Soldiers to hold the 88 M truck driver specialty.

"It's a small battalion, but it's a good, quality battalion with some solid Soldiers," said Stockstell as he welcomed Rasmussen to the organization.

According to Rasmussen, who follows

in the footsteps of Lt. Col. Curtis Abendroth, who left the unit earlier in the year to assume command of the 734th Transportation Battalion, he's excited to be part of the battalion.

"It's a privilege to take over the 3rd Battalion," said Rasmussen. "Our objective is to train Soldiers. We're going to train the best 88 Mikes available. The best truck driver training is going to be taking place in Nebraska."

"I've worked with many of you before and I'm looking forward to working more with you," he added.

Abendroth, who served as commander of the battalion from April 2010 until this past May, was presented the Meritorious Service Medal for his time with the battalion.

According to Stockstell, Abendroth accomplished much during his time at Camp Ashland.

"The 88 Mike team is a phenomenal team with quality instructors and I really appreciate your being there for them and working with them through their growth," Stockstell told the departed commander.



Abendroth



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

New Command: Lt. Col. David Rasmussen (left) accepts the colors of the 3rd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), from Col. Mark Stockstell, commander of the 209th RTI, during a Sept. 14 change of command ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Abendroth said he learned much about the battalion and their extraordinary support of developing the U.S. Army truck driver corps during his assignment to Camp Ashland, adding that he knew very little about the battalion's mission prior to assuming command.

"It was a team effort," said Abendroth as he thanked the staff and instructors for the

work they did during his tenure. "It's very sad for me to leave Camp Ashland because I just love seeing the Soldiers marching around. It took me back to basic training and (advanced individual training)."

"The Soldiers we trained... I have a bunch of them now," he added. "And they're some of the best we've got."

Practice Makes Perfect

Fourth agribusiness development team prepares for deployment

By Spc. Riley Huskey
Staff Writer

After nearly three weeks of combining all the knowledge and skills learned since they were notified of an upcoming deployment, members of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4 completed the final missions of their pre-mobilization annual training, Oct. 20.

Pre-deployment Training and Assistance Element instructors, carrying numerous lessons of war, spent the better part of the Oct. 9-21 annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site helping members of the Guard's agribusiness team better understand the challenges ahead of them.

Staff Sgt. Jennifer Feldt, the team's hydration noncommissioned officer, said the PMAT training brought all the elements of the ADT's training together, allowing the Guardsmen to have a clearer picture of the deployment ahead.

"The PTAE (instructors) we have are very motivated, very knowledgeable and they really care about us," Feldt said. "They ensure we're getting realistic scenarios, real discussions and it is actually applicable – it really feels like we are learning things we need to learn for this deployment and not just going through the motions."

That was particularly important for the 10 primary members of the ADT No. 4, two alternate members, and two members of the 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company (Airborne), who were leaving on individual mobilizations.

The agribusiness mission will include 10 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard, one member of the Nebraska Air National Guard and two Army Reservists.

According to ADT No. 4 leaders, this particular deployment will be



Day's News: Capt. Brandon Burton, Nebraska National Guard Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4, meets with a simulated village leader to discuss agricultural projects, Oct. 20, at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., during pre-mobilization annual training for members of the team that will be mobilizing for duty in January.

extremely important as members of the Guard team will be helping prepare Afghan leaders for an upcoming transition to greater local control.

"What we're looking forward to on this deployment, because things are getting mature, is continuing on the mission, but readying the (Afghan) Provisional Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock for the upcoming transition," said Lt. Col. Donald Kneifl, ADT No. 4 commander and Agricultural officer in charge. "It is preparing them to do the outreach and the extension to the Afghan people, to use their folks to do what ADT has

been doing previously."

The preparatory training for the ADT No. 4 mission has been as diverse as those hand-selected for deployment. From working and training with the University of Nebraska and the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, to traveling to the USDA Watershed Management Course in Dallas, Texas, and the Agricultural Development for Afghanistan Pre-deployment Training course at Fresno State University in California, the team has worked hard to build well-rounded competencies in agribusiness.

Of those chosen to participate in

the mission, a registered nurse, a deputy state surgeon, and a legacy ADT operations officer are among the ranks.

"I have prepared for two deployments previously and this the best training I have had by far," said Spc. Jacqueline Timmerman, a forestry specialist. "With my degree, this is a really good deployment to go on because the experience will directly translate to the civilian job force; I'm really looking forward to seeing how everything works and incorporates together."

"I'm a farm kid," said Kneifl. "The idea that you can go and help out — help the people (farm) — was

continued to give impressive support to Soldiers," said Martin, who was presented with the Meritorious Service Medal for his work leading the command.

Martin said during the past year, thousands of Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Nebraska State Patrolmen and Nebraska Department of Corrections personnel conducted training at either Camp Ashland, the Mead Training Site or the Greenleaf Training Site.

Additionally, he said, Soldiers expended more than 600,000 live rounds at the Greenleaf Training Site's marksmanship ranges while shooting more than 200,000 blank rounds during training exercises at Camp Ashland and the Mead Training Site.

Martin said the organization also continued to work toward modernizing the capabilities of the training areas to better prepare deploying Guardsmen for the challenges they face in places like Afghanistan and Kosovo.

Training Center Command additionally supported a number of high-level visits, including ones by a senior military leader from the Czech Republic and the Nebraska federal congressional delegation.

"It has been a wonderful time," said Martin, adding the members

of his team were the essential ingredients for his success. "Thank you Training Center Command personnel for your commitment and selfless service for your fellow Soldiers, community, state and nation. You truly embodied the Training Center Motto: 'Warriors Serving Warriors.'"

Martin is a 1989 graduate of Arapahoe High School, a 1991 graduate of McCook Community College and a 1993 graduate of the University of Nebraska at Kearney where he received his bachelor of Science degree in Finance and Real Estate.

He is also a 2000 graduate of the University of Nebraska where he received his master's degree in Business Administration.

Martin enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1988. He received his commission as a second lieutenant in 1993 and has served in a variety of leadership and staff positions at the company, battalion, brigade and state level. He is also an overseas deployment veteran, having served with the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade during its 2010-11 deployment to Iraq as the executive officer for the 325th Military Intelligence Battalion.

According to Col. Richard Dahl-

man, commander of the 92nd Troop Command, Martin and the Soldiers of the TCC made numerous contributions to the operational readiness of the entire Nebraska National Guard.

"Soldiers of the training center supported it all," said Dahlman, adding that the organizational Soldiers supported all types of training for Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and civilian entities. "The training never stops... a fact the Soldiers of the Training Center Command know all too well."

"You've done a great job," said Dahlman, adding that Martin deserves enormous credit for helping shape the focus of his team's efforts. "You started new programs while embracing old traditions in training... Lieutenant Colonel Martin's dedication to leading the Training Center Command over the past year have made this command a better organization."

Dahlman then challenged the incoming commander to keep the focus on developing effective training support that meets the needs of the current challenges.

"(Lieutenant Colonel) Finley, I challenge you," he said. "You were hand-picked for this position. You have all the right skills. (These Soldiers) won't let you down."



A Little Help: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4 work together to evacuate an "injured" patient during a pre-mobilization annual training exercise, Oct. 20, at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



On Patrol: A member of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 4 conducts a patrol, Oct. 20, at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., during the Nebraska National Guard's ADT No. 4's pre-mobilization annual training. ADT No. 4 is set to deploy to Afghanistan in January 2013.

intriguing, interesting and seemed challenging to me."

"All in all, we have gone through the total package of training to prepare us to do our Soldier tasks overseas as well as help the Afghans build capacity in farming and agribusiness in their economy. I think we're getting pretty close to being ready to go," said Kneifl.

He added the team worked tirelessly to study past ADT missions, combing through reports about what worked and what didn't work, while also constantly communicating with members of Nebraska's ADT No. 3, currently in Afghanistan.

The training has been successful and the motivation and morale of the team is high, Kneifl added.

Feldt agreed.

"I believe in the mission. I'm ready to go. I'm ready to do it," Feldt said. "We get to be Soldiers and we get to be people. We get to do a little bit of humanitarian and sustainability, and really work with the people. I really feel we will be doing something for the greater good."

The team is currently scheduled to deploy in January 2013.

Training Center Command welcomes new commander to organization

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Training Center Command welcomed a new commander to the helm of the organization during a change of command ceremony held Sept. 9 at Camp Ashland, Neb.



Finley



Martin

During a ceremony before the assembled member of the command responsible for supporting unit training at the Guard's three major training areas, Lt. Col. Ross Finley assumed command of the unit from Lt. Col. Shane Martin.

According to Martin, who had commanded the organization since September 2010, the command accomplished much in support of the Nebraska National Guard's ongoing training efforts.

"During this past year, the Training Center Command has

of his team were the essential ingredients for his success. "Thank you Training Center Command personnel for your commitment and selfless service for your fellow Soldiers, community, state and nation. You truly embodied the Training Center Motto: 'Warriors Serving Warriors.'"

In accepting the organization's colors, Finley said he was ready for the responsibilities and work the position entails.

"I'm humbled by your selection of me to serve as the commander here," Finley said. "I'm honored to take this challenge as we move forward over the next few years."

"Lieutenant Colonel Martin, thank you for leaving the command in such good shape," he added. "And to the command, I'm committed to you, your families and the mission."

Finley is a 1981 graduate of Palisades High School and a 1990 graduate of Kearney State College where he received his bachelor of Arts degree in Education.

He enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1981 and received his commission in 1989 after graduating from the Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland, Neb. Finley has since served in a variety of leadership and staff positions at the company, battalion and major subordinate command level.

Finley recently returned to Nebraska following a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan as a member of the Nebraska National Guard Afghan Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, where he served as an engineering officer.



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Proud Nebraska Candidates: (From left) Sgt. 1st Class Tonya S. Schwanke, 2nd Lt. Trent A. Wilson, Sgt. Matthew A. Tacha and 2nd Lt. Luke M. Johnson stand by their Officer Candidate School guidon during the Sept 15 officer candidate graduation ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb. Wilson and Johnson were pinned second lieutenants, while Schwake and Tacha accepted their certificates of eligibility.

Four Nebraska Guard Soldiers graduate from interstate Officer Candidate School

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

When it comes to the National Guard, it's about neighbors helping neighbors.

The Nebraska Army National Guard officer corps welcomed two new second lieutenants while two more Soldiers accepted their certificate of eligibility into the officer ranks after graduating from the Iowa-Nebraska Officer Candidate Class 55, Sept. 15, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Iowa's Officer Candidate School is a Camp Dodge-based commissioning program conducted by the Iowa National Guard's 185th Regional Training Institute. Nebraska's 209th RTI worked in conjunction with Iowa's program to teach 17 months of leadership training, which included two weeks of annual training followed by one weekend of training per month. It concluded with an additional two weeks of annual training.

This class was unusual compared to classes before it.

"It was kind of different because in our class two people dropped out like a week before we went to Phase One," said new 2nd Lt. Trent Wilson. "The four of us joined up with Iowa."

The Nebraskans commuted back and forth to Iowa for the training, bringing the size of the class to 15 candidates.

"Training in a different state was a challenge," said new 2nd Lt. Luke Johnson. "As a class we became very close, having the extra six hours per drill weekend locked in a (General Services Administration) van gave us a chance to drive each other nuts or come together as a team and build each other up."

"We chose the latter and worked hard to help each other to make it to this day," said Johnson.

According to the candidates, they were proud of their accomplishments during their journey through OCS and were also honored to get the signatures and best wishes of several Nebraska state senators.

"It feels amazing and honorable," said Wilson. "Especially when you go over and look at all those pictures and you see all the senators signing

to you, that's when it really hits you. Somebody is so proud of you."

But the candidates knew they couldn't have made it through the program without the knowledge of the cadre.

"We had many officers that put hard work and dedication into our development as leaders," said Johnson.

Graduating from OCS Class 55 were Trent A. Wilson and Luke M. Johnson. Accepting the certificate of eligibility were Tonya S. Schwanke and Matthew A. Tacha.

Earning the awards for Distinguished Honor Graduate and the physical fitness award was Officer Candidate Luke Johnson.

Both Johnson and Wilson agreed they were ready to challenge themselves and start their new careers as commissioned officers.

"I'm looking forward to learning and challenging myself," said Wilson. "I want to make myself a better Soldier, so I can keep my Soldiers safe."

"I grew in every way," said Wilson. "I grew just because of the experience."

Two graduate accelerated Officer Candidate School

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

Two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers were commissioned as second lieutenants during an accelerated Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony, Sept. 15, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

The ceremony was held in conjunction with the annual Officer and Warrant Officer Candidate School graduation ceremonies and 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

The National Guard Bureau Accelerated Officer Candidate School is a challenging eight-week, three phase South Dakota-based commissioning program.

"Know we are proud of you, who you are, who you were and who you are going to become," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 John Regan, Nebraska Army National Guard's state command chief warrant officer and graduation guest speaker. "Know we are grateful for your service and sacrifice and for the sacrifices of your families who we all depend on for our success."

Accepting commissions were Avery L. Walker and Matthew M. Wolff.

New 2nd Lt. Avery Walker will be a platoon leader for the 234th Signal Company and new 2nd Lt. Matthew Wolff will also be a platoon leader, but for the 623rd Engineering Company.

According to the candidates, the program was a great experi-

ence, but they are happy to finish the course and begin their careers as commissioned officers.

"It was intense," said Wolff. "Definitely a lot of things thrown at you in a short period of time, but it was a learning experience for sure."

Wolff knew he wanted something more in his life and decided OCS would fulfill the part he felt was missing.

"As I have grown," said Wolff, "I definitely decided I wanted a bigger challenge."

"I'm really looking forward to becoming a platoon leader," he added. "This is definitely something I have been looking forward to for a while now. I am excited for that and excited to take on the new challenge of engineering, a new area for me."



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger



Above: 2nd Lt. Avery Walker is sworn in as a commissioned officer during an Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb., Sept. 15.

Left: 2nd Lt. Matthew Wolff is "pinned" with his gold 2nd Lt. bars by his parents during an Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb., Sept. 15.

State's Warrant Officer Corps grows

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard graduated two former Staff Sergeants from its in-state Warrant Officer Candidate School, Sept. 15, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

The graduation was held in conjunction with the annual Officer Candidate School graduation and the 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame induction.

Warrant Officer Candidates Troy Bear and Hunter Isley received their diplomas in front of family, friends, fellow Soldiers and an official party.

The in-state Warrant Officer Candidate School is a five-month program that allows Soldiers to receive academic and field training designed to prepare them to become Army National Guard Warrant Officers.

Col. Mark Stockstell, 209th regimental commander, thanked the family members of the Soldiers for the sacrifices they made in helping their Soldiers during their commitment to the Nebraska National Guard.

"Thank you families for your commitment and support to these Soldiers," said Stockstell. "They have went through some trying last few months. Your patience, love and care assisted them through those times."

Isley earned the physical fitness award for the Warrant Officer Candidate class, performing 119 push-ups and 99 sit-ups, each in a two-minute span and scoring off the charts on the Army Physical Fitness Test.

Both new warrant officers recently

returned from deployments where they served as noncommissioned officers, Bear with the 623rd Engineering Company and Isley with the 1167th Brigade Support Company. They agreed they were ready to start their careers as warrant officers.



Isley



Bear

"It's a whole new set of opportunities," said Bear. "I'm looking forward to the challenges. It will be fun going back to my old unit. I was already a part of the leadership because I was one of the most experienced E-6s there. But now it's official."

During the five-month program, Bear said the hardest part was, "trying to switch your mind from being told what to do, to knowing what to do and executing it."

"I'm looking forward to being a leader that I was before and then at another level," said Bear. "I'm looking forward to the leadership side of it."

"I guess for me I didn't become a warrant officer for the career opportunities, but for the opportunities in teaching and being a leader," said Bear.

"It's a great opportunity and I think everyone that has the opportunity should try to do it if they can."

209th Regional Training Institute adds retired member to Hall of Fame

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame added one more name to its impressive honor roll, Sept. 15, when a retired command sergeant major was inducted into the prestigious institute.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Snoberger was honored during the Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Candidate School graduation ceremonies held at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall.

The RTI Hall of Fame was established to honor former staff members and/or graduates of the officer candidate program who distinguished themselves in military or civilian pursuits. The individuals are selected based on their contributions to the overall development of the 209th RTI or the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy.

Snoberger was the longest serving commandant for the Region IV Noncommissioned Officer Academy, serving for 10 years, said Maj. James Oliver, master of ceremony. During his 10 years, he helped ensure that the RTI passed every regional accreditation conducted by the U.S. Army Training Doctrine Command and the United States Army's Sergeants Major Academy.

"He started the first chapter of the NCO enlisted association here in Camp Ashland," added Oliver. "He was also highly involved and served as the president of the 5th Army Multi-Component NCO Training Council."

Snoberger began his nearly 38-year military career when he enlisted in the Army Reserve.



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Honored: Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Snoberger speaks after being inducted into the 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame during the Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Candidate School graduation ceremonies held at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall, Sept. 15.

Upon entering the National Guard in January 1986, Snoberger was assigned to Camp Ashland as the initial commandant in an active Guard reserve status of National Guard Bureau, Region IV Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

Following more than 10 years commanding Region IV NCOA, Snoberger became the Recruiting and Retention Sergeant Major for the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"Just the fact that I was honored is what is significant," added Snoberger. "It's not just me that I am accepting the honor for, it's all the staff that (were) here and the leadership others provided."

Snoberger thanked his family for supporting his time with the 209th RTI.

"It's great to have the family here," said Snoberger. "Obviously it has expanded a little bit since I was here and left about 17 years ago. It's always great to be able to share the positive sides, they put up with a lot of the negative sides of the assignment out here with me being gone all the time."

Nebraska Guardsman graces cover of *Newsweek*

By Spc. Riley Huskey

Staff Writer

Twice deployed while serving six years with the active Army, Spc. David Capps joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in September, returning home to “The Good Life” to be with friends and family. A 2006 graduate of Kearney High School, Capps attended the first annual ‘Hero Summit,’ produced by *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Nov. 14-15, for the work that he and his active Army helicopter accomplished in Afghanistan.

At the time, Capps, a maintainer and crew chief newly assigned to the Nebraska Army Guard’s Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, was part of an aviation crew assigned to the active Army’s Company C, “Dustoff,” Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade. Their heroic work in Afghanistan’s Kunar Province in June 2011, during which the crew conducted 11 hoists, three resupplies, rescued 11 patients and returned one service member killed in action over a three-day period, netted the crew the Army Aviation Association of America’s Air/Sea Rescue of the Year award.

“Each mission came one after the other, it was a pretty big operation,” Capps said. “They didn’t think it was going to be quite the hornet’s nest it turned out to be. It was like walking up to a hornet’s nest with a baseball bat and swinging away—it was pretty bad.”

After being rewarded by the AAAA, Capps and the Dustoff crew were selected to be speakers and guests for the Hero Summit, examining the essential elements of moral, political, intellectual and physical courage, resilience and selflessness.

Looking back at the mission and the experience, Capps said he is met with pride.

“It is a great honor,” Capps said. “There are a lot of intense and very worthy rescues, so to be recognized for it is nice.”

In preparation for the Hero Summit, Capps was flown to New York City on Oct. 27 to meet with a *Newsweek* photo editor and photographer to shoot a November magazine cover photo. The aviation crew was featured inside the magazine with an in-depth look at the events of those crucial 48 hours that made them heroic.

“I like my job—it’s a good mission,” Capps said. “When you pick up someone, in rough shape, and you take them back... and a



Honored: Spc. David Capps, a maintainer and crew chief newly assigned to Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, attended the first annual ‘Hero Summit,’ produced by *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Nov. 14-15.

couple days or a week later, you see them out walking around and doing well...there is no better feeling.”

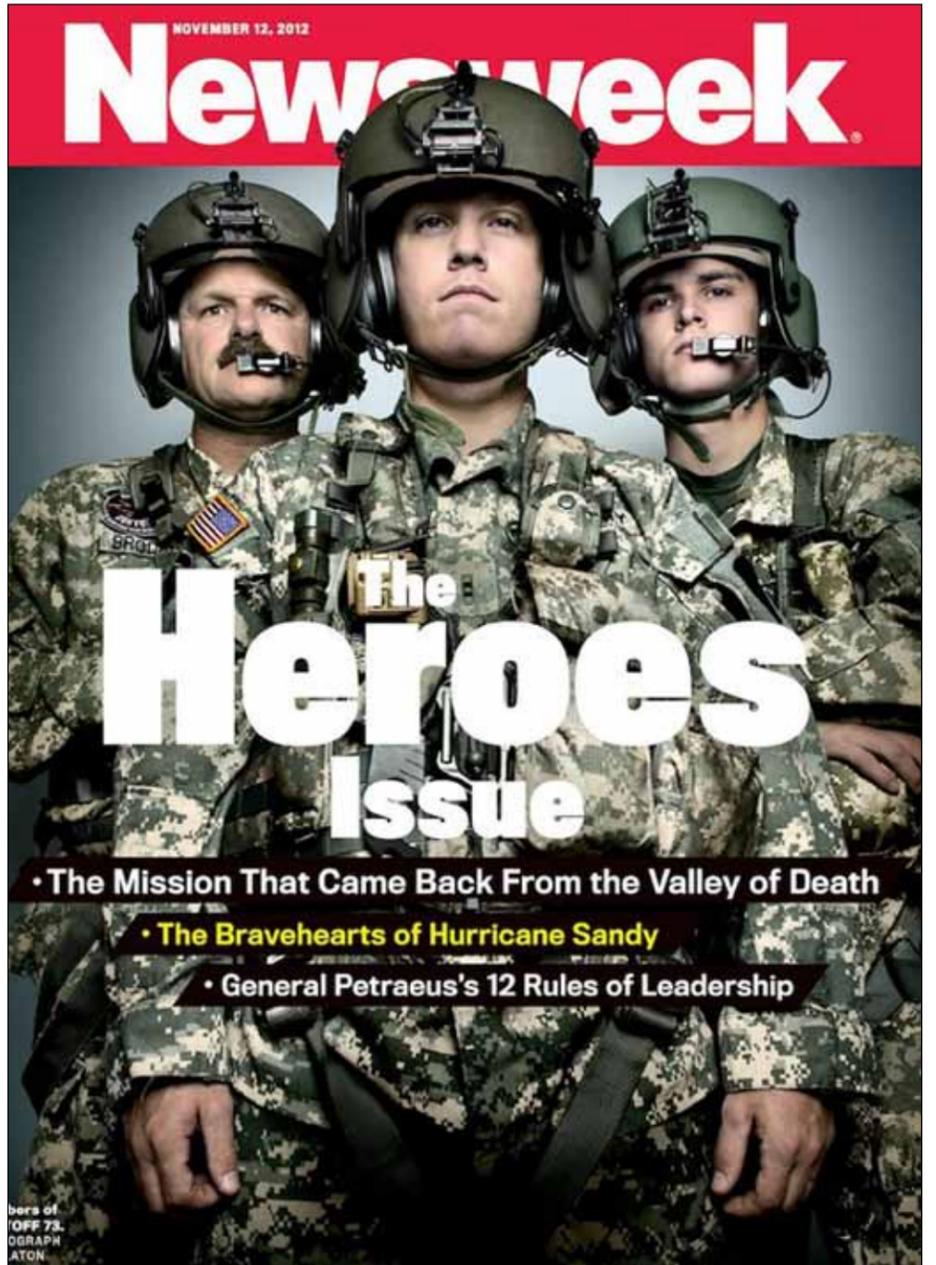
Scheduled to return home to Nebraska on Oct. 30, Capps found himself stuck in New York as Superstorm Sandy barreled onto land causing flood damage, power outages and devastation to the Big Apple.

“I think the hotel we were put up in was in the only part of Manhattan that didn’t lose power,” Capps said. “When the storm hit Monday night, I went out for a walk. No wind, no rain, the pavement was dry. I walked 10 blocks and the weather changed, it was a different story. “That night I walked to Times Square and found it completely empty, deserted. It was just me out there and the NYPD.”

By Nov. 2, Capps was able to fly out of Newark, N.J., and return to Nebraska just in time for drill weekend, Capps said with a smile.

Resiliency through battle, resiliency through storm, Capps believes he finds personal strength and courage in cohesion, he said.

“The Army is like family—we all stick together,” Capps said. “I don’t think you can find the same camaraderie in the civilian workforce as you can with the Army.”



Cover Models: Spc. David Capps (right), a maintainer and crew chief newly assigned to the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, is pictured alongside his active Army “Dustoff” air crew on the cover of the Nov. 12 *Newsweek*. Capps attended the first annual ‘Hero Summit,’ produced by *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Nov. 14-15.

Nebraska Air Guard’s 155th Maintenance Group welcomes new commander to unit

By Senior Airman Mary Thach

Staff Writer

The Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Maintenance Group welcomed a new commander, Oct. 13, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

Col. Barbra Buls assumed command of the unit in front of distinguished guests, friends, family and a 155th Maintenance Group formation.

“I assume command of this group with great respect and admiration, and full confidence in the men and women of our Maintenance Group,” said Buls.

Buls enlisted in the South Dakota Air National Guard in 1986, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant. She received her commission in 1992 and became a maintenance officer for the 114th Fighter Wing Maintenance Squadron, S.D. She transferred to the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Maintenance Squadron in 1999.

While serving in Nebraska, she assumed command of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron until 2009.

After being accepted to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., she moved to the East Coast with her family. While there, Buls served in several positions at the National Guard Bureau and became the NGB director of Human Resources.

Col. Keith Schell, a former commander of the 155th Maintenance Group and now commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, said Buls



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Leith

Welcome: Col. Barbra Buls accepts the guidon of the 155th Maintenance Group from Col. Keith Schell, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, recognizing Buls as the group’s new commander during an Oct. 13 ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

is a dedicated worker with a spark to get things done.

“You’ve done everything asked of you and at all times far exceeded expectations,” said Schell.

Schell reflected on the Maintenance Group’s success, reliability and willingness to step up to finish any task.

“Six and a half years ago, I was selected to be your commander,” said Schell. “When I came over here, I had the thought in my head that you were the best maintenance group in the ANG and in the Air Force. When I left three months ago, I knew you were the best maintenance group. You guys do a terrific job.”

After Buls assumed command, she highlighted the knowledge, professionalism and work ethic of the maintainers in the Nebraska Air National Guard.

“Our ‘traditional’s are a very important part of our team,” said Buls. “We rely upon you now more than ever as our tempo of operations has increased. You have risen to the challenge, but it is not without the expertise in our full-time force and their dedication to ensuring that you are ready, willing and able to meet those challenges.”

“As a maintenance officer, I know our mission, but even more importantly, I know our people.”

New leadership for Nebraska’s Recruiting, Retention Command

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion bid farewell to their commander who had been in charge for more than six years and led the organization to recruiting and retention success during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, during a Sept. 27 ceremony at the “Spirit of ‘76” Armory in Lincoln, Neb.

Standing in front of distinguished guests, members of the Nebraska National Guard command group, family, friends and a formation of Recruiting and Retention Battalion Soldiers, Lt. Col. Shane Martin took command from Lt. Col. Jim Murphy.

“Six years and three months and maybe a couple days ago Lt. Col. Jim Murphy took command of the recruiting and retention battalion,” said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general. “And if you think back to where we were six years ago, hip-deep into the war in Iraq, war in Afghanistan and we had Soldiers deployed to Kosovo and other locations. Strength was a significant issue.”

“He is the colonel of the unconventional and we needed that,” added Lyons. “Your unconventional thinking helped us achieve

our goals over the last six years and three months. We owe you a tremendous debt for your leadership and your partnership with these (noncommissioned officers) in formation.”

Murphy said he was exceptionally proud of the accomplishments Soldiers in the Recruiting and Retention Battalion made along with the Soldiers who enlisted during his six-plus years as commander.

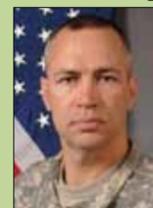
“One of things I engraved into the command was a belief in the product, a belief that every

young man or woman that we came in contact with would be better if they were in the Nebraska Army National Guard,” said Murphy. “That’s what we tried to create through recruiting, (Recruit Sustainment Program) and retention.”

Martin has served in a number of leadership and staff assignments.

“You have some big shoes to fill but you have a great team to fill them and I know you will lead them to success,” said Lyons. “And we will need that success in the next two to three years.”

Martin said he was humbled to take command of the great battalion and excited to see what the future brings. “I would like to thank Lt. Col. Murphy for his great leadership and setting this organization up for a huge success in the future.”



Murphy



Martin

Prairie Soldier editor, state public affairs officer honored

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

The Nebraska National Guard's State Public Affairs Officer and long-time editor of the award-winning *Prairie Soldier*, was awarded the Nebraska Press Association's highest honor during a Nebraska Journalism Hall of Fame dinner and induction ceremony at the Nebraska Club in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 26.

Maj. Kevin Hynes was recognized with The President's Award, an award only given out every three to four years, in recognition of his career as the editor of the *Prairie Soldier* and the many awards and honors he has received for his writing.

"I believe that this award recognizes both his individual contributions to the profession of journalism as well as recognizing the high quality of the *Prairie Soldier* as a newspaper," said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general. "It is wonderful to have an organization such as the Nebraska Press Association, that is external to the Nebraska National Guard, take notice of his excellent work. It also helps to keep the Nebraska National Guard in the minds of influential civilian leaders in the Nebraska Press Association."

Lyons added that despite the numerous military awards for journalism, Hynes is continuously looking for opportunities to tell the Nebraska National Guard's story.

"Our *Prairie Soldier* newspaper is a national leader in this respect and his hard work as editor-in-chief makes that happen," said Lyons. "He provides excellent direction to our talented pool of Air and Army National Guard public affairs staff."

"Major Hynes was characteristically humble in accepting the award and offered his gratitude to be associated with the men and women of the Nebraska Guard and how fortunate he felt in being able to help them tell their stories."

Hynes enlisted in the U.S. Army in May 1986. He was assigned as a photojournalist for the 1st Aviation Brigade (Air Assault) and staff writer for the *Army Flyer* at Fort



Courtesy photo

Prairie Soldier Honors: Mike Konz, president of the Nebraska Press Association, presents the association's President's Award to Maj. Kevin Hynes, editor of the *Prairie Soldier* and Nebraska National Guard state public affairs officer, in recognition of the *Prairie Soldier's* newspaper role in keeping member of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard informed on a variety of topics.

Rucker, Ala., where he served until he joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in May 1990, eventually joining the 111th Public Affairs Detachment as a print journalist.

During his time with the 111th PAD, he covered a wide range of stories on the training and mobilization of Nebraska Army and Air Guard personnel across the nation and around the world. He deployed to Panama and Honduras twice, Germany once, and was also selected as the photojournalist for the 134th Honor Platoon which traveled to Normandy, France, in June 1994 for the 50th Anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

Hynes was promoted to the position of associate editor for the *Prairie Soldier* news-

paper and 111th PAD Print Section noncommissioned officer in charge in December 1991. He became the acting editor of the newspaper in November 1992 and was named the full-time editor in September 1993.

Hynes transferred to the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, in August 1998 and received his commission as a second lieutenant on April 23, 1999, after graduating from the Academy of Military Science at McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base, Tenn. He then served as the 155th ARW public affairs officer until 2004 when he became the deputy state public affairs officer of the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters. Hynes was promoted to his

current position as the Nebraska National Guard's State Public Affairs Officer in 2010.

Hynes has covered a wide array of Nebraska Army and Air National Guard stories that have taken him to bases and forts across the United States and overseas including assignments in Honduras, France (three), Germany (twice), England (twice) Spain, Denmark, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hawaii (twice), Alaska, Guam and Kyrgyzstan.

He received his bachelor's degree in News Editorial from the Journalism College of the University of Nebraska in May 1994. He earned such honors as the Golden Key Outstanding Sophomore Award and the University of Nebraska Chancellor's Award for High Scholarship twice.

Hynes was named the Army National Guard Print Journalist of the Year for 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1995. In 1995, he was named the U.S. Army Paul D. Savanuck Journalist of the Year and was recognized in a Pentagon ceremony by then-Secretary of the Army Togo West. He was also named the Military Department Employee of the Year in 1995.

Hynes has received many accolades for his 20 years as the editor of the *Prairie Soldier*, which has been named the National Guard Newspaper of the Year 13 times (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011), runner-up U.S. Army Newspaper of the Year (1993, 1999, 2005), U.S. Army Newspaper of the Year (1995, 1998, 2004, 2006) and runner-up Department of Defense Newspaper of the Year (1995, 1998). He has also received more than 70 individual awards for writing and photography in National Guard, Department of the Army, Department of Air Force and Department of Defense-level contests.

In 2000 and 2005, he was the runner-up Air National Guard Print Journalist of the Year. In 2001, 2006 and 2008 he was named the Air National Guard Print Journalist of the Year and runner-up in 2000 and 2005. He was named Air National Guard Photographer of the Year in 2007.

Hynes and his wife, Lisa, live in Murdock, Neb., with their sons, Patrick, Thomas and Michael and daughter, Erin.

155th Air Refueling Wing Airman named Noncommissioned Officer Academy Graduate Association Outstanding Graduate of the Year

By Senior Airman Mary Thach
Staff Writer

One role of a first sergeant is to provide open lines of communication for enlisted personnel and help support Airmen struggling through difficult situations at home and while deployed.

To successfully operate in this position, a first sergeant should demonstrate a passion to help Airmen grow as individuals in their daily lives and in developing a mission-ready enlisted force.

According to those who know her, former 155th Mission Support Group first sergeant, Master Sgt. Mary A. Baker, who currently serves as the 155th Force Support Squadron's Services Flight superintendent, demonstrates selflessness, a desire to serve others, and continues to advance her knowledge by seeking opportunities within the Guard.

In 2011, she was instrumental in helping 12 unit members attend and graduate from in-residence professional military education schools and made an effort to attend each of their graduations. Additionally, in a three-month period, Baker helped eight unit families cope with the deaths of unit members or family members, and coordinated a flight with a local aircraft company to have a terminally ill unit member flown back to Nebraska from the National Guard Bureau.

In November, Baker was officially recognized for her caring attitude when she was formally presented with the Noncommissioned Officer Academy Graduate Association Outstanding Graduate of the Year Award for Fiscal Year 2011. She was given the option of how and where she would receive the award and elected to receive it in front of her peers during the 155th ARW's November unit drill.

"It would mean more to me to have it in front of my Airmen,

because that is who I served to get this in the first place," said Baker.

"It was a huge honor to be put in for something like this, whether you get it or not," said Baker. "It's very humbling to a large degree, because you realize that other people have noticed that you are doing a lot."

Baker was nominated for the award by Chief Master Sgt. Doug Schulz. It was presented on Nov. 3, by Col. Keith Schell, commander of 155th ARW, and Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general.

According to Baker, she appreciates the honor, adding that she was simply following a culture of service nurtured by the unit's leaders and members.

"I think we have a culture here in our unit where we see this as doing

our job... In other units, I think that is always viewed as going above and beyond," said Baker. "We have such a high standard here at the 155th, that I think I was doing what I needed to do for my Airmen... In my mind's eye, I think I just did what I should have done."

"In our unit, we have very high standards and a very high work ethic," Baker added.

Baker faced some extraordinary challenges in a short period of time during Fiscal Year 2011, meeting those challenges with the same outlook she approaches her many tasks as a first sergeant and senior NCO.

"I was thrown into some situations where I had to do some extraordinary stuff. Not because I chose to, but because it had to be done," she said.

Baker said her dedication to the unit and serving young NCOs and Airmen has been one of her main focuses throughout her career. She said she is motivated by helping people reach that "ah-ha moment" and to grow in mind, body, spirit and mission.

She said she is honored and humbled to receive this award and be recognized for the time and effort she has devoted to the men and women of the 155th ARW.

Along with her normal duties, Baker is on the Diversity Committee where she helps advise the state's adjutant general on diversity issues concerning the 155th ARW. She was recently honored for this work when she was awarded the Nebraska Excellence in Diversity Award.

She is also member of the Home Care Committee where she helps administer the child care program for drill weekends.

In her off-duty time Baker visits Airmen and their family members who are hospitalized. She also makes certain to provide a baby bundle from Airmen and Family Readiness, when a unit member's family has a baby.

Baker enlisted in the Nebraska Air National Guard in January 1989, working in the Photo Processing and Interpretation Facility, processing photos taken by the RF-4 Phantom II until the unit's mission transitioned to aerial refueling.

Baker then became one of the original 12 traditional in-flight refueling specialists, commonly known as "boom operators," for the KC-135R Stratotanker with the 173rd Air



Photos by Staff Sgt. James Leith

Congratulations: Master Sgt. Mary Baker accepts the Noncommissioned Officer Academy Graduate Association Outstanding Graduate of the Year trophy from Col. Keith Schell, commander of the the 155th Air Refueling Wing, as Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, looks on during a ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Nov. 3. Baker was honored with the award for her dedication to Airmen throughout 2011.

Refueling Squadron.

In 2001, after seven years as a boom operator, Baker transitioned into a traditional role in the 155th ARW's Finance Office. Baker accepted a position as an accounting technician, specializing in travel pay in 2003.

Baker left the finance office to become a first sergeant in 2008 and remained in that position until she accepted the job as the Services superintendent in 2011.

During her career, Baker was an Airman Leadership School instructor and was a certified Quality instructor.

She occupied many roles and positions in the Nebraska Air National Guard and said she is always willing to try something new and take risks. Baker has dedicated nearly 24 years to the unit and demonstrates a revolving door mentality where change is constant.

Her advice to unit members is simple: "Be willing to try something new and be brave enough to step out,"

said Baker. "Have a little bit of risk taking ingenuity in yourself. If you want to do something different or more challenging, don't be afraid to seek out those opportunities."

Baker said this attitude was developed early in her career when she focused on creating her own career and investing in the lives of Airmen in the Nebraska Air National Guard.

As her responsibilities grew, Baker said her focus gradually shifted to working primarily on the home front assisting young Airmen with their own personal development and military careers.

"It's been a gradual process," said Baker.

"When I was a first sergeant, I wanted to stay home and focus on taking care of my Airmen at home because I know when they deploy, it is hugely important that they know things are taken care of at home," she said. "I saw my role as a first sergeant was helping them maintain their home front as much as possible."

Military Police battalion receives new commander

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

After having served as the 402nd Military Police Battalion's commander during its predeployment training, 2010-2011 deployment to Afghanistan and subsequent demobilization activities, Lt. Col. Eric J. Teegerstrom relinquished the reins of the Omaha-based organization to Lt. Col. Randall S. Ames during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 8, at the North Omaha Readiness Center.

According to Teegerstrom, the ceremony was bittersweet.

"Surely the success that we have had is based upon the combined efforts of everybody in this room," said Teegerstrom as he addressed a formation made up of his battalion headquarters staff and other assigned units.



Teegerstrom

He added he remembered when he first addressed the organization, shortly after taking command, about the challenges that faced the battalion as it prepared to deploy to

Afghanistan. "I said that we're going to train one weekend per month and were going to do our two-week (predeployment training)... and then we're going to Afghanistan."

"And that happened," Teegerstrom said. Teegerstrom said he felt extraordinarily lucky to have been able to lead the organization through the three separate phases of the deployment.

"Very few commanders get the opportunity to do pre-mobilization, mobilize, and then do reset with the same unit," he said. "It's because of you that I've been able to succeed."

Teegerstrom was born in Polk County, Neb., in 1965. He is a 1984 graduate of Stromburg High School in Stromsburg, Neb., and a 1988 graduate of Concordia University



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Top Cop: Lt. Col. Randall S. Ames (center) accepts the organizational colors of the 402nd Military Police Battalion from Col. Michael Deger, commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, during a Sept. 8 change of command ceremony in Omaha, Neb.

where he received a bachelor's of Arts degree.

Teegerstrom received his commission as a second lieutenant from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Reserve Officer Training Corps in 1992 and then served on active duty for eight years, serving assignments in Korea, Germany, Bosnia and the United States. He joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in June 2000.

Over the course of his Nebraska Army National Guard career, Teegerstrom has commanded at the company-level and served in a variety of staff officer assignments at the company, battalion, and state level.

He currently serves as the Mobilization Readiness Division chief for the Nebraska

National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters.

According to Col. Michael Deger, commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Teegerstrom effectively led the organization through a significant moment of its history.

"He has impressed me. He has impressed the senior staff by his professionalism, his common sense, no B.S. way of doing business and his candor," said Deger. Deger added he has equal faith in the incoming commander's ability to take the battalion forward.

"(Lt. Col.) Ames, you've been selected for this position," Deger said. "We're at a transition point... he's the person who is going to lead this battalion to its next mission so that

when we get the call, the 402nd will be ready."

Deger then asked the assembled Soldiers to give Ames the same level of support they gave his predecessor. "Give this commander the same level of professionalism that you gave (Lt. Col.) Teegerstrom."

According to Ames, he's excited to take the battalion into the future.

"To the Soldiers of the 402nd, I stand before you honored and privileged to take you forward as your commander," he said, adding that he knows he has a significant challenge in front of him.

"I've watched (Teegerstrom) the last couple months," he said. "Eric, you've done an excellent job. I appreciate what you've done to develop your battalion."

"All I can do is promise that we will continue to march forward... continuing to maintain the high standards," Ames added.

Ames was born in Miller, S.D., in 1966. He is a graduate of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, S.D.

His military career began in February 1985 when he enlisted into the South Dakota Army National Guard.

Ames received his commission as an engineer officer in May 1990 through ROTC and then went onto serve in a variety of leadership positions with the South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion before transitioning to the Nebraska Army National Guard in April 1997.

While in the Nebraska Army Guard, Ames has served as a company commander with two signal companies as well as in a variety of staff level positions at the battalion and training site level.

Ames, like Teegerstrom, is a veteran of a recent overseas deployment.

Ames deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 as a member of a 17-member Nebraska National Guard Embedded Training Team, while Teegerstrom, along with deploying to Afghanistan with the 402nd M.P. Bn., served in Iraq with the Nebraska Army Guard's 1-167th Cavalry.

State employees honored for service to organization

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska Military Department's state employees were honored during the department's annual State Employee Appreciation Luncheon held Oct. 30 at the new Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb.

Along with honoring the department's employee and supervisor of the years, and the employee of the year runners-up, Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons and Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy also honored those employees who have reached significant milestones within their careers.

The following were recognized during the luncheon:

Supervisor of the Year: James Jackson
Employee of the Year: Scott Loos
Employee of the Year, Runners-Up: Phillip Akers and Harold J. DeCoste

40 Years of Service: Cindy J. York

25 Years of Service: Sandy M. Cunning and Timothy J. Greiner

15 Years of Service: Harold J. DeCoste, Harry J. Holcomb, Terry L. Klahn and Jona-

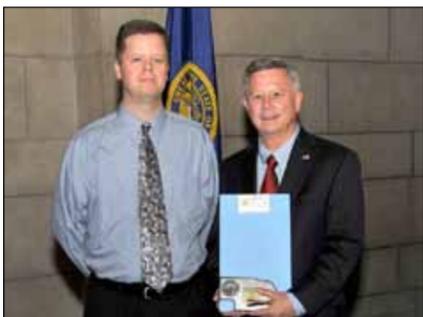


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

than F. Schwarz.
10 Years of Service: Nitha Beeck, Stephen Dyer, James Iron Thunder and Patrick Perez.



Award Winners: Gov. Dave Heineman congratulates Scott Loos (left) and James Jackson (right) during the annual State Employee and Supervisor/Manager of the Year awards ceremony held Oct. 24 at the State Capitol in Lincoln, Neb.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Guard firemen named state employee, supervisor of year

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's fire department scored a double win when two firemen were named the Nebraska Military Department's State Employee and Manager of the Year.

Scott Loos, an airport fire fighter crew chief assigned to the Air National Guard Base Fire Station was named the department's Employee of the Year while James Jackson, an airport fire fighter crew chief at the Air National Guard Base Fire Station earned the title of State Supervisor of the Year.

The two fire fighters were honored during the state Employee and Supervisor/Manager of the Year awards ceremony held Oct. 24 at the State Capitol and again during the Nebraska Military Department's annual State Employee Appreciation Luncheon held Oct. 30 at the new Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

The following are narratives taken from the State Capitol ceremony:

Scott Loos

"Scott Loos consistently strives to promote teamwork and shift cohesiveness within the fire department at the Air National Guard Base. He constantly promotes positive communications and feedback on his shift and challenges himself and co-workers to further develop leadership skills.

"Scott facilitated emergency prepared-

ness between military and public safety agencies for the 2011 Guardians of Freedom Airshow. He helped the Nebraska Air National Guard position itself, along with cooperating agencies, for an 'all hazards' approach to public safety during the air show. Scott also planned a table top and functional exercise to test public safety. During the air show he was responsible for four two-person EMS crews providing emergency medical services to the public.

"His positive leadership promotes an effective and professional team-centered shift."

James Jackson

"Many people rely on James Jackson's expertise in all aspects of the daily operations at the Nebraska Air National Guard fire department. He is the person that everyone goes to for computer or printer issues, ordering new equipment, uniforms and tools, and getting supplies.

"James manages the department's training program. This includes scheduling, documenting and conducting a number of training classes himself. He is relied on heavily as a knowledgeable resource, particularly when employees have questions and need insight into problems they are facing in their classes.

"James is not only the 'go-to' person for firefighters, he's also very well known with the Nebraska National Guard, and to others at Guard bases across the country as their point of contact for the fire department."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring the Past

Joyzelle Gingway Godfrey conducts a dramatic presentation on the family of Sitting Bull during the Nebraska Military Department's 2012 Native American Heritage Celebration held Nov. 27 at the new Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb. The story detailed the changes experienced by members of the Lakota Sioux Tribe during the later part of the 19th Century leading up to the Wounded Knee Massacre.



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



NORAD provides website, apps to track Santa Claus

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo., (AFPS) — Children of all ages will be able to track Santa Claus on his annual journey, thanks to the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

The “NORAD Tracks Santa” website at <http://www.norad-santa.org> is up and running. The site features a holiday countdown, games and daily activities, video messages from students around the world and more, officials said, and it is available in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Chinese.

Official apps also are available in the Windows Store, Apple Store, and Google Play so parents and children can count down the days until Santa’s launch on their smartphones and tablets.

Tracking opportunities also offered on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google Plus. Santa followers just need to type “@noradsanta” into each search engine to get started.

Starting at midnight Mountain Standard Time on Dec. 24, website visitors can watch Santa make the preparations for his flight. Then, at 4 a.m. Mountain time, trackers worldwide can speak with a live phone operator to inquire as to Santa’s whereabouts by dialing the toll-free number 1-877-Hi-NORAD (1-877-446-6723) or by sending an email to noradtrackssanta@outlook.com.

NORAD’s “Santa Cams” also will stream videos as Santa makes his way over various locations.

It all started in 1955, when a local media advertisement directed children to call Santa direct, but the number was misprinted.

Instead of reaching Santa, the phone rang through to the crew commander on duty at the Continental Air Defense Command Operations Center. NORAD has carried the tradition on since the command was created in 1958.

NORAD Tracks Santa is possible, in large part, to the efforts and services of numerous program contributors, officials said.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Bubbles: A young party-goer blows bubbles during the “Haunted Armory” held Oct. 23 at the North Omaha Readiness Center, one of three Halloween parties sponsored by the Nebraska National Guard’s Family Support Office. Other parties were held in Lincoln and Kearney, attracting hundreds of military kids of all ages.

Haunted armories draw military kids by hundreds to Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney



Winning Smiles: (From left) Michaela, AJ and Neil Wesley smile with the pumpkin AJ won during the North Omaha Readiness Center’s “Haunted Armory” party, held Oct. 23 in Omaha.



Antics Of A Caveman: Lt. Col. Robert Kadavy, State Family Program director, entertains a group of kids during the Oct. 23 “Haunted Armory” party held at the North Omaha Readiness Center.

RE-ENLISTMENT BONUSES

You may be eligible for:

- 6 YEAR EXTENSION = \$10,000
- 3 YEAR EXTENSION = \$5,000

- Both bonuses are lump sum payments, and contracts must be signed between 365 - 91 days to ETS.

• CONUS or OCONUS	• Cannot be excess
• Must be E-7 or below	• Must be DMOSQ (Some policy exceptions)
• Under 13 years service	• Meet other requirements in policy
• Can only have one incentive at a time (Bonus, Kicker, SLRP)	
• AGR and Technicians are not eligible to receive this incentive policy	

For more information contact your Unit Readiness NCO or Unit Career Counselor.

Hundreds attend Lincoln retiree briefings in October

Greetings. Oct. 27 saw approximately 350 retirees and spouses attending a retiree briefing at the Spirit of '76 Armory in Lincoln. Briefers covered such subjects as the Survivors Benefit Plan (SBP), Space-A travel, Tri-Care, Funeral Honors, an overview of the Nebraska National Guard today by Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons and time to visit with selected vendors.

A number of retirees were also able to update ID cards during the day.

All in attendance expressed their feelings that the half-day session was beneficial and asked to have another briefing in a year or so. We'll be working with the Nebraska Military Department to plan another one in the future.

Thanks to all who attended and provided their input.

In the meantime, stay caught up with retiree affairs on our website, www.ne.ng.mil. We post important announcements on Tri-Care, Medicare, Space-A, etc., for your use and information.

If you know someone who doesn't have internet access, print the info for them and let them stay up to date as well. Thanks!

If you have questions on any retiree subject

and don't know where to go, you may call (402) 309-7105 and either Peggy or Bill will assist you in finding the right department.

■ Retiree Breakfasts

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

• Lincoln:

Army National Guard retirees: **FIRST** Monday of each month, 8:00 AM, Virginia's Travelers Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway, Lincoln (Location change)

Air National Guard retirees: **LAST** Monday of each month, 8:00 AM, Stauffer's Café, 2701 N. 48th St, Lincoln (Location change)

• North Platte: **SECOND** Saturday of

each month, 8:00 AM, Village Inn, North Platte, Neb.

■ From the desk of Sgt. 1st Class Austin Behnk:

My phone number is now (402) 309-8151 and e-mail address is austin.j.behnk@mail.mil

Staff Sgt. Mandy Hatcher has replaced Sgt. Jennifer Short. Her phone number is (402) 309-8164 and mandy.r.hatcher.mil@mail.mil.

Our location address is 2433 NW 24th St, Lincoln, NE 68524. This address is on the National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., and we are located on the second floor. This is also the location of the ID card station.

If you have a change of address, please

contact me or Staff Sergeant Hatcher to update our records to make sure you receive any information we mail out.

Finally, here's a list of helpful list of numbers for your use as needed:

DEERS/ID card stations within Nebraska.

• G-1 – 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524 – (402) 309-8167;

• Spirit of 76 Armory 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade – (402) 309-7058 or (402) 309-7260;

• 92nd Troop Command Penterman Armory at Nebraska National Guard air base – (402) 309-1749 or (402) 309-1452;

• Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) – Building 600, Room E209, (402) 309-1452;

• Offutt Air Force Base – (402) 294-5019;

• Kearney Armory – 5710 Airport Road, Kearney, Neb., (402) 309-7743 or (402) 309-7758;

• Norfolk Armory – 817 South 1st Street, Norfolk, Neb., (402) 309-8908 or (402) 309-8900;

• DEERS — 1-800-538-9552.

Enjoy your well-deserved retirement. We all wish each of you the happiest of your respective holidays this season.

Street Talk

“What keeps you in the Nebraska National Guard?”

Hunting the good stuff

I recently attended resiliency training and I am very impressed with what the program has to offer.

Like most people, I have had my ups and downs and maintaining a resilient posture and attitude is not always easy. Resiliency training has helped me to identify and put a name to some of my less resilient thinking patterns. The program offers a set of tools to combat some of those emotional and thinking challenges that sometimes occur when we are confronted with adversity.

One of the resiliency tools that I began using many years ago is “hunt the good stuff.” I didn’t call it “hunt the good stuff,” but the habit I developed is essentially the same thing. This practice was recommended to me by a friend in the context of spiritual development and he called it a gratitude list.

No matter the name – hunt the good stuff, gratitude list, counting your blessings – the practice has been very beneficial for me.

So what are the things that typically appear on my gratitude list? My family appears on my gratitude list every day. I view my family relationships as a gift. Relationships can be challenging and difficult, but the reward of these relationships far outweighs any negative impact.

My friends appear on my gratitude list each day. I bring to mind different friends at different times depending on circumstances. For instance, I recently had lunch with a couple of Soldiers who I deployed with. While we had lunch I felt grateful for having these two guys as friends. I thought of them the next day in the context of my gratitude list. I’m grateful for the unconditional love of friends and family.

I’m grateful for my faith in God and the relationship that I have with him. This is usually number one

Another Voice

State Command
Chief Warrant Officer

John Regan



spend their lives with superstition and ignorance as their guide.

I’m grateful for clean drinking water and plentiful food – again, many in our world lack basic necessities – by God’s grace I am not one of them today. The lack of these necessities combined with ignorance

is a constant threat to our security and the security of the world. In spite of that threat, I’m grateful for the relative safety I feel in my city and in my home. For the most part I don’t feel threatened by anyone or anything in my local environment.

Finally, I don’t suppose anyone will be surprised if I bring up the recent Thanksgiving holiday, as it was fast approaching as I wrote this article. Remembering the first Thanksgiving is particularly pertinent to the connection between the practice of giving thanks or “hunting the good stuff” and resilience.

I think most of us know the history of those first pilgrims in our country – they had a very harsh existence and many died in the first years after they arrived in the new world.

Most of us probably don’t think of that fact when we sit down to Thanksgiving dinner or celebrate the holiday. However, I think their example – giving thanks even though they had endured and were in the midst of much adversity and loss – is worth noting and imitating. Their example of gratitude for what they had makes the practice of gratitude, or hunting the good stuff, all the more poignant.

If you practice gratitude then, when confronted with adversity, you will be better equipped to ward off any negative thinking and perspective that might otherwise drag you down.

So make hunting the good stuff a daily practice. When adversity hits, you’ll be glad you did.

on my gratitude list because of the importance this relationship has in my life. I would be lost without this relationship and it is the foundation of my relationships with everyone around me. It is the foundation of my adherence to our Army values and to my commitment to our organization. It is the foundation of my life.

My job in the National Guard appears pretty much daily on my gratitude list. I am so grateful to be in the position I am in and am grateful for all of the many people who helped me achieve my goals in this organization. I’m grateful (and humbled) to have the opportunity to lead the Warrant Officer Corps. It’s an opportunity that not everyone will have and I am grateful Maj. Gen. Lyons entrusted the responsibility to me. I’m grateful to be part of the command group team.

I’m grateful for my health. That’s an easy one. If you have ever been sick (I have) or injured (I have) this aspect of gratitude becomes all the more relevant and meaningful. I spent nearly a year with back pain and I can tell you that experience made me value my health all the more. It’s good to be pain-free and enjoy good health.

As I look around I don’t have to look far to see many who face daily challenges with physical and emotional health – again, this makes me all the more grateful for the health I enjoy.

I’m grateful for all of the educational experiences I have had. Ignorance is a great evil and source of injustice in our world and many

Do buildings have memories?

Do buildings have memories?

In the excitement and revelry surrounding the opening of the newly constructed Joint Force Headquarters building at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., I couldn’t help thinking this thought as my time in the Adjutant General’s headquarters building neared an end this past autumn.

As one of the last people to leave the old brick and mortar building on the corner of Military Road and 14th Street, I had time to wander the deserted hallways of the building that I’ve worked in since November 1992.

Often, these wanderings occurred long past the end of the official duty day, meaning that I was typically the last person in the building. Yet, despite what should’ve been a lonely walk, my mind was filled with the ghostly voices of the people I’d worked with over the years.

I could still hear the voice of Gerry Lawson, the long-serving departmental graphic artist who worked for decades in the Nebraska Military Department until his death a few years ago. Walking down the hallway where he worked when I first met him, I could still hear his voice calling out... “Hey Mister Prairie Soldier,” which caused me to remember all of the great conversations we’d had in this building, the jokes we’d shared, the problems we solved.

That’s when I realized that every hallway I walked in, every office I paused by, every step I made filled me with memories of people I’d met, the discussions we’d had, the occasionally chewings-out I’d received, and the general good memories created.

As I walked, I remembered the hallway where the agency had come

to a standstill on Sept. 11, 2001, as employees – both uniformed and civilian alike – crowded outside the Air National Guard offices to watch coverage of the terrorist attacks unfold. I remembered sitting next to then-Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke in the Nebraska Emergency Management Office’s bunker during a phone news conference as we began to announce the first responses to the attacks that would define the Nebraska Military Department for the next decade.

I remembered the offices where I’d received phone calls about the deaths of Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. I also remembered the desk where I received phone calls from my parents telling me that uncles, aunts and grandmother had died and the swarms of emotions I felt after learning the news.

I remembered standing in a crowded NEMA conference room located under the parking lot of a 1960s-era nuclear bunker during the historic flooding along the Platte and Missouri Rivers.

I remembered the people I’d met and worked with; the people who I had come to depend upon when I had a problem that I couldn’t figure out how to solve.

I remembered the late nights alone in the building, struggling to put the last pages of the *Prairie Soldier* to bed, and I remembered the early morning arrivals before starting out on a mission to cover a story.

I remembered so many things

during these walks, the memories flowing over and around me like a warm waterfall.

Which brings me to this thought: do buildings have memories? I’m not sure that I really want an answer.

For me, the question really is, what is it about

our workplaces that we truly will remember. If one were really to think about it, it’s not so much about the work as it is the people we have had the opportunity to work with.

Recently, I received an incredible award from the Nebraska Press Association that completely took me by surprise. As I sat at the banquet table trying to think of something to say, I kept returning to the thought that this award was less about me and more about the people that it symbolized. Without the Soldiers, Airmen and civilians I’ve had the distinct honor to cover, nothing that I ever could do, say or write would mean a thing.

In a way, that’s what my walks through the deserted TAG building hallways symbolized: I’ve been extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work in a unique place during what I consider to be a pivotal historic moment in our state and nation’s history.

I’ve also been distinctly fortunate in that I’ve had the opportunity to serve with people whose commitment to service and their fellow man knows no bounds.

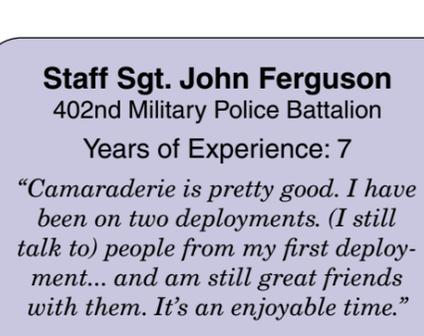
What I learned was that this building was less of a headquarters and more of a monument to all who had passed through its hallways and contributed to this agency’s success and that I’m proud to have been at least a tiny sliver part of that.

From my family to yours, may you all have a blessed holiday season and a good start to the new year.



Tech. Sgt. Travis Laframboise
155th Civil Engineer Squadron
Years of Experience: 10

“Honestly, what keeps me in is the deployments. Getting to go to other countries to meet new people, the cultures, and being able to deploy with people from other squadrons.”



Staff Sgt. John Ferguson
402nd Military Police Battalion
Years of Experience: 7

“Camaraderie is pretty good. I have been on two deployments. (I still talk to) people from my first deployment... and am still great friends with them. It’s an enjoyable time.”



Sgt. 1st Class Michael Schroder
402nd Military Police Battalion
Years of Experience: 17

“I love being in the military and love serving my country. Being deployed three times, I get to see things I never thought I would ever see anywhere else.”



Staff Sgt. Michael Clark
155th Operations Support Squadron
Years of Experience: 9

“The retirement. I separated from active duty because of cross training. My job in the Guard translates over to my civilian job fairly well.”



Master Sgt. Jon’el Doriocourt
155th Civil Engineer Squadron
Years of Experience: 26

“I like what I do and I believe in what I do.”



Capt. James Hewitt
195th Forward Support Company
(Special Operations) (Airborne)
Years of Experience: 22

“I just enjoy it and enjoy being around the people that are here and enjoy the military. We are doing amazing things.”



My Turn

Editor, *Prairie Soldier*

Kevin J. Hynes



really is, what is it about

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Charles A. Blankman
Thaddeus D. Fineran

Major

Nicholas M. Breen
Marna A. Cochell
Troy W. Dannehl
Daniel L. Smith
Lamartine X. Station
Kevin M. Ziebell

Captain

Greg S. Beran
Guinio W. Volpone

First Lieutenant

Bradley D. Larson

Chief Warrant Officer 5

Thomas W. Cerny

Chief Warrant Officer 3

Andrew J. Eiler
Bradley D. Kuhn
Monty A. Woodward

Chief Warrant Officer 2

Courtney L. Miller

Sergeant Major

Scott W. Langan

Sergeant First Class

Jeffry S. Drager
William D. Jacobsen
Thomas P. Jelinek
Adam C. Junck
David J. Kapustka
Jason L. Parks

Staff Sergeant

Jamie Bartholomew
Travis J. Engler
James T. Estes
Matthew K. Hagen
Dane M. McGinley
Nathan W. Meyer
Christopher M. Niles
Felton E. Phan
Daniel A. Prather
Timothy J. Vanlaningham
Shantel G. Webster
Cherie L. Wilford
Randall S. Zimmermann

Sergeant

Joshua A. Arocho
Jessica M. Berns
Ross A. Bricker
Justin N. Budd
Jacob N. Campbell
Jason S. Carlile
Kyle R. T. D. Creech

Curtis J. Erickson
Adam M. Galvin
Marissa M. Garciamcroberts
Shane W. Guker
Daniel J. Happel
Christopher J. Hart
Clarisa S. Hazen
Brock A. Helgerson
Tyler R. Hightree
Casey J. Hughes
Stephan L. Linnaus
Ashley E. Louny
Laurie E. Maley
Jason W. Mattison
Chad C. Oestreich
Dylan A. Recek
Curtis T. Scott
Coby R. Smith
Anthony D. Smotherman
James R. Stapleton
Alisha K. Welch

Specialist

Branden L. Ahlers
Johnation A. Albaugh
Connor H. Alberts
Keyle R. Alcorn
Deon J. Allen
Hayden E. H. Arnold
Zachary J. Bachmeier
James G. Berger
Neil A. Bestwick
Adam J. Brodahl
Jeffrey J. Burbach
Eric J. Campbell
Eric R. Davis
Michael W. Denklau
John R. Gallaway
Jonathan J. Harre
Dion W. Hizson
Clint A. James
Ashley R. Kingham
Gregory M. Lange
Christopher R. Lefrois
Chad V. Levi
Nicholas b. Loseke
Riley W. Lund
Jess C. Lusche
Michael P. Manske II
Kenneth L. McAlpine
Sherry T. McBride
Bobby P. McCann
Matthew R. McCoy
Keith M. J. Mills
Peter A. Messbarger
Joseph C. Pace Jr.
Alexander N. Petersen
Ashley M. Pofahl
Alyssa M. Prai
Ryan M. Redowl
Kathy H. Reyes
Christopher D. Rohde
Travis J. Rust
Riley J. Ruzicka
Daniel Salinas

Christostomos Savvidis
Amanda R. Sedivy
William D. Spies
Bryant R. Stein
Derrick W. Stratman
Nathan J. Vancura
Jordan M. White
Rhoderick J. Wagner
Reiley J. Wieland

Private First Class

Jacqueline P. Alvarez
Katrina M. Brock
David E. Cisar Jr.
Alex Y. Connor
Austin R. Fischer
Josue S. Flores
Timothy A. Foster
Joline E. Garwood
Brian H. Hamilton
Jordan T. Hopwood
Arez M. Karim
Dien T. Le
Jacob R. McCall
Mohamed A. Musa
Taylor D. Nekuda
Jacob M. Ohl

Amanda C. Schlund
Todd J. Strauss

Private Two

Robert W. Bradshaw
William T. Bushhousen
Keith A. Copeland
Cassius L. Dinkel
Jacob I. Kendrick
Gunner L. Kepler
Ryan E. Lawrence
Brandon J. Lustrea
Thawn S. Pau
Calvin J. Russell

Air National Guard Colonel

Chris S. Collins

Lieutenant Colonel

John L. Decker
Brenda L. Fujan
Christopher L. Hesse
Kathryn D. Millwood
John D. Williams

Major

Nancy N. Curtis

Captain

Timothy G. Russell

First Lieutenant

Aaron J. Self
Nicole R. Hansen

Chief Master Sergeant

Hubert Brunk
Edward Schmohr

Senior Master Sergeant

Tracy Bryant
Paul Buss
Toby Harm

Master Sergeant

Gregory Dodson
Jarrod Tisthammer
Beth Williamsen

Technical Sergeant

Timothy Baruth
Danelle Collins

Christina M. Crosby
Steven Fusco
Donovan A. Garcia
Darren D. Rademeacher
Blake Thuelin

Staff Sergeant

Matthew L. Conroy
Sara Dubas
Kyle Eddy
Kyle Linden
Melissa R. Miller
Mary Seeling
Courtney Sheldon

Senior Airman

Seth Deinert
Jose Guerrero
Natalie Nason
Naomi Sanders
Jace S. Wissler

Airman First Class

Danielle Boger

Airman

Mattie M. Schake

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Curtis L. Abendroth
Lt. Col. Shane M. Martin
Lt. Col. James E. Murphy
Maj. Daniel J. Benes
Maj. Steven O. Ward
Capt. Matthew D. Bartling
Capt. Hector F. Leguillow
Capt. Raymond P. Phillips
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chad M. Bruce
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Gettert
Sgt. 1st Class Curtis C. Koehler
Sgt. 1st Class Bruce A. Nakai
Sgt. 1st Class Lucas L. Poppe
Staff Sgt. Jonathan L. Hagemann
Staff Sgt. Jeremy J. Rinehart

Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. Eric J. Teegerstrom
Capt. Kevin A. Beavers
Capt. Jonathan D. Wymer
1st Lt. Sarah C. Hensley
2nd Lt. Larry L. Anderson Jr.
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joseph R. Amen
Sgt. 1st Class Michael A. Hagen
Sgt. 1st Class Joshua E. King
Sgt. 1st Class Jessie D. Matlock
Sgt. 1st Class Michael W. Victor
Staff Sgt. Todd M. Bretey
Staff Sgt. Travis S. Garrett
Staff Sgt. Bret A. Liermann

Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Niles
Staff Sgt. Peter J. Smith
Sgt. Gabriel C. Conrad
Sgt. Zackary L. Klapperich
Sgt. Eric L. Wilford

Army Achievement Medal

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Todd A. Wagner
Sgt. 1st Class Wayne P. Johnson
Sgt. 1st Class William D. Norris III
Sgt. 1st Class John J. Ruden
Staff Sgt. Todd M. Bretey
Staff Sgt. Scyler W. Foes
Staff Sgt. Justin D. McCoy
Staff Sgt. Brandi M. Vrba
Staff Sgt. Sonja S. Zerr
Sgt. Christopher R. Jansen
Sgt. Rachel B. Ramsey
Sgt. Kyle S. Kunkee
Pvt. Jonathan R. Emme

Nebraska National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Joseph L. Strack
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey S. Swanson

Nebraska National Guard

Commendation Medal
1st Lt. David M. Easterday
2nd Lt. Luke M. Johnson
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cory D. Languis
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joseph R. Amen

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Douglas A. Shively
Warrant Officer Hunter C. Isley
Master Sgt. Jay F. Bottorff
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Clyne
Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery A. Holbrook
Sgt. 1st Class Troy S. Lewis
Sgt. 1st Class Shane R. Prather
Sgt. 1st Class Matt J. Rubenthaler
Staff Sgt. Keith W. Cox
Staff Sgt. Peter J. Panicucci
Sgt. Jacob N. Campbell
Sgt. Bradley P. Cunningham
Sgt. Nicholas J. Ralston

Sgt. Justin L. B. Saner
Spc. Gage A. Brummer
Spc. Grevory A. Merrill

Nebraska National Guard

Individual Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Craig W. Strong
Staff Sgt. Tarissa R. Batenhorst
Staff Sgt. Christopher S. Deters
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Franklin
Staff Sgt. Peter J. Panicucci
Sgt. Sean M. Buckels
Sgt. Jacob N. Campbell

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Lt. Col. Joseph M. McClain
Cpt. Hector F. Leguillow
1st Sgt. Brian P. Stark
Master Sgt. Robert L. McCrory
Master Sgt. Kenneth P. Roddy
Sgt. 1st Class Lee M. Bates
Sgt. 1st Class James R. Brown
Sgt. 1st Class Tracey A. Eitel
Sgt. 1st Class David W. Fannon
Sgt. 1st Class Chris A. Harter
Staff Sgt. Alvin J. Sueper
Staff Sgt. William L. Terry

Sgt. Ralph E. Lamell
Sgt. Shane T. Zzulka

Air National Guard

Chief Master Sgt. Douglas E. Schulz
Staff Sgt. Thomas A. Frederick

TAPS

Col. Chris Maasdam

Shorttakes

'Tis the Season



Photo by retired Brig. Gen. (Neb.) Kevin Neumann

Omaha Soldiers help out homeless

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion and the North Omaha Readiness Center Family Assistance Center joined forces in December to help out local residents when they spent three weeks collecting clothing, hats, gloves, blankets and toys for donation to Omaha's Siena/St. Francis House Homeless Shelter.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Michael B. Warrick, supply sergeant for the 402nd MP Bn., the holiday season seemed like a good opportunity to help out local disadvantaged people.

"Part of being a Citizen Soldier is finding ways to help within the community and a clothing donation is a great way to help people out in their time of need and free up space in the donor's closet," he said. "Sadly, it seems like many families and individuals in the Omaha area and around the greater Omaha Metro area have been struck by unfortunate accidents, caught up in natural disasters or have become the victims of poverty. Clothing donations assist families and individuals, helping to alleviate their cost of living expenses."

As of Dec. 7, the Soldiers and staff had donated six 55-gallon drums and three boxes of items. Warrick said the group hoped to collect even more before the holidays.

Veterans Affairs to open office in Guard's Sidney Readiness Center

By Aaron Nielsen

VA Public Affairs Officer

On Nov. 27, Loren Miller, director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Lincoln Regional Office, and Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac, deputy adjutant general, continued their long-standing partnership by signing a memorandum of understanding between the Nebraska National Guard and the Lincoln VA Regional Office.

The memorandum of understanding allows the VA to utilize office space at the Sidney National Guard Readiness Center located at Legion Park in Sidney, Neb.

The VA will use the space to open an office for its Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Division.

The opening of an office in Sidney will help increase access to benefits administered by the Lincoln Regional Office to rural Veterans in



Signed: Loren Miller of the Lincoln VA and Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac, deputy adjutant general, sign a memorandum of understanding allowing the VA to utilize office space at the Sidney National Guard Readiness Center in Sidney, Neb.

western Nebraska.

This new office shows the commitment the Lincoln VA Regional Office and Nebraska National Guard has to caring for its veterans located in western Nebraska. The new office is expected to be opened by the end of January 2013.

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment counselor assigned the new

Sidney office will be responsible for administering the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program, which is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program.

The VR&E program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find and keep suitable jobs. The counselor will also be available to answer questions concerning other VA benefits such as compensation benefits, G.I. bill, home loans, and insurance.

For more information on VR&E benefits or other VA Benefits log onto to the VA website www.va.gov and click on the Veteran Services tab.

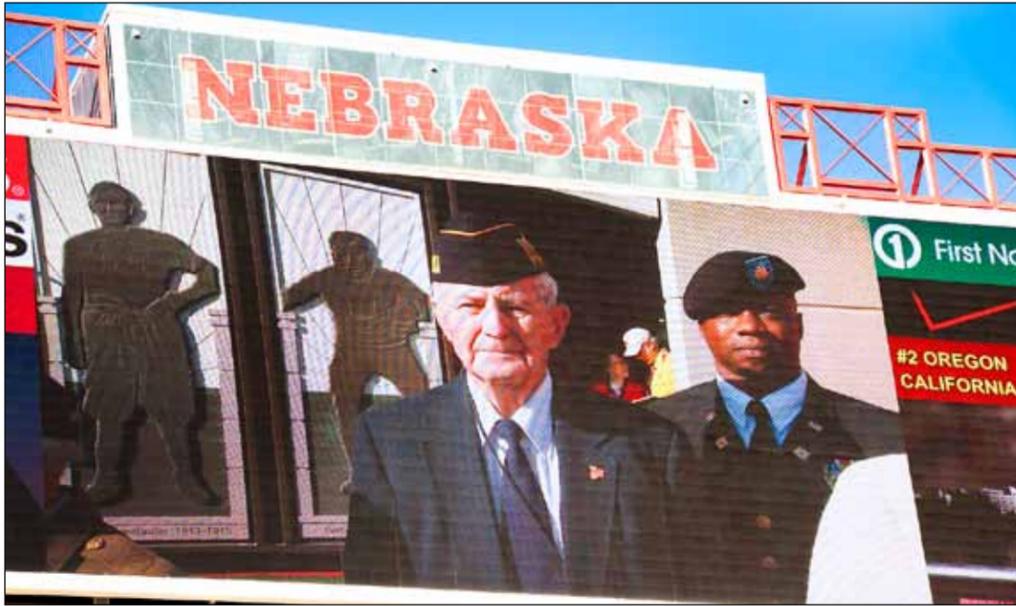
For more information about the new Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment office in Sidney, Neb., contact Aaron Nielsen at (402)420-4303 or aaron.nielsen@va.gov.

Upcoming Hiring Our Heroes job fairs

Veterans, current members of the military and their spouses seeking employment will have a chance to possibly find the jobs they're looking for when the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sponsors three free Hiring Our Heroes job fairs in Nebraska in January and February.

The following are the list of upcoming Hiring Our Heroes events:

- **Holdrege, Neb.**, Jan. 8, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Holdrege City Auditorium, 421 Grant Street.
 - **Papillion, Neb.**, Jan. 16, 9 a.m. – Noon, American Legion Post 32, 230 West Lincoln Street.
 - **Beatrice, Neb.**, Feb. 6, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., American Legion Post 27, 701 Dorsey Street.
- For more information, check out the website at <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/>



Helping Nebraska Honor A World War II Hero: Maj. Dale Burrage (right) stands at attention as Marine Corps veteran Pfc. Kenneth Dahl is introduced to Memorial Stadium before Nebraska's Nov. 10 game against Penn State. Dahl, who fought at Okinawa during World War II, was one of nine veterans honored before the game.



On The Run: Cornhusker quarterback Taylor Martinez runs during first-quarter action of UNL's Veteran's Appreciation Game versus Penn State, Nov. 10, in Lincoln, Neb. UNL donated hundreds of free tickets to Nebraska veterans in appreciation of their service.

Huskers honor state's veterans

■ University of Nebraska continues annual tradition of honoring Nebraska's military members during Big 10 class with Nitany Lions

By 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln continued its long-standing support of Nebraska military members when they thanked them for their service by hosting hundreds of Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen and other reservists during the annual Veterans Appreciation Game, Nov. 10. The day's events meant a lot for those in attendance, who watched the game for free, wore their uniforms with pride and soaked up the game-day atmosphere as the Nebraska

Cornhuskers battled the Penn State Nitany Lions with shares of Big 10 division leads hanging in the balance.

"You can feel the electricity in the atmosphere," said Spc. Bryce Higgins, an aircraft electrician with the Nebraska Army Guard's Detachment 4, Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion. "It's one thing to watch it on TV, but to actually be in the stadium you feel the emotion from all the fans – it's unlike anything else."

"I feel honored to be here to represent the state of Nebraska and represent the Air Force," said Staff Sgt. Pouthasone Bouasyn, a records management specialist with the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing's mission support group. "I'm just grateful for the university to donate tickets to service members as part of Veteran's day weekend," he added.

Both Guardsmen agreed the key to the game was limiting turnovers and gave very close predictions with Bouasyn's guess of a 34 to 28 Husker victory coming the closest to the true outcome.



Photos by 2nd Lt. Alex Salmon

Saluting Nebraska's Veterans: U.S. Army Cpl. Harold Heins waves to the Memorial Stadium crowd as he and eight other Nebraska veterans, representing various conflicts and military services since World War II, are introduced prior to the start of Nebraska's football game with Penn State, Nov 10.

In what became an almost normal occurrence during the 2012 season, the Huskers fell behind early only to come storming back

and ultimately win the game 32 to 23.

Following a tough Big 10 Conference Championship loss to Wisconsin, the 10-3 Cornhuskers will try to notch an 11th win against a tough Georgia Bulldogs team in the Capital One Bowl game on New Year's Day. Bouasyn echoed the thoughts of thousands in the stands that day, and in Orlando for the bowl game: "Go Big Red!"

Nebraska Guard members run annual 'Market-to-Market' relay

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

"When a lot of people hear about running 80 miles, they never think I'm going to be able to run 80 miles, but when you break it down into a relay," said Senior Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode, "it's pretty painless and a lot of fun."

Members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard rounded up some of their troops to participate in the 2012 Market-to-Market Relay-Nebraska. The Oct. 13 Market-to-Market Relay was a unique running event that took teams from downtown Omaha to downtown Lincoln.

"It's a great event," said Tontegode, ground safety manager for the 155th Air Refueling Wing. "When you break it up as a relay team, it's very achievable for someone that maybe doesn't run a lot or someone that enjoys working as a team."

Teams of six to eight members took on the nearly 80-mile scenic course from Omaha to Lincoln. Each member ran different stages of the course anywhere from two to six miles. A van transported the rest of the team members to the different running points along the course.

"You can make it as competitive, non-competitive or as fun as you want," said Tontegode. "I'm a very strong advocate of physical fitness and the Market-to-Market Relay is a great way to hang out with Guard members in a different environment and keep up on our physical fitness."

Lt. Col. Eric Teegerstrom couldn't agree more.

"If you are going to deploy, you don't really have time to fix your physical fitness level," said Teegerstrom, director of military support for Joint Force Headquarters. "That is something you need to have ready at all times. Having that from the get-go and being in condition makes everything easier."

"I think the other thing is the quality of life and just being comfortable in your own body," said Teegerstrom. "The benefits of being in good condition, you feel better, you usually look better, and you will usually have a more positive attitude about doing things because you know you are capable and fit."



Courtesy Photo

Final Steps: Members of a team made up of Nebraska National Guard members competing in the Market-to-Market relay cross the finish line in Lincoln's Haymarket Oct. 13. The annual relay takes teams of six to eight people from Omaha's Old Market to Lincoln's Haymarket, with each team member running one or more multiple-mile stretches.

"It's good for the people to see the Guardsmen out there and see that the military is really a part of their community."

— Lt. Col. Eric Teegerstrom
Director of Military Support for
Joint Force Headquarters

According to Guard members who participated in the Market-to-Market Relay, they don't run in events like this to get ready for physical fitness test but for their common interest and liking of running.

"It builds camaraderie," said Teegerstrom.

"It's a good event that takes what is essentially an individual sport to more of a team level and it's a lot of fun."

"This is unique in the way it's a team event," added Teegerstrom. "It brings into a dimension that just running a marathon doesn't. I

really like the Market-to-Market."

In the Market-to-Market Relay there was an Armed Forces division where members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard competed. Guard members ran beside community members, which made for one big community event.

"It's good for the people to see the Guardsmen out there and see that the military is really a part of their community," said Teegerstrom.

"I do it every year and enjoy it," said Tontegode. "I would highly recommend if there is anyone that is interested in trying a relay or something like this, that this is a great event."



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