

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

More than 200,000 fans flock to tarmac to watch thrilling show

9/11 terrorist attacks remembered during solemn ceremony

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Almost exactly 10 years from the moment of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Nebraskans attending the Guardians of Freedom Airshow paused beneath deep blue skies amid static displays of current and past military aircraft to remember the more than 3,000 people who died that day and the thousands of others who continue to defend America's homeland against future attacks.

"All over America, we are pausing and reflecting on the ways we've changed over the past 10 years," said Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, one of several leaders who spoke during the commemoration ceremony that kicked off the airshow on Sept. 11. "Today, I want to acknowledge and thank those who gave their lives protecting us."

"We honor those firefighters, police officers, emergency personnel and military members who were amongst the first to rush to the sites of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. We honor those passengers aboard United Airlines Flight 93 who fought against the terrorists to protect our country. We honor their heroic sacrifice to save



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Leith

Moment Of Silence: (From left) Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac, U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson and Gov. Dave Heineman bow in a moment of silence for those lost on Sept. 11, 2001, during a 9/11 memorial ceremony in Lincoln, Neb.

others," said Heineman. "We honor our men and women of the United States Armed Forces who continue to fight
See 9/11 CEREMONY on 9.



Photo by David Nore

Formed Up: A formation of U.S. Navy Blue Angels fly behind the boom of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker as the world-famous flying group travels to Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 8.

Blue Angels bring amazing aerial act to Guardians of Freedom show

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach
Staff Writer

The early morning sun glistened on the wings of the Blue Angels aircraft parked on the ramp. Upon entering the gate, spectators observed service members driving in golf carts with gear, setting up equipment, applying sunscreen and passing out water bottles, while vendors constructed their booths and exhibits.

The crowds wandered through historic aircraft displays to find the best shaded place to relax in their lawn chairs. The hum of the jet engines and clouds of smoke drifted into the sky while the aroma of barbecue hovered in the air.

The weekend of Sept. 9-11, the Nebraska National Guard, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Lincoln Airport Authority hosted the Guardians of Freedom Airshow, bringing the

See AIRSHOW on 10.

Obama: America emerged from 9/11 strengthened

WASHINGTON (AFPS)—President Barack Obama remembered those who were lost to terrorist attacks a decade ago and said the American commitment to freedom, justice, courage and liberty has not dimmed in the face of many trials, Sept. 11.

Obama capped a busy day that took him to ground zero in New York, to Shanksville, Pa., where United Airlines Flight 93 crashed,

and to the Pentagon.

That evening, the president spoke at the Concert for Hope at the Kennedy Center where he began his remarks with a quote from the Bible: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," from Psalm 30.

Americans endured such a night on Sept. 11, 2001, Obama said.

"Mighty towers crumbled. Black smoke billowed up from the Penta-

gon. Airplane wreckage smoldered on a Pennsylvania field," he said.

"Friends and neighbors, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters — they were taken from us with heartbreaking swiftness and cruelty. On Sept. 12, 2001, we awoke to a world in which evil was closer at hand and uncertainty clouded our future."

In the past 10 years, much has changed and America is at war, the

president said.

"We can never get back the lives we lost on that day, or the Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in the wars that followed," he said before adding that after a decade it is worth remembering what hasn't changed.

"Our character as a nation has not changed," Obama said. "Our faith — in God and each other —

See PRESIDENT on 8.

Nebraskans deliver wheat seed to local Afghan farmers

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley
Nebraska ADT 2

For centuries making bread from wheat grown locally has never been concern for local Central Asian farmers.

At least not until a new strain of devastating wheat rust spread into neighboring Iran as well as possibly into parts of Pakistan and India.

A new variety of certified seed wheat has been grown over the last two years in Afghanistan, which has been genetically altered to resist this new disease.

Recently, the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team's rangeland management and wheat specialist, Sgt. 1st Class Dan Nichols, has been working with local Afghan officials in an effort to distribute certified wheat seed that is resistant to
See FARMERS on 8.



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Nagasawa

Working To Spread Wheat: (From left) Sgt. 1st Class Dan Nichols, a rangeland management and wheat specialist with the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team No. 2, talks with Salah Mohammad, the local Afghan extension agent for the Sayed Karam District, during a meeting in September. The Nebraska ADT No. 2 is currently working to help develop an Afghan seed bank made up of disease-resistant wheat.

Nebraska Soldiers helping jobless vets find work 'one tee at a time'

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Most people looking for work know that when it comes to selling oneself to a prospective employer, they've got about 15 minutes or less to get the job done.

Needless to say, it's a difficult undertaking under the best of conditions.

A pair of innovative Nebraska Soldiers has recently challenged themselves to help unemployed and underemployed veterans improve those odds one tee at a time.

The idea, say Joshua Loos and Corey Gray, is to give vets an opportunity to meet and talk with prospective employers over a round of golf through a program they created "on the back of a napkin."

"Essentially, it's an 18-hole interview," said Gray, a former active duty U.S. Army helicopter mechanic who co-founded "Support, Educate and Reintegrate Veterans
See VETERANS GOLF on 14.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ Defense leaders laud 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' repeal

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The official end of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law reflects the American values that military members uphold, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said, Sept. 20.

"Thanks to this change, I believe we move closer to achieving the goal at the foundation of the values that America's all about — equality, equal opportunity and dignity for all Americans," he told reporters during a Pentagon news briefing.

Panetta reaffirmed his dedication to all who are serving and ensured everyone who wishes to serve has the opportunity to do so regardless of sexual preference.

"As secretary of defense, I am committed to removing all of the barriers that would prevent Americans from serving their country and from rising to the highest level of responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant," he said. "These are men and women who put their lives on the line in the defense of this country and that's what should matter the most."

Panetta credited several groups for helping prepare the Defense Department for the implementation of the repeal.

"I want to thank the repeal implementation team and the service secretaries, along with the service chiefs, for all of their efforts to ensure that DoD is ready to make this change, consistent with standards of military readiness, with military effectiveness, with unit cohesion, and with the recruiting and retention of the armed forces," he said.

"All of the service chiefs have stated very clearly that all of these elements have been met in the review that they conducted," Panetta said. "Over 97 percent of our 2.3 million men and women in uniform have now received education and training on repeal as a result of these efforts."

Panetta also lauded Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for his commitment to the repeal of the 1993 law. The chairman said the repeal will strengthen the DoD and emphasize positive values.

"Today, with implementation of the new law fully in place, we are a stronger joint force, a more tolerant force, a force of more character and more honor, more in keeping with our own values," Mullen said.

■ Program aims to reintegrate former Afghan insurgents

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — An Afghan-led program to reintegrate former insurgents is helping to stabilize communities, districts and provinces throughout Afghanistan, the general leading NATO International Security Assistance Force's contribution to this effort said.

British Army Maj. Gen. Phil Jones, director of ISAF's Force Reintegration Cell, described to Pentagon reporters via video uplink from Kabul, Afghanistan, the reintegration program's role in Afghanistan's long-term peace strategy.

There are now 2,418 former fighters en-

rolled in the program, Jones said. In contrast with this time last year, when the process existed only on paper.

"These are 2,418 men who are no longer shooting at the coalition and Afghan soldiers, no longer laying roadside bombs that kill innocent women and children," he said.

Jones said the reintegration process works in phases: when former insurgents wish to enroll, Afghan officials interview them, take iris and fingerprint scans, and store that data in government systems. After the former fighters integrate back into their villages, international donations dedicated to community improvement take hold.

"The \$142 million that is in the international trust fund is almost exclusively focused on community development projects," he said, adding that both the central Afghan government and international donors emphasize former insurgents shouldn't receive monetary incentives to lay down their arms.

■ Wyatt: Air Guard affordable, operational, accessible

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (AFNS) — The Air National Guard is the affordable, operational, fully accessible force the Air Force needs during uncertain economic times, the director of the Air National Guard, Lt. Gen. Harry Wyatt, said Sept. 28.

"The Air Guard provides to the United States Air Force 34 percent of the combat capability on seven percent of the budget," he said. "I like where the Air National Guard is positioned."

Speaking during the Air Force Association's 2011 Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition, Wyatt explained how the Air Guard has, is and will continue to be America's homeland force with a federal capability. "It started in the mid-1990s when the Air Force recognized that (they) could no longer afford the luxury of having an operational force and a strategic reserve force that could be placed on the shelf."

After the first Gulf War and Operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch in Southwest Asia, the active duty forces were beginning to stretch thin trying to do all the missions the U.S. expected the Air Force to do.

The Air Force turned to the Air Guard to join in the fight. But equipment, training and funding for the Air Guard at that time was nowhere near what it would need to be to achieve those missions, Wyatt said.

"Think of the transition the Air Guard has made since I joined in 1977 when it was a strategic reserve, to what the Guard did on Sept. 11, 2001, to what the Guard has done for the last 10 years to today," he said.

The Air Guard is present in the majority of Air Force missions with a fraction of the cost, Wyatt said:

- 43 percent of the air-refueling mission.
- 33 percent of the fighter mission.
- 30 percent of the cargo and transport mission.
- 20 percent of the remotely piloted aircraft mission.
- 20 percent of the distributive common ground station mission.

Mullen: America can't lose military edge

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — America can ill afford to lose its military superiority, Adm. Mike Mullen said Sept. 30, his last day as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Speaking to the audience gathered at Virginia's Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall to watch him transfer the chairmanship to Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Mullen said decisions made in the coming months will determine what kind of military the nation will have during the next 20 to 30 years. The admiral noted the U.S. military forces have fought for a decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now face "looming threats" posed by Iran and North Korea, challenges in cyberspace and China's growing military capabilities.

"We have become the best counterinsurgency force in the world, but we have done so at the expense of critical conventional capabilities we necessarily let lapse," Mullen said. "We have become the most expeditionary force in our history, but in the process sacrificed some of the basics of garrison leadership and continuity that preserve the health of our all-volunteer force."

Difficult budget decisions are ahead, the admiral acknowledged.

"Cuts in defense spending are fair game. We should do our part," Mullen said. "But cut too deeply and we will burn the very blanket of protection we have been charged to provide our fellow citizens. Cut too deeply now and we will harm, perhaps irreparably, the industrial base from which we procure the materials of war."

The chairman also addressed the American public, as he has in scores of visits to colleges, town halls and other venues across the nation during his "Conversation With the Country" travels. "The men and women of your armed forces are the best we have ever known," Mullen said. "They believe in what they are doing. All I ask is that you continue to believe in them."

He urged Americans to reach out to service members, veterans and their families — "to wash over them in what I call this 'sea of goodwill' that I know exists in the country."

War has changed America's service members forever, but it has not changed their dreams and their

fellow citizens can help make those dreams come true, Mullen said.

"Hire them. Help them buy a home. Get them started on the path to an education," he said. "Give them a chance. That's all they want."

America and its citizens are struggling amid a global economic downturn, he acknowledged, and the wars young men and women in uniform are fighting aren't "exactly foremost on everyone's minds."

But they are foremost in the minds of service members in the fight, the admiral said.

"We talk about the resilience of our troops and their families as if it is something apart from the rest of society," he said. "It isn't, or at least it shouldn't be."

Mullen said America's troops learned to be brave and steadfast in their homes, schools and communities. "Welcome them back to those places, not only with bands and bunting or yellow ribbons, but with the solemn recognition that they have done your bidding, they have represented you well, they have carried the best of you and of this country into battle."

Breaking Dirt



Photo by David Nore

Officials break ground for newest readiness center at Mead Training Site

Groundbreaking of the 47,304 square foot Mead Atlas Readiness Center was commemorated on Sept. 1 with state and local dignitaries breaking ground at the \$12 million site. The facility will house the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion in an environment that allows the unit to train in a realistic setting and complete all administrative support functions locally. "This training facility will allow the 402nd to complete all mission tasks and support requirements without leaving the training site," said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, during the ceremony.

The Air Guard operates 66 of 89 wings off of civilian airfields for about the same amount of money as it costs to run a large Air Force base, Wyatt said. "And we're dispersed in 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia. We are an operational force."

Wyatt said based on the facts — the cost effectiveness, preparation, skill levels, experience, training, quality of Guard members both officer and enlisted — that should be all that is needed in any debate of whether or not the Guard is fully operational.

"I've told my Airmen that the Air National Guard is positioned exactly where it needs to be at this critical time to provide the most combat capability for the least amount of money," he said.

■ Soldiers, vets initially denied Purple Hearts for concussive injury encouraged to resubmit

WASHINGTON (ARNEWS) — Active duty and Reserve Component Soldiers, as well as veterans, who were denied Purple Heart awards for concussive or mild traumatic brain injuries, are encouraged to resubmit documentation for reconsideration of the medal.

Since the Vietnam War, concussions or mild traumatic brain injuries, or MTBIs, as a direct result of an enemy action has always been an injury that warranted the award of the Purple Heart — according to Defense Department guidelines. Nevertheless, field commanders have sometimes been unclear on what constituted concussion.

With medical advances in the treatment and knowledge of concussion and MTBI injuries, the Army has been able to further identify the characteristics of the unseen wound and clarify guidance for entitlement to the Purple Heart, said Col. Tom Quinn, chief of Soldiers Programs and Services Division at Army Human Resources Command.

"In the past, concussion or MTBI injuries were very hard to diagnose," Quinn said. "Treatments varied and were not the same across the board and medical officers weren't always documenting that information in the Soldier's records."

To receive a Purple Heart, a wound has to be the result of enemy or hostile action and the treatment for that injury must be documented in a Soldier's official medical records by a medical officer, Quinn said.

For Purple Heart award reconsideration, the injury must have occurred on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

Active duty and Reserve Component Soldiers must work with their chains of command, through the first general officer, by submitting a copy of their deployment orders, various Department of Army forms, a one-page narrative describing the incident and the conditions under which the Soldier was wounded.

Veterans should submit packages directly to Army Human Resources Command. They can obtain copies of their deployment orders from the Veteran's Inquiry Branch by emailing veterans@conus.army.mil.

Submission for reconsideration is not a guarantee of approval, Quinn added.

Prairie Soldier

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Staying Afloat: Staff Sgt. Nicholas Kemp, survey team leader and noncommissioned officer for the 72nd Civil Support Team, proves to other team members that he will stay afloat in full gear during the 72nd CST survey team's "drown-proof" training at the Offutt Air Force Base outdoor pool, Aug. 29. The training was designed to give members of the 72nd CST the confidence they need to operate near water.

Full Gear: Staff Sgt. Nicholas Kemp, survey team leader and noncommissioned officer for the 72nd Civil Support Team, puts on a suit over his closed circuit breathing apparatus before getting into the Offutt Air Force Base outdoor pool during the team's Aug. 29 "drown-proof" training.

Splash!

■ 72nd Civil Support Team practices water procedures during August pool training

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

To most people, a day at the pool on a hot and sunny day may seem like a great way to get a little sun and relaxation.

For members of the Nebraska National Guard's 72nd Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction), it was simply a way to provide the team with critical water training.

The Aug. 29 "drown-proof" training at the Offutt Air Force Base outdoor pool was an important part of making sure the Lincoln-based 72nd CST is prepared for any possible situation, say unit members.

"Even CST's in the middle of the country are used along the coast line for hurricane support and maritime relief," said Tech. Sgt. Ryan Albano, the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear team chief for the 72nd CST. "That means anyone could be confronted with having to do a mission in a water environment."

"This training really builds confidence," said Capt. Sean Thurmer, survey team leader for the 72nd CST. "But it also is a fun time for the team to bond and learn their trade."

The training began with the Soldiers and Airmen learning pool rules and water safety tips before jumping in the pool.

Then it was time for a big splash. Most jumped in. Some of the not-so-adventurous ones used the ladder to get into the pool.

Once in the pool, the team members swam around and got familiar with their surroundings. They swam in the short end to get used to the water before moving to the deep end where the team members conducted their primary training in 12-foot-deep water.

The next step of the training



One Step At A Time: Capt. Sean Thurmer climbs up the pool ladder to complete his "drown proof" training at Offutt's outdoor pool, Aug. 29.

required the Guardsmen to put on their gear, which included either self-contained breathing apparatus or closed circuit breathing apparatus, mask, suit and boots.

The Soldiers and Airmen soon found out how beneficial their gear was in the water.

"The equipment will help you float and is near impossible for you to sink," said Thurmer.

Putting on the cumbersome gear in the water did prove to be a little trickier for some. Many of the suits had water in them, requiring the participants to use balance and coordination to put all their gear on, which on dry land weighs about 60 pounds.

The challenges didn't end once the suits were on, either.

"You feel claustrophobic at times," said Albano. "The suit sucks in and plus you are in the water, too."

Albano compared the sensation to being similar to a fear of heights. Being in a small area, let alone be

ing in a suit in a body of water, can be a frightening experience in itself.

Participants were then submerged underwater to simulate a fall into the water. There, they had to trust in their equipment that they would float and have enough oxygen to breathe.

That confidence could be a critical component should a person fall off a ship, vessel or dock and into the water, said Albano.

"(This gives the team the) confidence and training with the equipment (to) know what to do," said Albano.

The participants then moved around the pool in full gear to ensure they could get around in suit while in the water.

In-pool safeties were stationed around participants at all times to insure safety and assist those needing help.

The final portion of the training required each team member to attempt to extract themselves from the suit without assistance, swim to the edge and get out of the pool.

Following the training, Albano said he was extremely pleased with the experience the members of the CST received during the exercise.

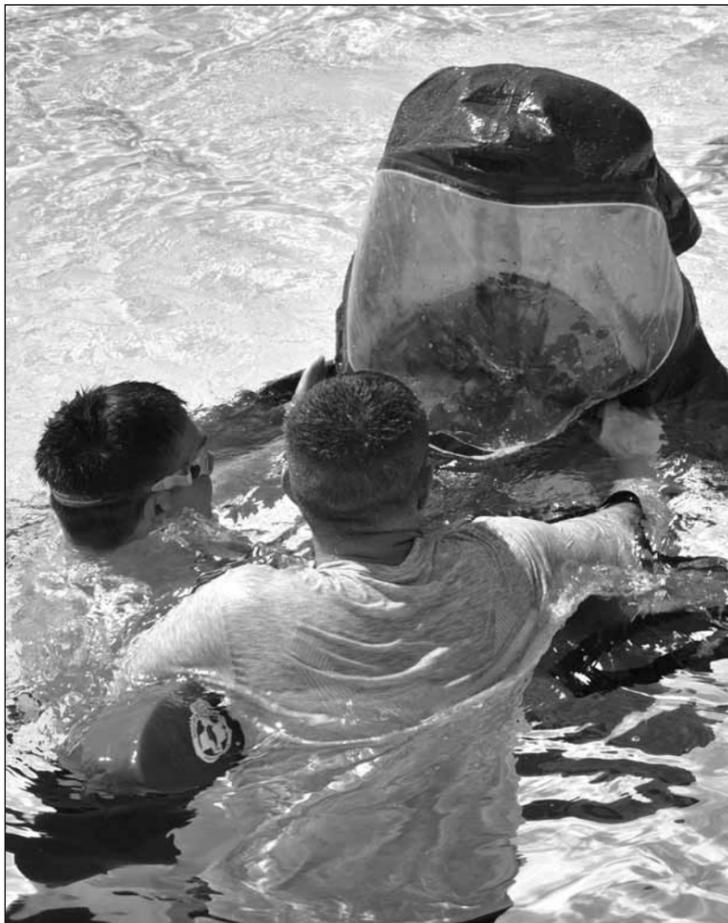
"The mission of this training was to gain proficiency and confidence in the equipment," said Albano, adding that it also gave the team the opportunity to test its equipment in a watery environment.

"When we do this training, some of the equipment might fail and this works great as doing an extreme PCMS (Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services)," said Albano.

"We already had a sentinel fail, which means it was not waterproof," added Albano. "Contamination could have gotten into it if it was exposed. This training really identifies these types of problems."



I Can Do This: Staff Sgt. Nicholas Kemp, survey team leader and noncommissioned officer for the 72nd Civil Support Team, pulls his hands out of his gloves before getting out of his gear during "drown-proof" training at the Offutt Air Force Base outdoor pool.



A Little Help From My Friends: Capt. Sean Thurmer and Tech. Sgt. Ryan Albano, both survey team leaders, help Sgt. Cassandra Daynothorn, a survey team noncommissioned officer, get out of her protective suit during the "drown-proof" training at the Offutt Air Force Base outdoor pool, Aug. 29.

Guard firefighting team deploys on 9/11 anniversary

■ Small unit spent months preparing for upcoming mission to support aviation activities at overseas base

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

Staff Sgt. Shawn Sullivan knows the dynamics of a small force of highly trained firefighters. He has been with the 181st Engineer Detachment Fire Fighter Team from the first days of his enlistment into the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"These individuals have been on orders for the better part of the last year," Sullivan said recently. "We had a mobile training team from Texas come up and go through all of our firefighter certifications, the same certs that you get on the civilian side: your fire instructor, fire inspector, fire officer certs."

Sullivan is the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 181st Engineer Detachment.

On Sept. 11 Sullivan joined the other six firefighters from his unit as they were wished farewell at Omaha's South Omaha Readiness Center before the start of a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.

According to Sullivan, the seven firefighters will have a big mission in Afghanistan.

"Aviation fire protection will be our main mission in Afghanistan, out on the flight line very similar to our Nebraska Air National Guard firefighters," Sullivan said on the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "It will be a little more austere environment and we pick up with other seven-man teams. It is a multiple team effort," he added.

This is not the first time the unit

will perform missions with other fire fighting teams.

"We have trained with the other teams up at (Operation) Golden Coyote in South Dakota... (we) know their senior leadership and then a couple of years later trained with them, so we are familiar with many of them," he said.

Aircraft and structural fires are the two main emergency situations the unit has trained for, but the unit Soldiers have trained on other emergency situations as well, Sullivan said.

"We sent our youngest guys through the whole course; they got certified up to the senior firefighter level, so we have a really good group of guys," Sullivan said.

"We went up to South Dakota and at Ellsworth Air Force Base and we did a bunch of large aircraft frame burns. Every year we do large aircraft burns and structure burns, just like your regular firefighters," Sullivan said, adding that a number of the unit members are also qualified in emergency medical services. "Some of our team members are paramedics."

According to Sullivan, most of the unit members are also members of either reserve firefighting units or volunteer fire departments.

That, Sullivan said, means they're very active in maintaining both their military and civilian fire fighting skills.

The unit consists of two different fire trucks, a utility trailer and a Conex shipping container, which, along with the seven Soldiers, can all fit into one C-5 Galaxy transport airplane.

The historic 10 year anniversary of 9/11 held significant meaning for the departing Soldiers and the assembled group.

"This date (9/11) is very significant to all of us because we are all firefighters," said Spc. Patrick Farns, a unit driver operator, said. "343 firefighters died that day, so being a firefighting unit, it is kind of an honor."



Photo by David Nore

A Heritage Of Family Service Represented On Anniversary Of 9/11: Five Sullivan family members with military service, four of whom are currently in the Nebraska Army National Guard, pose for a photograph during the sendoff for the 181st Engineer Detachment at the South Omaha Readiness Center, Sept. 11. (From left) Nick Sullivan, Navy service, Spc. Britni Sullivan, 195th Forward Support Company (home on two-week leave from Afghanistan), Pfc. Brandi Sullivan, 313th Medical Company, Staff Sgt. Shawn Sullivan, 181st Engineer Detachment, 1st Lt. Casey Sullivan, 1-134th Cavalry.



Photo courtesy of the 181st Firefighting Team

It All Fits In One Plane: Two fire trucks, one trailer, one Conex shipping container and seven Soldiers all fit in one C-5 Galaxy transport aircraft at Fort Bliss, Texas, as the members of the 181st Engineer Detachment, Nebraska Army National Guard, prepare to depart on a one year deployment in Afghanistan. The unit will perform aviation and structural fire protection, and emergency medical services in theater.

"And for the families, it's kind of cool, too," he added. "My whole family is law enforcement in South Dakota."

The farewell was indeed a family affair as most of Sullivan's family present in the audience are presently in the Nebraska Army National Guard or have served

in the military in one fashion or the other.

Brother 1st Lt. Casey Sullivan just returned from deployment to Afghanistan with the 1-134th Cavalry. Two sisters, Spc. Britni Sullivan of the 195th Forward Support Company and Pfc. Brandi Sullivan of the 313th Medical Company, are

in the Nebraska Army National Guard. Brother Nick served in the Navy, while their father served in the South Dakota National Guard and their grandfather served in World War II.

"I think this is a great way to capstone their deployment with all the training they have been doing and being it is the 9/11 anniversary," 1st Lt. Casey Sullivan said. "It is that much more memorable and gives them a little more extra drive to start off with. Every single Soldier in that unit joined post 9/11 knowing that they had a high chance of deploying with that unit."

Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal praised the Sullivan family for their service and gave special thanks to all the families in the audience.

"I know that you are capable and you will be successful in your mission," he said.

"I want to offer a special thanks to the families of the 181st because during the time of train-up for the firefighters, the families had to sacrifice much time that they would have liked to spend with their loved ones."

Small Guard team gets big send-off before starting Kosovo mission

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

One of the Nebraska Army National Guard's smallest – if not the smallest – teams to be deployed overseas was given a warm send-off, Sept. 16, when military and governmental leaders gathered at the South Omaha Readiness Center to wish the 1969th Acquisition Team farewell before the start of a year-long mission to Kosovo.

According to members of the four-person team, the group has gone through an amazing transformation since standing up two years ago.

"It's just been a journey because we stood up this team just two years ago without really knowing how to go from zero to where we are now," said Capt. Justin Pedersen, commander of the team that will be responsible for writing and administering contracts in support of American and NATO forces currently serving in Kosovo.

According to Pedersen, the team has spent months preparing for the deployment during last year's eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., and during recent work with U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer employees in Lincoln.

"It's been two years of hard training and it seemed like the day would never get here," said Pedersen. "But we are ready to go."

Nebraska's senior leaders agreed with that assessment.

"The important work that you're going to do to enable NATO forces to be able to conduct their mission is extremely important," said Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general,



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Family Portrait: Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Rupprecht and his wife Melissa pose for a photograph with their two children, Jackson and Sophie, shortly after the Sept. 16 send-off ceremony for the 1969th Acquisition Team at the South Omaha Readiness Center. Rupprecht and the three other members of his team are deploying to Kosovo for a year-long mission.

Army. "Peace in the Balkans region is of vital interest to our nation, so the work that you will do over there is very important."

Navrkal said he has faith that the small team is ready to tackle that work.

"I know that you are extremely well-prepared to go do this mission and do it extremely well in the fine Nebraska Soldier

tradition," he added.

U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns echoed those words as he addressed the departing Soldiers and their families.

"Captain Pedersen, you have assembled a great team. You know what it takes to lead a successful deployment," said Johanns, adding that the team's expertise in financial

management will be of great importance in Europe. "Today, our armed forces must be prepared to not only fight, but most importantly in these days of tough budgets and finances, we also expect them to manage the resources that the taxpayers give to them."

"In Kosovo you will be helping manage the funding to continue the rebuilding and restoration in that region. Your team has a unique level of experience from your civilian jobs and military training that will be invaluable as you serve," he said, adding that the mission in Kosovo, while no longer front-page news, continues to be important as NATO forces work to rebuild a region nearly decimated by civil war in the 1990s. "Your role is to do everything you can to keep that (rebuilding) on track."

Navrkal and Johanns also both pledged their support to the families left at home.

"Families, Nebraskans are committed to making sure that whatever your needs are, they are met so that your loved ones overseas will hopefully worry less, although we recognize that they will worry," Johanns said. "Your support and your sacrifice are essential to the mission. This mission could not be accomplished without you."

"Families, whether it be four or 400, our commitment to each and every Soldier and their family is there," added Navrkal. "You are extremely important to us. Now that we send the Soldiers off to Kosovo, we don't forget them... but we focus much of our attention on our families."

"If you need us, we will be there. You just need to ask," he said. "There are a myriad of resources available and they want to help."

The team's mission is expected to last one year.

Tied Down: Pfc. Brian Keck and Pfc. Detrick Jacobs, truck drivers with the 1057th Truck Company, securely fasten chains to the bed of their truck to ensure the Humvee they were hauling doesn't move during a convoy, July 29.



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

No cow ropin' at this rodeo!

Truck units use annual training competition to prepare Soldiers for upcoming overseas mission

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

The Army's version of a rodeo doesn't come with horses, lassos, or saddles. In fact, it isn't your typical rodeo in any shape or form.

It's a truck rodeo. Soldiers from the Scottsbluff-based 168th Quartermaster Battalion showed off their truck driving skills during a truck rodeo at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., during a portion of their July 23 - Aug. 6 annual training. The 168th QM Bn. includes the 1057th Truck Company from Chadron and Scottsbluff, and the 1074th Truck Company, from North Platte, Broken Bow, Ogallala and Sidney.

The truck rodeo included preventive maintenance checks and services of vehicles, proper tie-down procedures for equipment on trailers, left and right hand turns, straight-line backing up and coupling and uncoupling a truck

and trailer.

"The coupling and uncoupling was the event I really got excited about doing," said Pfc. Alex J. Fritz, a truck driver with the 1057th Truck Co. "There are so many details involved and we are really doing it right by going by the book."

"I like the aspect of driving down the road," added Pfc. Brian Keck, a truck driver who also serves in the 1057th Truck Co., "but the instructors are really telling us different facts and regulations, so it's a good way to learn firsthand."

In addition to the truck rodeo, the battalion's annual training consisted of range qualification, truck maintenance, convoys, warrior tasks and battle drills, and preparations for an upcoming deployment.

The annual training also provided the battalion Soldiers with the opportunity to gain valuable insight into the work that they will be doing while preparing for the overseas mission.

"A lot of what we are learning



Safety Briefing: Soldiers from the 1057th Truck Company listen to the sergeants in charge of the straight-line back-up competition during the truck rodeo portion of their annual training in Camp Guernsey, Wyo., July 29.



Checking The Mirrors: Pfc. Detrick Jacobs, a truck driver with the 1057th Truck Company, looks and adjusts his mirrors during the coupling and uncoupling of a truck and trailer portion of the truck rodeo.

at this annual training is what we will be covering when we do pre-deployment training," said Spc. Derek Utemark, a truck driver with the 1057th Truck Co. "It will really help prepare all of us in the long run."

Along with the training, 1st Lt. Lawrence Leathermon, a chaplain candidate with the 168th QM Bn., put on a pre-deployment relationship-building class for the Soldiers. The class covered such topics as sexuality, family, attractiveness,



Checking Hoses: Sgt. Bobbie Schroeder, a truck driver with Detachment 1, 1057th Truck Company, checks the hoses on her truck during the preventive maintenance checks and services of vehicles portion of the truck rodeo, July 29. The truck rodeo was an important part of the 168th Quartermaster Battalion's July 23-Aug. 6 annual training at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

finances and other relationship-building skills to help Soldiers and their spouses or loved ones prepare for next year's deployment.

"I am confident that we will be

ready for our deployment," said Utemark. "I have good noncommissioned officers that pay special attention to details and have helped me learn what all I know."

Medic support to South Dakota exercise required team approach

By Pfc. Justin Zdan
Staff Writer

Medics from the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion (MMB) knew they had a big job in front of them when more than 2,100 service members travelled to the rugged Black Hills of western South Dakota to train together as part of Operation Golden Coyote 2011.

The medics' job was to provide "real world" emergency medical support for the operation. That meant that they had to be ready to respond to anything from sprained ankles to a life-threatening heart attack during the June 11-25 exercise.

To get that mission done, the medics' needed the support of their battalion's tactical operations center, which was responsible for coordinating the communications and logistical support the Soldiers required. This ranged from making sure the medics had the equipment they needed to ensuring the communication network was up and operational.

"Without communication... people may not be able to get the proper treatment," said Staff Sgt. Nicholas J. Mosel, communications sergeant with the 110th MMB.

Getting that communication system up and running was no small task, either.

Mosel had to make sure aid stations had phones, very small aperture terminals (VSAT), automation, and other information technology assets. It took four days to get communications established. Then aid stations at the forward operating bases (FOB) requested radios, chargers and batteries.

"Networking was limited when we first arrived, so I had to persistently request Ethernet ports to be installed since the facility is still under construction."



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

On The Job Training: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard perform a combat lifesaver technique in a mock combat environment while supervised by a U.S. Navy corpsman. Members of the Nebraska Army Guard's 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion traveled to the Black Hills of western South Dakota to participate in the June 11-25 Golden Coyote exercise that included more than 2,100 service members from across the United States.

That was particularly important when battalion digital radios had to be used for a "real world" situation when one Soldier's vital signs indicated he may have been suffering a heart attack.

Getting the necessary equipment into

the hands of the actual medics was also a challenge. In this case, members of the battalion's supply section had plenty of work to accomplish before the first Soldier even stepped out into the field.

"Most of what we do is at the beginning

and at the end," said Sgt. 1st Class Pamela R. Whisenhunt, battalion supply plans and operations sergeant. "We make sure the Soldiers have fuel, billeting, food, equipment."

This year's Golden Coyote also gave the battalion Soldiers an opportunity to help train other units that rarely get to operate in a tactical field environment.

"We have a Navy Reserve unit and a Colorado medical detachment," said Whisenhunt. "We command and control them as well."

Not knowing how the process works specifically was one of the biggest difficulties for any supply section, she said.

"Say a unit needs (Meals, Read to Eat.) You have to submit the right report to the right contact and at the right location. Since everyone is from a different entity and it's always changing, the most difficult part is if you don't know the process your efforts can prove to be inefficient," said Whisenhunt.

Practice and paperwork were keys to a successful supply shop, say members of the battalion.

"What I really wanted was the practice. To actually do it helps you learn to be a subject matter expert," said Sgt. Michael D. Rieke, battalion medical logistics specialist sergeant.

This was the first practical exercise that Rieke has been tasked to support. Initially Rieke's section was supporting four battalion aid stations and the troop medical clinic.

He said teamwork was a success in making the process fluid.

"Once we got here we had to supply three more units and had a shortage," said Rieke. "So we had to stretch the supply. You can't give them everything they request and you can't say no. Sometimes units have to work with the bare minimum to complete a mission."

Offutt-based Guard unit welcomes third commander

By Maj. Jason Palmer

170th Group

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 238th Combat Training Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., conducted a change of command, Sept. 9, as the unit said farewell to its second commander and welcomed a third.

Lt. Col. Mark Hopson, who served as the director of Operations for the 170th Operations Support Squadron, succeeded Lt. Col. John Anderson in a ceremony held at the squadron auditorium. Col. James "Bob" Stevenson, commander of the 170th Group, presided over the ceremony.

Stevenson said choosing the new commander was difficult because of the talented applicants.

"There were three highly qualified candidates and that made my decision tough," Stevenson said. "But once the decision was made, the selection seemed obvious. Lieutenant Colonel Hopson

is a fantastic teacher, well respected pilot and officer, and a natural, consistent leader. I am confident he will be an extremely effective commander."

Anderson thanked Col. Mark White, former 170th Group commander, for the opportunity to command and his family for their constant support during his career. Anderson also addressed the members of the 238th Combat Training Squadron and thanked them for their hard work during his command.

"The secret to a great organization is in its people," Anderson told them. "You have all chosen to be involved in the training of our Airmen to help fight and win our nation's wars."

Anderson also reminded them that the outstanding reputation of the 238th Combat Training Squadron is directly attributable to them. "You accomplish your mission effectively and with excellence. You made my job easy. I have no doubt you will continue your exceptional performance and support Lieutenant Colonel Hopson in taking the squadron to even greater heights as he takes command."

Anderson received his commission from the Reserve Officer Training Corps in 1988. He earned his navigator's wings at Mather Air Force Base, Calif., when he graduated as an electronic warfare officer in 1989.

Anderson's first operational assignment was with the 343rd Reconnaissance Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base where he upgraded to instructor/evaluator and mission director. Anderson was reassigned to a classified location in 1994 to serve as special projects test director.

In 1995, he was selected for the Joint Air

Force Institute of Technology/Air Force Test Pilot School program. Following graduation, Anderson was assigned to the 413th Flight Test Squadron at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., where he served as special projects test director and director of Test.

Anderson attended Air Command and Staff College in residence, graduating in 2001. He was then reassigned to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, where he served at the Global Hawk Program Office, with the BIG SAFARI program and as a USAF Flight Test Center representative.

Anderson joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in 2003 and served as a flight commander in the 170th Operations Support Squadron and as the 170th Group executive officer prior to commanding the 238th Combat Training Squadron.

Anderson is moving to the 155th Air Refueling Wing where he will succeed Col. Dennis Hayward as the vice commander.

When Hopson took the stage he first thanked his parents. "They were both teachers and they taught me to be the person I am today. They are the reason I am on the stage this morning."

He then thanked Stevenson "for your trust and confidence, and for this tremendous opportunity."

To the members of his squadron, Hopson said, "You take young kids and grow them up fast. In as few as six flights you qualify them to fly our jets in combat all over the world. What you do will never cease to amaze me."

Hopson received his commission from the United States Air Force Academy in 1991 after graduating with a bachelor of Science degree as an economics major. After earning his pilot's wings at Reese Air Force Base, Texas, in 1992, Hopson began his flying career with the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base. He upgraded to aircraft commander and instructor/evaluator pilot before being asked to join the initial instructor cadre team assigned to open the first RC-135 Flying Training Unit in 1997.

Hopson created RC-135 ground, simulator and flight training classes for the fledgling Flying Training Unit. In 1998, he narrated the ceremony that recognized the unit as an official Air Force Squadron, the 338th Combat Training Squadron. His final active duty assignment with the 338th Combat Training Squadron was as chief of RC-135 Pilot Training.

Hopson joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in 2002, serving in a variety of roles within the 170th Group including chief of Scheduling, chief of Standardization and Evaluation, flight commander, assistant director of Operations and director of Operations.

Hopson is a command pilot with almost 5,000 flying hours including over 2,500 as an instructor and evaluator.



Photo courtesy of the 55th Wing Public Affairs Office
New Boss: Col. James "Bob" Stevenson presents the colors of the 170th Operations Support Squadron to Lt. Col. Mark Hopson.



Anderson

Nebraska colonel named new Army National Guard chief of staff

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

A long-time Nebraska Army National Guard officer serving at National Guard Bureau has been named the new Nebraska Army National Guard chief of staff by Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general of Nebraska.

Col. Daniel A. Kenkel succeeded Col. Kevin Neumann as chief of staff for the Nebraska Army National Guard. Neumann served as chief of staff since August 2009.

As the chief of staff Kenkel will serve as the chief advisor and principal assistant to the Nebraska adjutant general in all matters relating to the Nebraska Army Guard.

Kenkel graduated from Wayne State College with a bachelor of Sci-

ence in Education degree in Biology and Chemistry.

Kenkel's military career began when he enlisted into Company A, 1-134th Infantry, Nebraska Army National Guard in October 1981. He graduated from the Nebraska Army National Guard Officer Candidate School program and was appointed a second lieutenant in June 1987.

Since then Kenkel's prior assignments include: platoon leader, training and operations officer, company commander and executive officer for 1-134th Infantry, executive officer for 110th Medical Evacuation Battalion, training and operations officer for the 67th Infantry Brigade, Task Force Falcon Rear personnel officer, executive officer for Base Support Battalion, Camp Able Sentry. He also served as the operations and plans officer for 41st Rear Area Operations Center, training and operations officer and executive officer for 92nd Troop Command, recruiting and retention

commander, operations officer for Personnel Programs Manpower and Resources Division, deputy division chief for Family Support Division, Army National Guard, and advisor to the Warrior Transition Command.

His last assignment was as the Personnel Services Division chief for Army National Guard Bureau.

Kenkel's military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Component Overseas Training Ribbon, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Kosovo Campaign Medal, NATO Medal and Global War Terrorism Service Medal.

Kenkel and his wife, retired Chief Warrant Officer 2 Julianne Kenkel, have three children, Gerald, Joseph and Jordyn.



Kenkel

New commander takes helm at Army Guard's State Training Site Command

■ Outgoing training site command leader tells incoming commander new assignment will be highlight of his career

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Training Site Command welcomed a new commander, Maj. Shane M. Martin, during a change of command ceremony held Sept. 11 at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Martin took over command from Lt. Col. Kevin L. Hittle in front of the Training Site Command formation, distinguished guests, friends and family.

"I am truly honored and humbled to take command of this great unit," said Martin. "I look forward to being able to lead this unit with all the outstanding Soldiers."

Martin enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1988 as a petroleum supply specialist with Detachment 1, 1-195th Armor in Holdrege, Neb. Martin was commissioned in 1993 through the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy Officer Candidate School program.

He has had many assignments over his military career including: platoon leader in Companies B and C, 1-195th Armor; executive officer Co. B, 1-195th Armor; commander of Det. 2, Co. B, 735th Main Support Battalion; maintenance and personnel officer for the 734th Transportation Battalion.

Martin has also served as the commander of the 1618th Transportation Co.; selective service officer and facilities engineer for Joint Force Headquarters-Nebraska.

He has also served multiple stints as a staff officer for the 41st Rear Operations Center, 168th Quartermaster Battalion, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion and

67th Battlefield Surveillance Battalion.

Col. Richard Dahlman, commander of the Nebraska Army Guard's 92nd Troop Command who presided over the ceremony, spoke highly of both Hittle and Martin.

"Major Martin you have some big shoes to fill," said Dahlman. "Hittle as a (traditional, part-time) Soldier (you) have really delivered full-time results. However, remember you (Martin) were hand-selected for this position."

Hittle also expressed his confidence in his successor to continue building on the organization's successes.

"Major Martin, (being) selected to command this unit is evidence of your immense capabilities," said Hittle. "I guarantee being with Training Site Command will be your greatest assignment of your career."

Hittle also gave some great advice to Martin.

"First, give these warriors a latitude to develop and help them complete their mission based on their strengths, resources available and their desire to excel," said Hittle. "Second, ensure you understand the implications of your command."

"I have found that these Soldiers will sacrifice well beyond my intentions," said Hittle.

Hittle began his military career in 1985 when he enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard.

In 1988 he was commissioned as a second lieutenant through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.

Hittle has held numerous leadership positions throughout his military career, including maintenance control officer, company commander, and battalion logistics officer for the 67th Support Battalion; aide-de-camp to the adjutant general and facilities engineering officer for Headquarters Nebraska State Area Command and for the Training Site Detachment.

Hittle also served as the master planning branch chief for the 67th Area Support Group while deployed to Iraq; Camp Ashland Training Site commander and battalion executive officer for the Nebraska National Guard Training Site Command.

"(Lieutenant Colonel) Hittle is going to be greatly missed. He was a commander that really cared about the Soldiers," said Master Sgt. Chris Saltzgaber, Training Site Command operations noncommissioned officer. "He put family first and did all he could to make sure Soldiers could be at their family functions."

"But Major Martin is coming in with a lot of energy and great visions on taking us from where we are now and moving us forward to be a very highly professional organization," Saltzgaber added.



Hittle



Martin

Retiring Nebraska Army Guard chief of staff honored

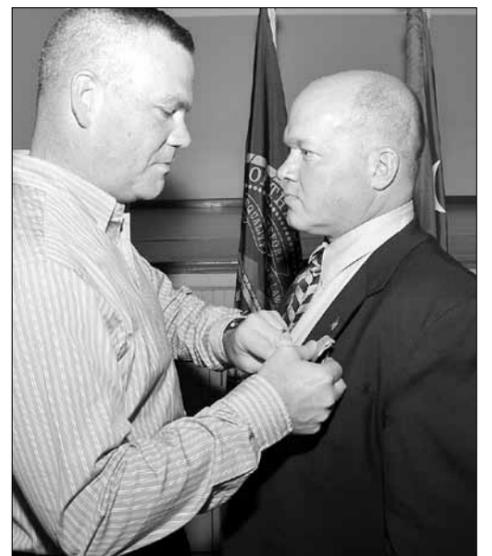


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Col. Kevin Neumann (right) is presented with the Legion of Merit Medal by Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, during a Sept. 17 retirement ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb. Neumann, who had served as the Nebraska Army Guard chief of staff since August 2009, was also promoted to the rank of brigadier general (Nebraska) during a ceremony culminating the end of a military career spanning back to 1983 when Neumann enlisted into the organization as an infantryman.

Centcom releases report on Chinook tragedy

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON—An insurgent-fired rocket-propelled grenade was the primary cause of an Aug. 6 CH-47 helicopter crash in Afghanistan that killed 38 U.S. and Afghan forces, a U.S. Central Command investigation confirmed.

Centcom officials released the results of the investigation Oct. 12.

Among those killed was Staff Sgt. Patrick Hamburger, 30, a member of the Grand Island-based Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

The investigation confirmed that the RPG, fired by a Taliban fighter, struck the helicopter's aft rotor blade as it approached its combat landing zone in Wardak province.

The grenade exploded on contact, causing the chopper to spin violently as its aft, then forward rotor blade systems ripped from the fuselage. The aircraft crashed into a dry creek bed, then burst into flames. Onboard fuel and munitions sparked multiple secondary explosions.

The incident was the deadliest in the decade-long war in Afghanistan. In addition to the aircrew, 17 Navy SEALs, five naval special operations support personnel, three Air Force special tactics airmen, seven Afghan soldiers and an interpreter were killed. A military working dog

also died.

Investigators inspected the aircraft wreckage, reviewed volumes of relevant documents and several hours of aircraft full-motion video and conducted more than 60 interviews, some with eyewitnesses, during their investigation, according to Army Brig. Gen. Jeffrey N. Colt, who led the team.

Based on this review, Colt said they found no wrongdoing by U.S. or Afghan forces, and concluded that the mission was planned and executed appropriately.

"I have determined that this mission, and the tactics and resources employed in its execution, were consistent with previous U.S. special operations missions, and the strike forces selected to execute the mission were appropriate," Colt reported.

Investigators concluded that the decision to load the entire immediate response force onto one helicopter to minimize exposure to ground fire and mass the assault force was "tactically sound." They also determined that the helicopter crew members involved were "fully qualified" to conduct the mission.

The mission was launched the night of Aug. 5 to capture or kill Qari Tahir, an Afghan who had assumed the role of senior Taliban leader in Wardak province's Tangi Valley, the investigation report revealed. Tahir was believed to have ties to senior

Taliban leaders in Pakistan, including the Taliban's shadow governor of Wardak.

The special operations task force manager, operating at a forward operating base in nearby Logar province, ordered one of his assault forces, built around a U.S. Army Ranger platoon, to conduct the mission. He also included an Afghan partnering unit, the report notes.

Another assault force, built around a Navy SEALs troop, was identified as the immediate reaction force, if needed.

Two CH-47D Chinook helicopters, two AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, an AC-130 gunship and "a relatively robust team of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft" supported the mission, the report said.

The plan was for the two CH-47 helicopters to airlift the assault force to a landing zone near the compound where Tahir was believed to be. The assault force then would move in to surround the compound, clear and secure it, question detainees and collect items of intelligence value.

While the mission was under way, overhead aircraft continued to track two armed enemy personnel who fled the site and joined several more suspected Taliban fighters. Tahir was believed to be among the group.

Based on the tactical situation, the special operations task force

commander and immediate reaction force commander deployed the 17-man Navy SEAL immediate response force. To increase its capabilities, they added an Afghan partnering unit and additional assault support elements.

This increased the force to 32 members, with all loaded onto a single CH-47D.

"An informed tactical decision was made to load all personnel on one aircraft because the (immediate reaction force) commander wanted to mass troops quickly, and to mitigate the increased risk of a second helicopter approaching the landing zone," the report says.

As the helicopter began descending to approach the landing zone and slowed to about 58 mph, a previously undetected group of suspected Taliban fighters began to attack, the report said. They fired two or three RPGs in rapid succession from the tower of a two-story, mud-brick building about 220 meters south of the aircraft, the report says.

Although the first RPG missed, the second struck one of the aft rotor blades and exploded. Within about five seconds, the aircraft dropped from the sky and crashed into a dry creek bed, where it burst into flames. Fuel and munitions caused multiple secondary explosions before the aircraft burned out several hours later, the report says.

The Ranger-led assault team

rushed in by foot to search for survivors as overhead aircraft stood by to keep enemy fighters away from the crash site. A 20-man rescue and recovery unit quickly arrived to help secure the site and recover remains.

Within eight hours of the crash, they accounted for all 38 remains, as well as the military working dog. They were transported by ground convoy to Combat Outpost Sayyid Abad.

Meanwhile, efforts to recover the helicopter were disrupted by a flash flood that swept through the creek bed, washing parts of the wreckage up to 200 meters downstream, the report says. By Aug. 9, U.S. forces finished moving the aircraft from the site.

Colt extended condolences to those who lost comrades and loved ones in the crash. "For the families, friends and fellow warriors of the fallen, American and Afghan, the loss of these selfless and courageous men was a tragedy for which this report can provide little comfort," he wrote. "I offer my deepest condolences, personally and on behalf of my investigative team, to all of those who mourn the loss of these brave men."

An unclassified executive summary of the investigation is posted on Centcom's website. A full copy of the redacted report was scheduled to be posted later on Oct. 13, officials said.

Nebraska National Guard volunteers work together to spruce up Lincoln couple's home

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach

Staff Writer

Painted fingers gripped and dipped brushes and rollers into gallons of paint as more than a dozen volunteers from the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard surrounded an aged, gray house as they prepped and painted the house, Aug. 13.

The house belonged to World War II U.S. Navy veteran, Norman Phillips and his wife Gloria of Lincoln, Neb. It was painted after being selected by the Lincoln Action Program to be part of the Lincoln Paint-a-thon.

The Phillipses were thankful for the Nebraska National Guardsmen who volunteered to work on their home during their time off.

"I was ecstatic, I didn't know what to think," said Gloria Phillips as she admired her freshly-painted home. "I knew we could not do this ourselves. Without (the Guard), we couldn't afford it."

The Lincoln Paint-a-thon, formerly known as Brush-Up Nebraska, is a non-profit organization that originated in Omaha, Neb., 23 years ago.

Founded by Tom and Sheila Pettigrew, the program was modeled after similar Paint-a-thon efforts in Denver and Minneapolis. The Pettigrews then sought out companies willing to sponsor the program in different



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

All Together Now: Volunteers from the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard paint a house during the Paint-a-thon in Lincoln, Neb., on Aug. 13. The Paint-a-thon is part of the Lincoln Action Program and is designed to assist disabled, elderly, or financially unstable homeowners preserve their home with a fresh coat of paint.

communities throughout Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota.

The Pettigrews said once the programs were established in communities, they handed over the responsibility of continuing the program to the surrounding towns and shifted their focus primarily onto the Lincoln and Omaha programs, where they are designed to help low-income homeowners who are disabled, over 60 years of age, or simply do not have the financial resources or physical ability to maintain and preserve their homes.

"It is a joy working with all of these (the Guardsmen)," said Tom Pettigrew. "It's a win-win situation. They love the young people and the volunteer team can stand back and look at what they have done and see how good it is."

Senior Airman Eva Dean, a knowledge operations manager at the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Civil Engineering Squadron, said this was her first opportunity to participate

in the Lincoln Paint-a-thon. After the effort she said she felt everyone should volunteer to help the community at least once.

"It's nice to do something for other people and I like to paint, so I'm enjoying it," said Dean. "A coat of fresh paint makes such a difference. It just makes their house look nicer."

This is the fourth year Master Sgt. Sherri Bejvancesky, a knowledge operations manager at the 155th Operations Squadron, has participated in the Lincoln Paint-a-thon. She said volunteering is a great opportunity to get together with friends and family and get involved in helping the community.

She said she also enjoys the ability to help get the Nebraska National Guard's name into the public eye in a positive way.

This year, Bejvancesky brought her friend, Dawn Giles of Cedar Creek, Neb., to help paint the house. Giles said she volunteers for Habitat for Humanity and decided this would be something fun to do with her friend.

"We were hanging out last night and Sherri told me about the Paint-a-thon she was helping with in the morning. I said I would go," said Giles. "It's all about helping each other."

Army Sgt. 1st Class Pam Whisenhunt first participated in the Paint-a-thon in 1995. She said the day was beautiful, she met new people and enjoyed volunteering and helping the community.

"Find a cause that you feel good about and do it," said Whisenhunt. "Painting is something anyone can do."



Photo by Airman 1st Class Mary Thach

Lending A Happy, Helpful Hand: Senior Airman Eva Dean laughs as she paints the back deck with Master Sgt. Sherri Bejvancesky during the Paint-a-thon in Lincoln, Neb., on Aug. 13. This year was Dean's first to volunteer for the event.

Nebraska's growth as state partly tied to contributions by Hispanic Americans

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

Celebrating Hispanic American Heritage Month, the Military Department invited Dr. Lazaro Arturo Spindola to speak during a luncheon on Sept. 20 at the "Sprit of 1776" Armory in Lincoln, Neb.

Spindola received his education and medical degree from the University of Carabobo, Venezuela, and came to the United States in 1996. He was one of the first medical interpreter trainers in Nebraska; an activity he continues to expand with the help of Southeast Community College, and in association with the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity.

Since April 2010, Dr. Spindola has been the executive director of Nebraska's Latino American Commission (formerly Mexican American Commission).

The focus of Spindola's speech was the influx of Hispanic immigration into Nebraska and the economic support that immigration gave to the state's growth and expansion. Sugar beets in western Nebraska, expansion of the railroad, meat packing industry in Omaha and agricultural work all attracted Hispanic workers to Nebraska, Spindola said.

Above all Dr. Spindola reminded the attendees that they need to remember that during Hispanic American Heritage Month people must celebrate all of the people that make Nebraska diverse.

Notable Hispanic Americans with ties to Nebraska

Hector P. Garcia (Jan. 17, 1914—July 26, 1996) - physician, surgeon, World War II veteran, civil rights advocate, and founder of the American G.I. Forum. He completed his residency at St. Joseph's Hospital at Creighton University in Omaha.

Edward Gomez (Aug. 10, 1932—Sept. 14, 1951) - United States Marine who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor during the Korean War.

Steve Turre (born Sept. 12, 1948) - internationally renowned trombonist, recording artist, arranger, and educator born in Omaha. He is of Mexican descent.

9/11 flyover salute extra special for Offutt Airmen

By Maj. Jason Palmer

170th Group

Two Nebraska Air National Guardsmen of the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., were members of the RC-135 aircrew that participated in Omaha's commemoration of the 10th anniversary of 9/11 at Midtown Crossing's Turner Park.

Lt. Col. Mark Hopson and Maj. John O'Neill from the 170th Group piloted the RC-135 along with their Total Force partners Lt. Col. Shawn Gunter, Lt. Col. Doug Rice and Capt. Ron Palmer of Offutt's 55th Wing.

Together, they overflew the crowd of 9,000 Nebraskans while the Omaha Symphony, the United States Air Force Heartland of America Band and special guest artist Ronan Tynan, a world-renowned singer and former member of The Irish Tenors, performed the National Anthem.

Capt. Joe Laclede, an active duty instructor pilot at Offutt, was on the ground and coordinated the aerial demonstration over the radio. Laclede is an instructor pilot at Offutt and is the husband of Capt. Laura Laclede, an aircraft commander with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Air Refueling Squadron.

Participating in the event was special for the entire crew.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Hopson was on his second day on the job as a pilot with American Airlines.

"I flew three times on the 10th and was in my hotel room in Houston during the events of the 11th," said Hopson, who joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in 2002 and is now the commander of the 238th Combat Training Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base.

O'Neill is from Secaucus, New Jersey, five miles from where the World Trade Center buildings stood. He was at Squadron Officer School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., the morning of Sept. 11, 2001.

"I had just returned to my room after morning PT and my cell phone was ringing. My wife told me to turn the TV on immediately and I could not comprehend what I



Photo by Josh Plueger, 55th Wing Public Affairs Office

Aerial Salute: A 55th Wing RC-135 flown by an active Air Force and Nebraska Air National Guard crew, flies over a crowd gathered at Turner Park in Omaha, Neb., during the 10th anniversary commemoration of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

saw," said O'Neill.

He added that his thoughts went out to family and friends who live and work in Manhattan.

"I was able to reach my best friend from high school who worked in the shadow of the second tower just as that building collapsed. As luck would have it, he was late to work that day and was about 20 blocks from the towers when the first plane hit."

All of O'Neill's friends and relatives made it through the day safely. O'Neill is now program manager for aircraft upgrades at Offutt Air Force Base.

Gunter was in the air during the events of 9/11. He was flying a local training mission out

of Offutt Air Force Base on a RC-135 aircraft.

"I was in the air just east of Chicago when (air traffic control) told us to land in Duluth, Minn. We had no idea what was going on, but we insisted we needed to get back to Offutt," Gunter said. "The radios were eerily silent en route home station and it wasn't until after landing that we found out what happened. It was quite a surreal experience."

Gunter is now the director of Operations for the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base.

Rice was deployed to Osan Air Base, Korea, and watched news coverage from the lobby of billeting with his aircrew.

"My cousin is a detective for the New

York City Police," said Rice, who is now the commander of the 338th Combat Training Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base and works directly with Hopson to command Offutt's Combat Training Squadron, the Air Force's only RC-135 Flying Training Unit.

"I was the first one in my family that was able to contact him to make sure he was okay."

Palmer was a staff sergeant at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., working as an armament systems journeyman on F-22 aircraft on Sept. 11, 2001. He is from Canton, Penn., and has family living near the United Flight 93 crash site in Shanksville.

"Initially we were locked down on the base and did not get very much information about what was going on," Palmer said. "It wasn't until about four hours later that we were released and I was able to go home and check that everyone was okay."

Palmer is the current safety officer for the 338th Combat Training Squadron at Offutt.

Laclede was a senior at the Air Force Academy. He recalls of class that day: "Every class I went to, the instructor rolled in a TV and we watched news coverage. The academy changed a bit that day."

Laclede is now the chief of Scheduling for the 338th Combat Training Squadron.

According to the five Airmen, participating in the aerial salute is something they'll never forget. "Getting the privilege to do the flyover and participate in this event to honor those that lost their lives that day was rewarding for all of us," O'Neill said.

The Airmen added that the flyover also gave them the opportunity to showcase the Total Force effort of the Nebraska Air National Guard and Offutt's 55th Wing, as well as the RC-135 aircraft that has been deployed overseas in support of ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Southwest Asia continuously since the 1980s.

From the ground, Laclede had the best view of the fly by. "When the RC-135 flew over during the National Anthem, the audience looked up and cheered. It was a fantastic moment and an experience I will never forget."



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Nagasawa

Unloading The Wheat: Two local workers help unload seed and fertilizer at the Sayad Karam District Center, Sept. 25, part of an effort to combat the spread of black stem rust in Afghanistan.

FARMERS continued from page 1.

UG-99 Black Stem Rust.

"It's (black stem rust) a disease in the wheat that stops the growth to the point where it kills the plant," Nichols said. "Once a field is infected, the wheat just dies."

The distribution program, along with the USDA and cultural advisors, delivered 100 metric tons of certified resistant seed and 52 metric tons of Urea fertilizer to the local district centers of Sayad Karam and Ahmad Abad on Sept. 25.

The huge project required a massive coordination effort to ensure delivery takes place before villages normally plant, said Nichols.

"It has been an immense challenge to get this entire project on the road. This is going to 18 districts in two provinces, but the seed is travelling over four or five provinces to get there," said Nichols.

"Last year the USDA attempted the same type of project and the wheat seed didn't arrive on time. It wasn't from Afghanistan and it just didn't yield," he said.

Only handpicked farmers from the province will take part in the program.

The long-term goal is for the farmers to return 50 kilograms each year to the local "Seed Bank" so that each fall a new group of farmers will receive the seed to plant, according to Nichols.

Nichols said the Guard team is currently watching with guarded hope that the local Afghan leadership is prepared enough to manage and sustain the program for years to come.

Nichols said he believes the project marks a turning point in Coalition Forces' involvement with direct support of the local government in terms of funding and was glad to see the project to a successful completion.

"After all of this, I'm relieved that my part is over and the Afghans' learning has just begun," he said. "The government has so much to learn and develop to compete on the world stage."

PRESIDENT continued from page 1.

that has not changed. Our belief in America, born of a timeless ideal that men and women should govern themselves, that all people are created equal and deserve the same freedom to determine their own destiny — that belief, through test and trials, has only been strengthened."

The past decade has shown America does not give in to fear, Obama said. He spoke of first responders running into doomed buildings and airline passengers taking on terrorists as just two examples, and he said Americans have worked together to defend the nation and its values.

"Two million Americans have gone to war since 9/11," Obama said. "They have demonstrated that those who do us harm cannot hide from the reach of justice, anywhere in the world."

The men and women who fight America's wars are not conscripts, but volunteers, the president noted. "They are men and women who left behind lives of comfort for two, three, four, or five tours of duty. Too many will never come home. Those that do carry dark memories from distant places and the legacy of fallen friends."

U.S. service members and their families have sacrificed in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama said, but they do not sacrifice for conquest or to demonstrate America can occupy another country.

"Our strength is not measured in our ability to stay in these places; it comes from our commitment to leave those lands to free people and sovereign states, and our desire to move from a decade of war to a future of peace," the president said.

And America holds on to its freedoms, Obama said, acknowledging that fierce debates have taken place about the balance between security and civil liberties.

"But it is precisely the rigor of these debates and our ability to resolve them in a way that honors our values that is a measure of our strength," he said. "Meanwhile, our open markets still provide innovators with the chance to create, our citizens are still free to speak their minds and our souls are still enriched in our churches and temples, our synagogues and mosques."

And America has also not succumbed to suspicion and mistrust, the president said, evoking the words of his predecessor. "After 9/11, President Bush made clear what we reaffirm today: the United States will never wage war against Islam or any religion," Obama said.

In the wake of 9/11, America has arisen from the

canvas and demonstrated once again its resilience, the president told the Kennedy Center audience.

"The Pentagon is repaired and filled with patriots working in common purpose," he said. "Shanksville is the scene of friendships forged between residents of that town and families who lost loved ones there. New York remains a vibrant capital of the arts and industry, fashion and commerce."

"Where the World Trade Center once stood, 'the sun glistens off a new tower that reaches toward the sky,' he continued. "Our people still work in skyscrapers. Our stadiums are filled with fans and our parks full of children playing ball. Our airports hum with travel and our buses and subways take millions where they need to go. Families sit down to Sunday dinner and students prepare for school. This land pulses with the optimism of those who set out for distant shores and the courage of those who died for human freedom."

America has met the test and those who follow will appreciate the courage, commitment and resilience of Americans of this era, the president said. He stressed the word "united" when he said, "Nothing can break the will of a truly United States of America."

Those of the future will remember and understand that the people of the United States "have overcome slavery and Civil War, bread lines and fascism, recession and riots, communism and, yes, terrorism," he said. "They will be reminded that we are not perfect, but our democracy is durable, and that democracy — reflecting, as it does, the imperfections of man — also gives us the opportunity to perfect our union."

"That is what we honor on days of national commemoration — those aspects of the American experience that are enduring and the determination to move forward as one people," he said.

That determination to move forward is the real legacy of 9/11, the president told the audience. "It will be said of us that we kept that faith — that we took a painful blow, and emerged stronger," he said.

The president closed with a call that echoed President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: "With a just God as our guide, let us honor those who have been lost. Let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals that define our nation, and let us look to the future with hearts full of hope. May God bless the memory of those we lost and may God bless the United States of America."

"Our people still work in skyscrapers. Our stadiums are filled with fans and our parks full of children playing ball. Our airports hum with travel and our buses and subways take millions where they need to go. Families sit down to Sunday dinner and students prepare for school. This land pulses with the optimism of those who set out for distant shores and the courage of those who died for human freedom."

— President Barack Obama

(Left Photo) **Lots To Learn:** U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Stephanie Puzak shows Ace Weiland, 6, how to pack a parachute, Sept. 11, after Puzak performed a parachute jump at the Guardians of Freedom Airshow.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

(Center) **Standing Tall:** A member of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels stands atop the unit's C-130 aircraft as the Blue Angels arrive in Lincoln, Neb.

(Right) **Parking An Eagle:** Tech. Sgt. Kasey Korth, 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, guides Col. Patrick Doherty to a stop as he arrives at the Guardians of Freedom Airshow, Sept. 9.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Soaring Overhead: Members of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels perform a diamond formation over Lincoln Airpark, Sept. 10, during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow. (Inset) **Which Way Did They Go?** A pair of young airshow enthusiasts try to keep track of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels during their Sept. 11 performance in Lincoln, Neb.

2011 Guardians of Freedom Airshow

High Flying Airshow Wows Record Lincoln Crowd

Air Guard wing commander flies with Blue Angels



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels

What A View: Col. Richard J. Evans III, commander of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing, takes in a view of the Nebraska National Guard air base from the back seat of a U.S. Navy Blue Angels F/A-18 during a Sept. 8 flight.

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach
Staff Writer

The commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Col. Richard J. Evans III, flew with the U.S. Navy Blue Angels during their Guardians of Freedom Airshow practice, Sept. 8, in Lincoln, Neb.

While the Blue Angels routinely offer media and VIP flights in the F/A-18 Hornet in conjunction with their events, it is rare for them to allow someone to fly during a full profile demonstration with all six F/A-18 Hornets participating. Evans flew in the two-seat Blue Angel #7 aircraft, flying in the slot position, with Lt. Rob Kurrle piloting.

The colonel was afforded this unique opportunity to fly with the Blue Angels because of his current status as the host wing commander for the airshow and his previous experience flying tactical fighters as a weapon systems officer in the RF-4C Phantom II aircraft.

The 155th operated the RF-4C aircraft from 1971 until 1993 when it was known as the 155th Tactical Reconnaissance Group.

One of the unique things Evans noted about the flight

was flying without a G-suit. G-suits are worn by pilots to prevent loss of consciousness when flying under high levels of acceleration force, known as Gs.

Blue Angel pilots are highly conditioned to perform difficult maneuvers without wearing a G-suit while flying, so Evans followed suit. He said despite not pulling many Gs since he stopped flying the RF-4C, he was able to handle up to 8.2 Gs during the flight, noting it was fun doing so.

"I haven't pulled any Gs in a long time, but it was fun, and obviously with their professionalism and how close they fly, it's staggering to the average person," said Evans.

After his almost one hour flight was over, the colonel said he felt a little tired, but said it was amazing to see the entire Blue Angels performance from the inside the cockpit.

He noted the professionalism with which the Angels prepare and then execute a performance is simply amazing and the whole experience was "very impressive."

For his experience the colonel received a VIP Flight Certificate, Slot Ride Lithograph and got to log flying time in the F/A-18 Hornet aircraft.

He said the memories of the flight will last a lifetime and he appreciated the Blue Angels allowing him this "once in a lifetime opportunity."

9/11 CEREMONY continued from page 1.

for our freedoms and our liberties. We honor our military families and their employers for their continued support and sacrifices."

According to Col. Bob Stevenson, Guardians of Freedom Airshow director who planned the 9/11 commemoration ceremony, his goal was to commemorate the sacrifices the nation has made in response to the 9/11 attacks while giving the audience an opportunity to stop and reflect on all those who have served in response to the terrorist attacks.

"It seeks to be an opportunity for all of us to stop and reflect on all that has happened, but also to reflect on all who have served: military, civilian authorities, police, fire, utilities, emergency management agencies, elected officials and the

community itself through volunteer organizations," said Stevenson prior to the ceremony.

The commemoration included both military and police/firefighter color guards, a missing man flyover and a dramatic playing of "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes.

Probably the single-most dramatic moment of the ceremony came as Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac and Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela took turns reading the names of the 14 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have died of combat or non-combat injuries while mobilized to active duty since Sept. 11, 2011. Each name was then followed by the single chime of a ceremonial firebell, marking the passing of a fallen hero.

"We will never forget these Ne-

braska patriots and their families for the sacrifices they made while defending their families, friends, neighbors, countrymen and those who they never met," said Bohac. "We will never forget."

Also speaking at the commemoration were U.S. Senator Ben Nelson and U.S. Representative Jeff Fortenberry.

The two legislators both said the terrible events of 9/11 transformed America and reinforced the nation's commitment to defend freedom and liberty both here and abroad.

"9/11 strengthened us as a nation," said Nelson. "We saw steel bend. We saw concrete crumble. But our inner steel and our bedrock freedom strengthened."

"To be sure, 9/11 changed a lot

of things, but it did not break the American spirit," he added. "We still bring our families to an event like this amazing display of patriotism at its finest. We still fly Old Glory with great pride... perhaps even greater pride today. And we still look up to our American heroes like all the members of the military who are here today - those who continue to make sure our freedoms are safe - and our first responders who every day put their lives on the line for our safety."

Fortenberry echoed those sentiments.

"A decade later, through deeds both ordinary and remarkable, our nation stands proud and resolute," he said. "Through our mourning, through the sweat of rebuilding and through the toil of watchful

vigilance, we've stood united, committed to securing our country, our families, our communities."

"This is the extraordinary character of America, which not even the wound of a national tragedy could scar," Fortenberry said. "Fortunately, there has not been a successful attack on America in 10 years. And this is not due to wishful thinking. It is due to the extraordinary efforts as we rethink and reform our national security."

"Our military, intelligence and national security forces, police officers, firefighters and emergency first responders have all played a critical role in protecting our country," Fortenberry added. "Their work makes our nation safer and their sacrifice keeps our family and community more secure."



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Moving Out: AM2(AW) Daniel Pascual, a Blue Angels crew chief, sprints away from the front of a U.S. Navy Blue Angels F/A-18 before a Sept. 8 flight at the Nebraska National Guard air base. The visit to Lincoln marked the first time since 2006 that the Blue Angels had performed in the capitol city.



Helping Hands: Staff Sgt. Michael Wellman, an equipment technician from the 155th Air Refueling Wing, shows a future Airman how to adjust a helmet at the Guardians of Freedom Airshow.

Explosive Entry: Paul Stender and his jet-powered school bus emerge from a cloud of smoke trailing a tail of flames during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow, Sept. 10. The 2011 Guardians of Freedom Airshow was co-sponsored by the Nebraska National Guard, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Lincoln Airport Authority.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

AIRSHOW continued from page 1.

world's best pilots and demonstration teams to Lincoln Air Park.

Col. James R. Stevenson, airshow director and commander of the 170th Air Refueling Group, Offutt AFB, Neb., began planning the event in September 2009 after he was contacted by the U.S. Navy Blue Angels requesting a return to Lincoln, Neb.

"Their offer to return was based upon the great experience they had at our 2006 show," said Stevenson. He added that his goal was to have a safe airshow, improved traffic flow and stay within the budget.

On Sept. 9, the Blue Angels and other show performers exhibited flying capabilities to families attending the special needs airshow. The unique set up of the tarmac and show catered to special needs children or adults, as well as elderly veterans who were able to attend a major event without waiting in long lines and maneuvering through large crowds.

The main airshow for the general public was conducted on Sept. 10-11.

Lisa Lannin-Clarke, mother of Chayse who is a special needs sophomore at Lincoln East High School, said she appreciated that the Guard provided an event she and her family could easily attend.

Chayse, a Make-A-Wish child, came to the special needs show with both parents, while her brother and sister stayed in school for the afternoon. Chayse spent most of the show curled up next to her mom while sitting in her wheelchair and watching the planes soar through the sky.

"We would not have been able to come if there was a large crowd out here. Waiting in line is a big deal; we have so much extra stuff to carry. It's

a lot of work," said Lannin-Clarke.

Lannin-Clarke said she seldom gets to spend one-on-one time with her special needs daughter because of her other two children's school activities, so it was pleasant to spend an afternoon with her husband and daughter.

Gloria German, a mother of a Make-A-Wish child, said she watched the planes practicing from her backyard and decided it would be great for her children to watch the show the day before so they were not exposed to the large crowds.

"I am so thankful to have the show so close to our home" German said. "The coolest part is watching the kids and seeing the awe in their faces."

On Sept. 10 a crowd of nearly 100,000 filed onto the Lincoln tarmac to watch the full demonstration. Among those thousands of spectators were two Pender High School freshman girls who unveiled their artwork on the nose of a KC-135R Stratotanker.

That was just the opening act of a star-studded lineup that included the U.S. Air Force Academy's Wings of Blue parachute demonstration team, a jet-powered school bus that zoomed across the runway, warbird bombers and fighters that flew overhead while pyrotechnics burst near the flight line, and a heart-thumping exhibition by the U.S. Air Force's A-10 East Coast Demonstration Team.

The afternoon was capped by the world-renowned U.S. Navy Blue Angels, who showcased their talents in the clear, sunny skies.

On the morning of Sept. 11, a memorial ceremony was conducted on the tarmac, with speeches by Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman,

U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry and Brig. Gen. Daryl L. Bohac. The ceremony gave tribute to the 10-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and featured a minute of silence for those who fell on 9/11.

An officer of Lincoln Fire and Rescue Department also rang a bell 14 times for the 14 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have fallen of combat and non-combat related injuries while mobilized to active duty since Sept. 11, 2001.

"The 9/11 ceremony was the most rewarding event for me personally because I wrote and coordinated it myself. However, the entire weekend was rewarding and I continue to be awed and humbled by how hard everyone on the team worked to pull this off," said Stevenson. "We were all tired by the week's end, but the results speak for themselves."

Throughout Sunday afternoon, a more than 100,000 spectators wandered across the hot concrete, watching in awe of the amazing aircraft flying overhead. The audience enjoyed concessions from the surrounding stands while relaxing under umbrellas and lounging in lawn chairs.

Performances by Jessy Panzer, flying a Pitts Special, an A-10 and Heritage P-38 demonstration, and an E-4 and B-52 fly-over were only a few of the acts that performed throughout the weekend.

Miss America 2011, Teresa Scanlan, a native of Gering, Neb., also visited the grounds to greet her fellow Nebraskans and watch the aerial acrobatics.

Stevenson said he was asked on numerous occasions why the military provides the airshows and if it is worth the cost.

"The answer was on the faces of the people and particularly the kids," he said.

He said he was working on last minute-details on Saturday during the Blue Angels performance. He looked at the crowd and explained what he saw: "The jets passed overhead and every face of hundreds... was upturned and smiling; the taxpayers, marveling at the skill and professionalism of their military whom they pay to keep them safe."

"And the kids, some eyes sparkling with excitement and some scrunched against the jet noise... who knows what seeds we planted this weekend," he added.

Col. Richard J. Evans, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, said the weekend was remarkable and the public complimented the improved organization of parking and traffic control compared to the 2006 airshow.

"We showed off for people from around the region and left them impressed and informed...." he said "We demonstrated once again, we are ready and able for anything and we did it in a dignified manner that fit in perfectly with the 10th Anniversary of 9/11 and our airshow theme, 'Heroes Among Us,'" said Evans.

There were very few incidents over the weekend, said Evans.

"When something bad happened, we were right there and got things taken care of," said Evans. "That's what makes the 155th ARW so great; we want to get better, even when we're doing really well."

Although it was a noisy weekend, there was fun for all ages.

Evans said, "The overall effort was superb and the results extraordinary."



Breaking Away: Members of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels fly in formation during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow held Sept. 10-11 at the Lincoln Airpark in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 8. The world-renowned team last performed in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 8.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Smoking History: A pair of vintage Russian fighter airplanes trail smoke as they fly in formation during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow held in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 10-11.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Surprise! Julie Watson, Lincoln, reacts with surprise after a U.S. Navy Blue Angels flew directly over her head and created a huge "boom," Sept. 11.



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore
An aircrew flight equipment wing's Aircrew Flight School member properly put on a pilot's helmet, Sept. 10.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Remembering A Fateful Day: The United States' flag billows behind a member of the U.S. Air Force Academy's "Wings of Blue" parachute team during a Sept. 11 memorial ceremony marking the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The ceremony kicked off the Sunday portion of the two-day Guardians of Freedom Airshow held Sept. 10-11 in Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

The U.S. Navy Blue Angels team arrive at the Nebraska Air National Guard Base. The Blue Angels performed for the 2011 Guardians of Freedom Airshow in Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

High Climbing: A young airshow attendee attempts to scale a simulated rock wall at the "Kids Zone" during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow, Sept. 11.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Lighting Up The Fires: A U.S. Navy Blue Angels F/A-18 Hornet stands silently as a billowing ball of flames and smoke fill the air behind it during a demonstration by the U.S. Air Force's A-10 East Coast Demonstration Team. The explosion was the result of a carefully-timed pyrotechnics display set off by technicians to coincide with a simulated strafing run by the A-10.

Airshow homecoming for visiting F-15 commander

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach
Staff Writer

With the sound of fighter jets overhead, the colonel's eyes followed the aircraft across the sky. Dressed in his green Air Force flight suit, Col. Pat Doherty, commander of the 4th Fighter Wing, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., flashed a proud smile.

Doherty, a native of Bellevue, Neb., and graduate of Bellevue East High School, flew one of the two F-15E Strike Eagles his wing sent to the 2011 Guardians of Freedom airshow, Sept. 10, in Lincoln, Neb. The two-day show, which was co-sponsored by the Nebraska National Guard, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Lincoln Airport Authority, attracted more than 200,000 people. It was designed to recognize the contributions of America's military while honoring those who were lost during the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"This weekend was special for the entire country. What a way to showcase

the importance of our military here on the 9/11 weekend, and to be a part of it and bring Strike Eagles back in," said Doherty, who brought two of his unit's F-15E Strike Eagles to Lincoln to be part of the show's static displays of current and historic military aircraft.

Doherty said the trip to Lincoln was extra-special because of the fact that he had a chance to visit his mother, who still lives in Bellevue, Neb., during his short weekend home. He said when he was a child he would attend air shows often. Coming from a military family, he said he caught the "flying bug" early in life.

His late father retired as a senior master sergeant at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. Before retiring, he worked as a boom operator, radio operator and tail gunner.

Doherty said he had the opportunity to see all of the exciting and important missions his dad was involved in and decided he wanted to be a part of it. As a college student, he took private flying lessons and later joined the Air Force.



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Now Arriving: Col. Patrick Doherty arrives at Lincoln Air Park in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 9. Doherty is commander of the 4th Fighter Wing.

Being the commander of a fighter wing, he said he keeps the upcoming generation of Airmen in mind.

"We are always thinking about serving our country, serving our communities and engaging with the next generation that needs to pick up the torch and continue on," said Doherty. "That's a small part of this and we are very honored and privileged to play a small part."

Students decorate airplane nose

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach
Staff Writer

The 155th Air Refueling Wing honored two Pender High School freshmen girls who unveiled their artwork on the nose of a KC-135R Stratotanker during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow, Sept. 10, in Lincoln, Neb.

The unveiling ceremony is an annual event sponsored by the 155th Air Refueling Wing. It honors those Nebraska communities that are extraordinarily supportive of their hometown Nebraska Air National Guard Airmen.

After being nominated by Nebraska Air Guardsmen, the selected community's high school is offered an opportunity for students to submit artwork to be selected and painted on a KC-135R Stratotanker. Pender is the seventh community to display student artwork on a Guard aircraft.

The two girls whose artwork was chosen, Brandy Buchholz and Martina Juhlan, age 14, were one out of 36 groups to submit artwork. They put their artistic minds together and created a piece of art that will represent their community and Nebraska when



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Lieth

Proud Artists: Brandy Buchholz and Martina Juhlan take a look at their winning artwork on the nose of a KC-135R Stratotanker, Sept. 10. Their artwork was unveiled during a ceremony at the Guardians of Freedom Airshow.

the plane refuels other aircraft around the world.

Buchholz said it was fairly intimidating to submit her artwork

and did not expect to win. She was surprised when she and Juhlan were notified that their artwork was the top choice.

The drawing featured the head of a red, fire-breathing dragon in the center of a bold black circle, to signify the Pender Dragons.

"We feel honored that we were chosen to be a part of this... especially during 9/11," said Buchholz.

Family and community members from Pender, Neb., traveled to Lincoln to show support and pride for their town being recognized.

Juhlan thanked her parents and her art teacher for their support and help. She said she was excited to have her artwork selected after dedicating so much time and effort to the drawing.

Buchholz said she is trying to pursue art for her future, while Juhlan would like to travel the world as a journalist or be an equine veterinarian.

The accomplishment of these two artists will be seen by the eyes of many around the world over the next year. Only time will tell where these girl's talents will lead them from there.

Air Force sergeant living dream on vintage World War II bomber

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When it comes to living out a childhood dream, few people – if any – can top Master Sgt. John Pilgrim's story.

"I'm the last B-29 flight engineer in the entire U.S. Air Force and also the last bomber flight engineer in the entire Air Force," the 38-year-old Snyder, Texas, native likes to say with more than a glimmer of pride in his voice as he cracks the joke. "As far as I know, I'm also the last piston flight engineer in the Air Force."

"The great thing about it is, I'm actually a loadmaster, which makes my flight engineer friends mad that a loadmaster is doing this job and they're not," Pilgrim said, Sept. 10, chuckling as he shook his head. "I always say that it's cool to me, my mom and my wife. We think it's kind of neat, (but) it doesn't mean much to anyone else."

To understand Pilgrim's story, one first must go back to his early childhood in west Texas. The son of a U.S. Marine, Pilgrim said he used to love going with his family to area airshows and watching as World War II aircraft staged mock battles in the blue skies above and reenacted desperate aerial dogfights fought decades earlier around the world.

"I never had any use for jets," said Pilgrim, who added that he used to imagine himself flying one of those sleek fighters or thundering bombers and being part of all those battles fought during world War II. "All I ever wanted to do is fly old airplanes and play with old airplanes."

After graduating from high school, Pilgrim said he approached his father about his idea of following in his footsteps and becoming a Marine. The response was anything but positive, Pilgrim recalled.

"He pushed me up into the wall and said no boy of his was going to be a Marine," Pilgrim said. "He said you can join the Air Force or you can go to college."

"So I went down and joined the Air Force," he said.

Pilgrim's first job was as an aerospace ground equipment mechanic where he was responsible for keeping various pieces of equipment up and running so that aircraft mechanics could do their all-important jobs. Still, the flying bug continued to gnaw at Pilgrim. So, after about two-and-a-half-years, he decided to retrain as a C-130 Hercules loadmaster.

It was a job Pilgrim said he fell



Historic Arrival: The last flying B-29 Superfortress in the world arrives in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 9, for the Guardians of Freedom Airshow.

in love with immediately.

"The C-130 was the best experience of my life," he said. "I will never badmouth that airplane. It's hot and dirty. It's the old Chevy pickup of the airlift world, but it's extremely dependable and will do anything you ask."

The new job brought opportunities to deploy and work around the world. Lots of opportunities, in fact.

"I've been deployed so many times that I can't even tell you how many," Pilgrim said, adding that during his last year serving at an operational base he was gone on missions 326 days. "Most of it was my own choice because I like to fly. I don't see any need if you're going to be a flyer to sit back home."

A few years ago Pilgrim transitioned from the C-130 to the new and technologically advanced C-17 Globemaster III. He said the change was challenging at first.

"Loadmastering is loadmastering, but the move to a new airplane with computer-operated stuff, electric rails and locks – it was a step-up in technology," he said. "And it really makes you a lazy loadmaster if you aren't careful. Your skills will regress."

Pilgrim now serves as the flight chief of the standards and evaluation section of the 58th Airlift Squadron, the only C-17 training unit in the world at Altus Air Force Base, Okla. There, Pilgrim is responsible for helping train the next generation of C-17 loadmasters for the challenges they will meet in the airplane.

He said he has a pretty simple philosophy that he hopes to impart on the American and international students he trains.

"The difference between you killing the entire crew and having a successful mission is as simple as you doing your job right," Pilgrim said. "This is one of the few jobs where nobody will check up on you and that's a big responsibility that not everybody is ready for. It's not a hard job by any means, but you can

kill people pretty quick if you aren't careful in this job."

Working in a training unit versus an operation squadron has its own unique challenges, Pilgrim said. The biggest advantage, however, has been the ability to spend more time working on his hobby – helping restore and maintain the only flying B-29 Superfortress still in existence.

According to Pilgrim, he grew up a big fan of the venerable B-17 Flying Fortress that helped win the aerial wars in Europe and the Pacific Theaters. Around 2004, however, he received a phone call from a friend that dramatically changed Pilgrim's feelings about the B-29.

Pilgrim said that he first saw the B-29 nicknamed "Fifi" perform in 1984 during an airshow in Texas. 20 years later, Pilgrim's friend was calling to ask him to help change one of "Fifi's" engines.

"He was in Asheville, N.C., and he needed to change one of the engines," Pilgrim recalled. "So I went up there and helped him."

"From there, it just grew," he said, smiling.

Did it ever. Shortly after helping change out the engine, "Fifi" was grounded as members of the Texas-based Commemorative Air Force – a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and showing historic aircraft at airshows in the United States and Canada – began the exhaustive work of replacing the massive airplane's equally massive four engines with newer, more reliable ones.

The work took an amazing five years to complete.

"And I was heavily involved in all that through this five-year period," Pilgrim said. "When they started flying the airplane again, they needed a new flight engineer. I had that experience with the airplane and knew it well enough and was lucky in that they let me do it."

Pilgrim said balancing the duties and responsibilities of his full-time military job with his part-time



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

One Of A Kind: Master Sgt. John Pilgrim, a U.S. Air Force C-17 loadmaster, poses with the last flying B-29 that he works on as a flight engineer, Sept. 10, during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow in Lincoln, Neb.

hobby hasn't been as hard as one might think.

"Once you make that decision that you're going to do something – whether it's balancing your family life and your military life, or it's balancing your military life and your hobbies – once you make the decision, you just do it. You just make everything else work around it," he said.

"Obviously the military always comes first. I can't always do everything I want to with the B-29. I have to pick and choose," said Pilgrim. "Fortunately, I've got the ability to get off work, drive three hours, work on the plane for three hours, and then drive back home and be back to work the next morning. It's just a matter of wanting to make the sacrifice bad enough to make it work."

Probably the best part of Pilgrim's job comes when the Commemorative Air Force flies "Fifi" to an airshow, such as the Sept. 10-11 "Guardians of Freedom Airshow" that was co-sponsored by the Nebraska Air National Guard, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Lincoln Airport Authority. During each flight, Pilgrim sits just behind the pilots and monitors the aircraft's engines and other equipment at the flight engineer's station, located in the B-29's uniquely designed cockpit.

He said each flight is still an amazing experience.

"Every time you climb the ladder to get into the aircraft you think to yourself of all the men so much greater than me who have climbed this ladder thousands of times in history," he said. "This is the airplane that pretty much won the Pacific War by bombing Japan

into submission."

"You get into this airplane and it's the only one in the world that flies – probably the only that ever will fly – and just the fact that you're lucky enough to do it is just amazing," added Pilgrim. "It is just so labor-intensive to fly the airplane and operate the engineer's panel, but at the same time you look out the window in flight and you think to yourself, 'Nobody else in the world is doing this right now, except me.' It's a childhood dream."

Pilgrim said that keeping the aircraft in flying shape is a constant battle. The airplane costs roughly \$9,000 per hour to fly and takes about 125 hours of maintenance for every flight hour. Parts, while available, sometimes have to be bartered for from dealers or museums across the United States.

"Plain and simple, it's people's wallets that make the difference between a flying museum piece and a static museum piece," said Pilgrim.

Finding people skilled with working on radial engines also is becoming harder, he added.

"It's the same technology in the airplane, but there's a specialty to a round engine that people don't have nowadays," Pilgrim said. "We can still find the people, but they are getting fewer and farther between, though."

Still, Pilgrim added, he wouldn't change his life for the world. "I'm living out a childhood dream and an adult dream," he said. "It's just the dreamland that I live in. My military job... I couldn't have found a better job. I want to do it until I retire."

"And then I get to come over and do this," added Pilgrim. "It's just a dream to me. It's something I've wanted to do my whole life."

Rocket man shows off thunderous vehicles during Lincoln visit

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Ever wonder what it would be like to drive a bus in excess of 300 miles-per-hour?

How about sit in an outhouse as it barrels down a runway at 70-miles-per-hour, a plume of fire and smoke trailing behind it?

Paul Stender doesn't have to imagine such bizarre vehicles. He actually drives them for a living.

Stender, a native of Big Bend, Wisc., who now lives in Indianapolis, has made a career of taking ordinary vehicles – and non-vehicles – strapping rockets to them and driving them in front of massive crowds around the nation.

Stender, who recently brought his School Time Jet School Bus and jet-powered outhouse to the Lincoln, Neb., to perform in the Sept. 10-11 "Guardians of Freedom Airshow," said his interest in taking ordinary vehicles and making them fast began at an early age.

"I grew up on a farm in Wisconsin where

I learned how to work with my hands," said Stender, Sept. 9. By the time he was 13 or 14, he began buying and selling motorcycles. "It just kept getting bigger and bigger from there."

Did it ever.

Stender soon began racing motorcycles and snowmobiles before becoming an Outlaw sprint car driver. In 1995 he purchased his first jet car, which could race down a speedstrip in excess of 300 miles-per-hour. That then evolved into his current career of demonstrating a variety of jet-powered vehicles across the United States and Canada.

He also visits schools to pass on the message that the types of work he does simply couldn't be done if he was involved in drugs or alcohol.

On Sept. 9, that effort took him to Lincoln's Goodrich Middle School where he talked to several hundred students about the value of working with one's hands and staying away from the types of activities that can derail a promising career and life.

"People don't seem to work with their hands as they once did," Stender told one group of students. "If you get a chance, go out and buy a lawn mower, or a motorcycle, or something like that. Fix it up and learn

to do mechanical types of things or how to weld."

"Build impressive bikes. Build impressive cars," he said. "It's really an interesting life and it's really rewarding. And when you're able to show off something that you built with your own hands, it's pretty neat."

Of course, the bus and the outhouse were instant hits, causing the students to ask numerous questions about Stender's two unique vehicles. Stender gave several stories about what it's like to ride in a jet-powered bus and outhouse.

About the bus: "I like to introduce myself as a school bus driver, which doesn't sound very impressive unless you have a jet-powered school bus, which is pretty cool," he said.

The bus, Stender added, was built around a F-4 Phantom II engine that can generate 42,000 horse power. "That's more horsepower than the entire starting lineup of the Daytona 500."

And about the outhouse: "It's the world's fastest outhouse," said Stender about the wooden structure that's been clocked at 72 miles-per-hour. "That may not seem fast, but I tell you what... when you're sitting on that toilet seat, that feels pretty fast."



Stender



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Rocket Potty: Paul Stender fires up his rocket-powered outhouse, Sept. 10, during the Guardians of Freedom Airshow. Stender, a native of Wisconsin, has made a living out of designing bizarre, rocket-propelled vehicles that he shows off around the country during various airshows.

State graduates five new second lieutenants

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard officer corps welcomed five new second lieutenants into the organization after they graduated from the Officer Candidate School, Sept. 10, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Officer Candidate School is a Camp Ashland-based commissioning program conducted by the 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute.) It consists of 17 months of leadership training including two weeks of annual training followed by one weekend of training per month. It concludes with an additional two weeks of annual training.

"The best part of graduating and moving on is being part of something bigger," said new 2nd Lt. Roger Yant Jr., who will be serving as a chemical officer. "I got picked to be in the chemical field and I'm really excited to start."

"The hardest parts were the mental and physical aspects of dealing with OCS and my life on the outside, too," said Yant. "It was absolutely hard being away from my two kids and wife. But my wife handled it very well and stayed strong throughout it all."

New 2nd Lt. Aaron Schimm, who is going back to the 623rd Engineering Company where he previously enlisted as a carpentry and masonry specialist, agreed.

"OCS was an experience like no other," said Schimm. "Balancing our lives in and outside of OCS was one of the hardest parts. Not having a family based here was really hard. I really used my fellow candidates and cadre to help me get through it."

According to all the candidates, they were excited to start their career as officers.

"It became a very difficult decision whether to deploy or to become an officer," added Schimm, whose unit is currently deployed to Afghanistan. "But I originally joined the Army to be an officer, so I decided to stay with the course and do my part there."

Brig. Gen. Michael D. Navrkal, Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general, Army, gave the new officers some words of wisdom and spoke of the lessons he learned as an officer.

According to Navrkal, who served as the keynote speaker, the Soldiers represent a generation of Soldiers who have vowed to never accept defeat. He said as leaders of



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Getting Pinned: Newly-commissioned 2nd Lt. Aaron Schimm receives his new gold bars from his fiancée and mom during the Officer Candidate School's graduation ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb., Sept. 10. Schimm's mother came from Michigan to support her son at graduation.



Althage



Gonzales



Yant



Zulkoski

that generation, the new officers now need to challenge them to assure them they can do everything they need and want to do.

"A lesson that I learned early on was to trust those who I served with," said Navrkal. "Trust is so important. We have to trust those who we serve with. As a leader you will be able to do a lot more if you can trust that your Soldiers will get the tasks done."

Graduating from the OCS Class Number 54 were:

Victoria A. Althage
Bradley L. Gonzales
Aaron A. L. Schimm
Roger V. Yant Jr.
Derek D. Zulkoski

Earning awards were: Derek Zulkoski, who earned the Distinguished Honor Graduate award as well as the Physical Fitness Award and the Academic Excellence Award; Roger Yant Jr., who earned the Leadership Excellence Award.

Soldiers take on new responsibilities as warrant officers

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard graduated two Soldiers from its in-state Warrant Officer Candidate School, Sept. 10, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

The graduation was held in conjunction with the annual Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony.

Warrant Officer Candidates Aaron Carpenter and Steven Stienike received their diplomas from the official party that included Brig. Gen. Scott Gronewold, Brig. Gen. Michael Navrkal, Chief Warrant Officer 5 John Regan, Col. Mark Stockwell and Lt. Col. Gary Ropers.

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. Their one weekend per month training took place at Salina, Kan.

The training ended with a two-week annual training period at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

Speaking at the combined graduation ceremonies, Navrkal, Nebraska National Guard's assistant adjutant general, Army, lauded the Soldiers and their families for their commitments to the Nebraska National Guard.

"Thanks to the families," said Navrkal. "Your commitment, dedication and sacrifice for your loved ones is outstanding. It is certainly very important to me and other members in uniform that we thank you. Without you we would not be able to do what we do and it's because of you we do what we do."

"You all should be excited about what lies ahead of you," added Navrkal. "It's an



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Repeat After Me: Aaron Carpenter and Steven Stienike take their oath as warrant officers from Brig. Gen. Scott Gronewold during the Warrant Officer Candidate School graduation at Camp Ashland, Sept. 10.

incredible journey. You will have opportunities to serve with the finest that this nation has to offer."

Earning the award for Distinguished Honor Graduate was Carpenter.

Following the graduation ceremony, Carpenter and Stienike both agreed they were ready to start their careers as warrant

officers.

"The best part of training was Phase III where all 73 warrant officer candidates from across the country were combined," said Carpenter.

"It was a great opportunity to display our leadership skills and mentor and encourage our classmates through the training," he added. "It was very realistic, as the candidates were responsible for keeping the class on track."

During the first day of Phase III, Carpenter served as the class sergeant, a warrant officer candidate leadership position that placed him in charge of the other 72 candidates.

"Being put into that leadership position of Candidate Class Sergeant was the hardest part," said Carpenter. "On top of moving into new barracks with a new standard operating procedure and preparing myself for the final phase of WOCS, I was suddenly accountable for 73 people including myself and 70 of whom I had never met. It was very stressful as I literally had to plan every minute of my time, but I believe it has helped me become a better leader and Soldier."

"Now that I am warrant officer, I have a profound and renewed sense of pride of being an American Soldier,"

added Carpenter. "After being enlisted for nine years, I have learned my job and how the Army works as it relates to me. A new path has been laid before me and I feel blessed for being given this opportunity. I plan on taking advantage of this opportunity by helping to improve my fellow Soldiers and the Army itself."

Two more Army Guard Soldiers named to Hall of Fame

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame added two more names to its distinguished honor roll, Sept. 10, when two retired Soldiers became inductees into the prestigious institute.

Retired Lt. Col. James H. Kinney and retired Master Sgt. Colin E. Jones were 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 have distinguished themselves in military or civilian pursuits. The individuals are selected based off how they have contributed to the overall development of the 209th RTI or the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy.

"I have seen a few people receive this award, but to be in the company of those folks really makes me feel humbled," said Jones. "It's a really, really humbling experience and award to receive."

Jones started his military career in the United States Army from 1983 to 1987. He joined the Nebraska Army National Guard, serving from June 1987 until September 2011 as an assistant infantry squad leader, infantry squad leader, instructor with Region IV Non-commissioned Officer Academy at Camp Ashland. He also served as a full-time instructor with the Region IV NCOA. As a full time instructor he also served as a platoon sergeant.

In 2004 he was assigned as readiness sergeant with 2nd Battalion, 209th RTI. He then deployed to Afghanistan with the Agribusiness Development Team in 2008, serving as the team's noncommissioned officer in charge. After his deployment he was assigned as NCOIC for Headquarters 209th RTI S4 section.

Kinney started his military career when he enlisted in the United States Navy, serving from June 1961 to June 1965. He enlisted into the Nebraska National Guard in June of 1972. In 1973 he graduated from Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. During his career he served as an infantry platoon leader, an OCS training officer and company commander, battalion communication officer, and then later as senior OCS Training Assess and Counsel (TAC) officer.

Kinney later served as an operations officer at the Nebraska Military Academy, intelligence officer of Headquarters State Area Command, and commandant of the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy.

Kinney retired in March 1994 as a lieutenant colonel.

After the ceremony was complete Jones said, "My family is incredibly supportive and I couldn't have done it without them."

"Honestly, this is the icing on the cake," added Jones. "To be nominated and to actually get accepted into the Hall of Fame is one thing, but for me there isn't really any better way to end my military career than this."



Kinney



Jones

'Job hunters take note: Employment resources out there'

By Lt. Col. David Dubois

Warrior and Family Support

Service members have many resources available to aid them in their search for a new or better job.

Most of these services are available to service members regardless of whether they just entered military service, just returned from deployment and mobilization, or served years ago. A few services may be restricted to returning deployers, or in some cases, our wounded heroes.

In September, the Nebraska Department of Labor held two Veteran Job Fairs. The first occurred in Bellevue on Sept. 15 and the second was held in Lincoln on Sept. 27.

Job fairs connect employers who are actively seeking to hire, with military service members and veteran seeking jobs. Individuals seeking employment should always dress appropriately (a suit, or polo and slacks, updated resume, and be prepared to have a preliminary interview on the spot).

Job fairs are held year-round and across the state. Check out the NE DOL website often to find Job Fairs near you at: <http://www.dol.nebraska.gov/center.cfm?PRICAT=3&SUBCAT=2H>

The Nebraska Department of Labor recently developed a post-deployment employment survey in cooperation with Nebraska's Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to get an idea of where unemployed veterans live and what type of work they are interested in. If a service member has a particular desire or need, they can put their name and contact info in the comment section. See the survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WCVWNQN>

The Nebraska Department of Labor also provides specialized services to the men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces who have bravely served. Career centers

have specially-trained Veteran staff to assist Veterans with employment and training opportunities: <http://www.dol.nebraska.gov/center.cfm?PRICAT=4&SUBCAT=7Z0>

The Military One Source website has great resume and interview materials for both the service member as well as spouses. Click on Career & Education / Career, or try doing a search for a civilian job at: <http://www.militaryonesource.com>

The USAJOBS website lists many opportunities for Federal Technicians: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>, while the Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces is a Defense Department-sponsored website and links reserve component service members with military friendly employers. The website is located at: <http://www.employerpartnership.org/>

Please contact the following for more information:

♦Bonnie Bessler, Nebraska transition assistance advisor, 2411 W Butler Ave, Lincoln, NE 68524, (402) 309-1543 or bonnie.bessler@us.army.mil, Arrowpoint Corporation, contractor

♦Bill Nelson, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), 1776 North 10th St, Lincoln, NE 68508, (402) 309-7105 or william.nelson1@us.army.mil, Defense Department contractor

The Nebraska Military Department does not endorse businesses, offers, products or services. However, the following private websites may also be good sources of information:

The National Guard Association of Nebraska website lists Nebraska employers who are military friendly and actively hiring: http://www.neguard.org/extra/job_opportunities.html

The VetJobs website is not government sponsored, but is another potential source to find military friendly jobs. The website is located at <http://www.vetjobs.com/>. Be leery of any website that requires payment in exchange for job placement services.

Helping Fellow Soldiers



Photo by David Nore

On A Mission

Sgt. 1st Class David Wooten, rear detachment sergeant for the 623rd Engineer Company, talks to an employer representative during the Veteran Job Fair held in Lincoln at Southeast Community College, Sept. 27. Wooten carried his backpack, which contained more than 10 resumes from Soldiers currently deployed to Afghanistan who are seeking employment upon their return this fall, throughout the job fair in Lincoln. Wooten communicated with the deployed Soldiers and received their resumes, which were then passed to companies represented at the job fair. "A lot of them were excited about hiring Soldiers that recently returned from (Operation Enduring Freedom) and expressed an interest in further interviews and possible training classes for them," Wooten said. Nearly 50 companies were represented at the job fair, which was open to veterans and their spouses. Approximately 150 veterans attended.

VETERANS GOLF continued from page 1.

Everywhere," or "SERVE," with Loos, a Nebraska Army National Guard staff sergeant who works as an instructor at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Gray, a career advisor at Concordia University, said the idea actually sprang from a news article he read more than a year ago while working for the Nebraska Department of Labor in the Veteran Employment and Training Program.

"(It was) about the Iowa VA sponsoring a disabled golf outing and I thought to myself, you know there's a way that they attached function to what they do. I can do this functionally for the vets in the area," said Gray.

A short time later, Gray said he discussed the article and the idea with Loos. It wasn't the first time that the two golf enthusiasts had talked about the problem that some veterans were encountering finding jobs. It also wasn't the first time that they'd discussed their shared desire to do something to help.

"It's hard for (vets) to find a job," said Loos, who works as a Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course instructor, which has put him face-to-face with the problem as he has taught Soldiers at Camp Ashland who often didn't have jobs to return to after the course was completed. "Many of them are experiencing being out of work

six months to a year. We wanted to help with that transition... to help that Soldier find an easier way to find a job."

Through their discussions, the two developed an idea where they hoped to make a direct impact by matching an unemployed veteran with three perspective employers during a golf tournament.

"The overall goal was networking... to give veterans who are unemployed or underemployed a good chance to network with a company, to see what they need to do as far as resumes, to try and grow on their personal experiences and do it while they're golfing," said Loos.

Along with serving as a potential job interview, the experience would allow the veterans the chance to learn more about what employers are looking for so that they could better tailor their job resumes, Loos added.

Gray said they believed the connections gained through the golf outing might be invaluable for a veteran searching for a better job.

"With the Department of Labor, I could see that the biggest issue was making that connection," added Gray. "This is our way of saying, 'The connection is made for you... just come out and show them how amazing you are. It's not that hard. You're a vet. Everyone wants a vet... come out here and flex your veteran and get a position; get a job.'"

About a year ago the duo held

their first "Tee Off on Veteran Employment" golf tournament. A total of 46 veterans and business representatives participated. Of that number, Loos said, six veterans were able to secure jobs.

Loos and Gray hosted their second golf tournament in Omaha at the Pacific Springs Golf Course on Aug. 24. This year, a total of 70 veterans and potential employers attended the event.

According to Gray, the veterans came from all walks of life with many different levels of golfing experience.

"I love to golf and I really like getting out there and watching guys hack," he said. "And that's another great thing about this. We have both spectrums from guys who go out and shoot with a 4 handicap to those people who have to borrow golf clubs because it's the first time that they've golfed in years."

"The bottom line is, this gives them an opportunity to get their skill sets across to those people they're playing with," Gray added.

The duo say they're especially encouraged by the response they've received from the local business community.

"The response has been really good," said Loos. "It started out from networking with one company, Northrup Grummond, and they talked to their friends and it's just growing from that."

"The fact that it's snowballed to



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

the point that it has is really exciting," said Gray, adding that most of the companies that participated last year were out again at the August event. Two additional businesses also sent representatives to this year's tournament.

The organization is growing to the point where Loos and Gray recently hosted an event in California. They are also looking to expand into Nebraska's neighboring states.

Out To Help Veterans: (From left) Staff Sgt. Joshua Loos and former U.S. Army Soldier Corey Gray pose for a photograph on a Pacific Spring Golf Course green, Aug. 24, after hosting their second golfing event that teams unemployed and underemployed veterans with prospective employers for an "18-hole interview."

Gray and Loos said they're both excited to be able to give fellow Soldiers a chance to find interesting and challenging work.

"It's personal pride knowing that every little thing that I can do is helping someone who is struggling find a job or get a better job than they already have," said Loos. "What better thing is there than to help out one your fellow Soldiers?"

Suicide Prevention Month

Professor: Personal involvement big key to preventing suicides

By Spc. Heidi Krueger
Staff Writer

During most presentations audience members aren't allowed to snack on munchies – let alone eat a full meal – but this wasn't the case during the "Lunch and Learn: Suicide Awareness" presentation held Sept. 28 in Lincoln, Neb.

The presence of food didn't change the impact of the message that Dr. Jon Kaye, professor of clinical counseling and psychology from Bellevue University's College of Arts and Sciences, brought with him to the "lunch and learn" presentation at the "Spirit of '76" armory drill floor, however.

According to Kaye, one of the most important things a person can do to help combat suicides is simply noticing a person who may be experiencing difficulty in dealing with pain and suffering, and establishing a conversation.

"Notice that change and mood difference. Then approach them and simply say, 'I just happened to notice you don't seem to be yourself.' Asking that little question can show that person you care and that can make the biggest difference in someone's life," said Kaye.

"We have all seen several instances of lives being saved through intervention," added Kaye. "It is imperative we continue our fight against this tragic loss of human life."

Kaye knows his information when it comes to military programs. He is a member of the American Psychological Association as well as a member of the APA Division on Assessment, Psychotherapy and Military Psychology. He is also a subject matter expert to the Nebraska Army National Guard for assisting traumatized veterans returning from deployment.

His presentation was part of the U.S. Army's Suicide Prevention Month observance. Kaye spoke about suicidal behavior and how suicide has a cause.

He went into detail about if there is a cause; there is something everyone can do about it.

The most basic and important



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Help Is Key: Dr. Jon Kaye, professor of clinical counseling and psychology at Bellevue University, speaks during the "Lunch and Learn Suicide Awareness" presentation in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 28.

'Notice that change and mood difference. Then approach them and simply say, 'I just happened to notice you don't seem to be yourself.'

—Dr. Jon Kaye

Professor of clinical counseling and psychology, Bellevue University's College of Arts and Sciences

thing is to work on establishing a good human relationship, said Kaye, adding that people need to recognize that the basis of suicide comes from a combination of overwhelming pain, hopelessness, failed coping mechanisms and other factors.

In 2009 the 'per capita' suicide rate for Nebraska Army National Guard was among the highest all Army Guard states and roughly doubled the 'per capita' rate of the second leading state, he said.

For the five year period of 2007-2011, the Nebraska Army National Guard 'per capita' suicide ranked third in the nation among all the states. There were nine actual suicides.

The good news is, for 2010 and 2011 the numbers are down significantly, he said.

The downward trend is partially due to reinforcing resiliency in

Soldiers. The Peer To Peer program, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and Army ACE Suicide Intervention Training Program have helped teach good suicide prevention and coping techniques; thereby preserving mission effectiveness for the citizen Soldiers in and out of uniform.

"The ACE model is something that is useful... perhaps the best model there is," said Kaye.

ACE stands for "Ask, Care and Escort." It is meant for Soldiers to directly and honestly question a battle buddy that shows suicide behavior.

All of the programs have been shown to improve suicide prevention among the troops.

"I encourage commanders to get as many Soldiers as you can to participate in the Peer to Peer programs," said Col. Kevin Neumann, chief of staff. "I've really noticed a difference with this program."

Chaplain (Maj.) Philip Houser is hosting the Peer to Peer Programs. Programs have already been scheduled for eight different times this year.

Neumann said the effects a suicide can have on the entire National Guard force can't be overestimated. So many people's lives are touched by attempted suicide or suicide of a family member, friend, unit member or acquaintance.

"Suicide affects every Soldier from the governor on down," said Neumann.

Ask a question, save a life

Suicide can affect anyone at any time. Suicidal thoughts occur when someone has exhausted all their usual coping skills and they believe that there is no hope that their situation will improve.

Often individuals having suicidal thoughts feel an unbearable pain they believe will never go away. One stressor will typically not push someone to consider suicide, but a multiple of stressors occurring at the same time may cause someone to consider and/or plan to end their own life.

The major stressors that seem to be in play for most suicides are relationship, financial and substance abuse, usually alcohol. Generally individuals can cope with one of the three, but when more than one is causing stress, suicide can seem like a way to escape the pain.

As family members, friends and battle buddies/wingmen we need to be aware and ask the difficult questions.

So what keeps people from asking the question, "Have you or are you thinking about suicide?"

As a caring person, one might notice that an individual seems to be "down" or "struggling." He/she might not seem to be acting their usual selves. One may be aware that their family member, friend, or battle buddy has recently lost their job or is having relationship problems.

You may believe that it is intrusive or rude to ask your friends, family members, or battle buddy/wingmen about their home life, finances, job, or increased alcohol and/or illegal drug use.

Many times individuals who are experiencing stressors want to be asked.

One of the main triggers that can lead someone to consider suicide is the feeling of being alone, isolated, and not having any support or resources. Though an individual may initially shrug off attempts to talk, it is important to keep asking them about their stressors and most importantly how they are coping with these stressors.

Through the discussion it is important to ask, "Have you or are you thinking about suicide?"

Even though the thought of asking this question strikes anxiety and fear in most individuals, it is important to ask. Most will report a fear of not knowing what to do if the person says "Yes." This is normal, but should not stop the person from asking.

Healthy Coping

By Viola Raschke
Director of Psychological Health, Nebraska National Guard

It is important that each individual know that if you are the person asking the question, you are not alone in getting help. There are resources available once the question is asked.

What to do after you ask the question?

If you are brave enough and caring enough to ask the question, "Have you or are you thinking about suicide?" and the person says "yes," then the most important next step is to stay with them and escort them or connect them to resources that can help.

During this time after the person has said "yes," it is okay to ask more questions about their decision, the stressors that have led them to this point and reasons they have not yet attempted suicide.

Sometimes just talking about the thoughts and feelings can help an individual realize the seriousness of considering suicide and realize that they need help.

There are numerous resources through the military and through the community. Listed below are just a few:

- Chaplains: Maj. Scott Ehler (402) 326-4258 or Maj. Philip Houser (402) 326-4254

- Director of Psychological Health Viola Raschke, LIMHP (402) 314-4092

- National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

All of these are confidential resources.

Once you have connected the person to resources the next step is to make sure that you follow up with them to continue to show support and make sure that they are getting the help they need.

If you ask the question and the person says "No," it's still okay to continue to talk to them about how they are coping and let them know about these supports and continue to be a support to that person.

Let them know that you and others are available to talk and get help.

Assure that person that getting help is strength, not weakness.

Retirees will see changes to coming pay schedules

Happy Retirement. To our recent retirees, you will receive a one-year complimentary membership to the Nebraska Military Retiree Council (NMRC).

With this complimentary membership, you receive all the news that we send out, including links to important websites to manage your retirement pay, Tricare, and many other retirement related sites.

Also, we are up and running on our retiree council website at www.neguard.org. Check us out.

We'll soon be posting quarterly minutes for all to see. Don't forget to send us your email address at your earliest opportunity, if you haven't already done so.

■Retiree breakfasts

Reminder, for those who like to rise early to eat 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 a.m., T&R Gar-

Nebraska National Guard

Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

den, 5250 Cornhusker Highway
Lincoln-Air National Guard retirees: Last Monday of each month, 8 a.m., The Pantry, Van Dorn village, 2548 S. 48th Street (Van Dorn Plaza)

North Platte-area retirees: Second Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Village Inn, North Platte

■Keeping up to date important for retirees

The internet and news has been full of articles about increasing costs for retirees. I urge each of you to do the research and make your own decisions on these issues.

Contact your elected representatives, if you so choose, to voice your opinions on the pressing issues.

■From the desk of Sgt. 1st Clas Mary Moss

MyPay is a method to view Retiree Account Statements (RAS) online. RASs are only mailed to the retiree when there is a change to the retiree's pay. By using MyPay, you are able to view your RAS every month.

MyPay is also the timeliest way to retrieve your 1099R for tax purposes.

To set up an account in MyPay do the following: Go to <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>, click on create account and follow the steps there. You will need to enter in your social security number and create a password at this time.

The DFAS MyPay website has

a section for customer assistance and with frequently asked questions.

The 2011 National Defense Authorization Act requires DFAS to process your pay by the first day of the month. When that day falls on a weekend or national holiday, the pay date is moved to the previous business day.

In 2011, this means your payment normally scheduled for Oct. 3 will be issued on Sept. 30 and your payment normally scheduled for Jan. 3, 2012, will be issued on Dec. 30, 2011. As a result of the second payment in December, you'll receive a total of 13 pay checks instead of the normal 12 in the 2011 tax year, which may increase your tax liability.

Because Jan. 1 is always a federal holiday, going forward you'll always receive your January pay the previous December.

So in 2012 and beyond, when we've fully transitioned to the new schedule, you will receive the normal 12 pay checks.

Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

TRICARE reduces cost of pharmacy home delivery co-pays

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AFPS) - Co-payments for some medications provided through TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery were reduced to zero and as of Oct. 1, home delivery beneficiaries will be able to fill generic prescriptions at no cost to themselves.

"These new copays make using TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery more affordable than ever," said Navy Rear Adm. Christine Hunter, the TRICARE Management Activity deputy director. "Home delivery offers a great value for patients taking maintenance medications for chronic conditions."

Military members, their families and retirees are increasingly using home delivery to get their maintenance medications delivered through U.S. mail, saving TRICARE about \$30 million in 2010.

For more information about TRICARE pharmacy, the new co-payment rates and home delivery, visit the TRICARE pharmacy program website.



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



Officials aim to manage TRICARE costs, preserve future benefits

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Modest increases to certain aspects of military health care will help to responsibly manage costs and ensure benefits for future service members, the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs said, Oct. 3.

“The truth of the matter is the spiraling cost of health care requires us to adjust some fees and co-pays — fees and co-pays that really have not been adjusted since the TRICARE program was put into place in 1994,” Dr. Jonathan Woodson said. “This allows us to responsibly manage our costs while providing access to high-quality care and ensuring the benefit is there for those that might serve in the future.”

Effective Oct. 1, military retirees enrolling in the TRICARE Prime health plan began paying slightly higher annual fees, Woodson said. “The (TRICARE Prime) fee increases for an individual has only gone up, essentially, \$2.50 a month,” he explained. “And for a family, \$5 a month. (The) total cost is really modest in terms of the overall cost of the entire year.”

Those enrolled before Oct. 1, however, won't see an increase in cost until fiscal 2013, he added.

Woodson said two groups of TRICARE beneficiaries would not experience any increases: people who are medically retired and survivors of deceased active duty sponsors.

Defense Department officials recognize the potential concerns regarding fee increases during tough economic times, he said.

“We understand, particularly in the current economy and set of fiscal realities, any increase in (out-of-pocket) costs would cause some concern,” he said. “But I would remind everyone there have been no fee increases since 1994.” Woodson also noted



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Waving at the judges

Izabel Stubbendick, 2, waves at Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage during the costume contest at the 2011 Haunted Armory party held Oct. 14 at the “Spirit of ‘76” Armory in Lincoln, Neb. According to Jessica Shottenkirk-Cooley, state youth coordinator, an estimated crowd of between 300 and 400 people attended this year's party where military kids were able to receive treats at different booths, walk through the haunted hallways and participate in the annual costume competition. Similar parties were held in Omaha and Kearney.

that not all co-payments and fees have risen.

“There have been some adjustments in co-pays,” he said. “In one category, actually, the fees have gone down, so (for) those individuals who have mail-order pharmacy benefits (and) previously paid \$3 for generic drugs, ... that fee will go away.”

Beneficiaries will see modest increases in other co-payments for brand-name drugs, particularly at the retail level, which will go from \$3 to \$5, he explained. Nonformulary drugs will rise from \$22 to \$25 for both retail and mail-order pharmacies. For brand-name drugs, the cost will remain the same — \$9

for the mail order pharmacy.

Another potential concern Woodson addressed was staff reduction.

“It will not affect the care, and it's important to note that while we've been talking about adjustments in fees and co-pays, that is really part of a real comprehensive strategy to manage our cost,” he said. “We've taken a look at the administrative costs of TRICARE and reduced the numbers of so-called full-time employees and contractors to reduce the cost before getting to the point of increasing the fees.

“But none of this will decrease the service

or the quality of care that beneficiaries will expect and receive,” he added.

The health affairs chief also said the department has taken a very “modest posture on the current recommendation and rollout of fee increases.” Woodson said no decisions have been made on future increases, and he re-emphasized that this is the first increase since TRICARE's inception.

Free tutoring services available to Guard families

National Guard and Reserve families can now receive online tutoring and homework assistance from Tutor.com at no charge.

This program allows K-12 and adult students to connect to a live tutor online at anytime for help with homework, studying, exam preparation, college coursework and more.

Guard and Reserve families accessing services at Tutor.com are matched with one of more than 2,500 carefully screened experts who include certified teachers, college professors, graduate students, select undergraduates from accredited universities and other professionals.

For more information go to <http://www.tutor.com/military>

Army leaders renew commitment to covenant

WASHINGTON (ARNEWS)—Top Army leadership renewed the Army Family Covenant, the Army's formal commitment to support Soldiers and their families, with a signing in October at the 2011 Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

Secretary of the Army John McHugh, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond Odierno and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler III conducted the signing Oct. 10.

“We talk a lot about the Army family,” said McHugh. “We hear it on radio and on television. We read about it in virtually any Army publication and it is important that we talk about it. It's important that we remind ourselves, but it can't just be a bumper sticker.”

Bureau works to protect troops, military families pursuing education

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Service members and their families are under siege from for-profit colleges, many of which see service members as nothing more than “dollar signs in uniform,” a top financial official said in late September.

A number of these schools target troops with aggressive, misleading marketing tactics followed by a lack of administrative or counseling support — which can lead to roadblocks for service members seeking to advance their education, said Holly Petraeus, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's assistant director for service member affairs.

She issued this caution in a Sept. 21 New York Times op-ed, and in written testimony submitted to a U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' subcommittee.

“The real and growing concern is that, just as in the days of unchecked payday lending before the implementation of the Military Lending Act, military communities are once again under siege by a group that sees big money to be made off the military: for-profit colleges,” Petraeus wrote.

These colleges are targeting a population that's become increasingly more interested in obtaining higher degrees, she noted.

She recalled when her husband, CIA director David H. Petraeus, a retired Army general, first enlisted

in 1974.

Back then, officers were expected to have a bachelor's degree, but enlisted service members with a two- or four-year college diploma were scarce.

Fast-forward several decades, and now officers who would like to move up the ranks are expected to have a graduate degree and enlisted personnel who would like to reach senior noncommissioned officer status, a bachelor's degree, she said.

These degrees are equally important post-service, she added, where in today's economy, a bachelor's degree is “a must” for many jobs.

The growing demand for higher education has caught the attention of for-profit colleges, eager to enroll troops with ready cash in hand.

Active-duty service members, Petraeus explained, have access to tuition assistance funds, and troops, veterans and some family members, to the GI Bill.

They're also driven to enroll service members to help meet the “90-10 rule,” she said, created by the 1998 amendments to the Higher Education Act.

Under this rule, a for-profit college has to obtain at least 10 percent of its revenue from a source other than Title IV federal education funds.

While tuition assistance and the GI Bill are federally funded,

they don't fall under the Title IV category, she added, “putting (service members) squarely in the 10-percent category of the 90-10 rule.”

For every service member who uses tuition assistance or GI Bill funds — or a service member's spouse or child under the Post-9/11 GI Bill — the college can enroll nine other students with Title IV funds, Petraeus said.

“Therein lies the problem,” she said. “This has given some for-profit colleges an incentive to see service members as nothing more than dollar signs in uniform and to use some very unscrupulous marketing techniques to draw them in.”

Petraeus cited what she called a “particularly egregious example” that was featured in a 2010 Bloomberg Business Week article.

The article told the story of a Marine Corps corporal with a traumatic brain injury. A for-profit university representative visited a wounded warrior battalion to sign up service members for courses.

According to the article, the corporal “knows he's enrolled ... he just can't remember what course he's taking.”

Petraeus said she often hears concerns about “unscrupulous marketing” by some for-profit colleges. On one site she visited, the schools were listed as “GI Bill” schools, but all were for-profit colleges.

A number of these schools proceed to deliver poor treatment after enrollment. One spouse told Petraeus she had connectivity problems and couldn't sign on for her online class, yet was unable to gain assistance from the school. Still, she was billed for the full tuition.

These support problems can pose a challenge for deployed troops, Petraeus added, who can experience a “lock down” on communications or other connectivity issues.

“I have heard about instances where no flexibility was shown by the college and the student received an ‘F’ for failure to submit the work on time,” she said. “The tuition bill, of course, was still expected to be paid.”

Some students run into problems when transferring credits as well. A number of for-profit colleges have questionable credentials or lack accreditation accepted by other schools, Petraeus said.

While some for-profit colleges have solid academic credentials and a history of graduate success, “as a group, and compared with other institutions, for-profit colleges have low graduation rates and a poor gainful-employment history,” she noted.

“The benefits provided to our military and their families should not be wasted on programs that do not promote, and may even frustrate, their educational goals,”

she added.

Yet there's been “explosive growth” in the amount of military benefit money flowing from the government to for-profit schools, Petraeus noted.

Between 2006 and 2010, combined Defense and Veterans department education benefits, received by just 20 for-profit education companies, increased from \$66 million in 2006 to an estimated \$521.2 million in 2010 — a 683 percent increase.

“As long as military education funds are on the 10 percent side of the 90-10 rule, service members will be a lucrative target for exploitation,” she said.

“It is critical that federal agencies redouble efforts to prevent aggressive and deceptive practices.”

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Office of Servicemember Affairs will work alongside Congress, the Defense, Veterans Affairs and Education departments, the public sector, and the nonprofit and business communities to improve financial education for military families so they can avoid these types of pitfalls, Petraeus said.

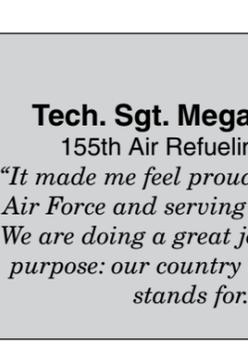
The goal, she added, is for every military family to be a well-educated family, “armed with the knowledge of how to avoid poor financial decisions, and willing and able to invest toward long-term goals that lead to a successful future.”

Street Talk

“What did the 10-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks mean to you?”



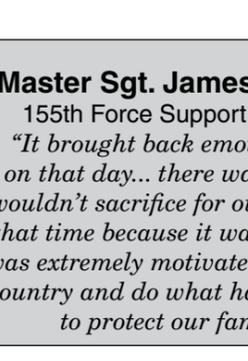
Senior Airman Vey Thach
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron
“It made me think of what I was doing at the time, what I was feeling. I was more or less in shock, in awe, thinking, ‘Is this really happening?’”



Tech. Sgt. Megan Zuver
155th Air Refueling Wing
“It made me feel proud to be in our Air Force and serving our country. We are doing a great job for a good purpose: our country and what it stands for.”



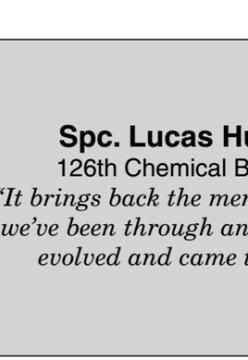
Pvt. David McLarnan
126th Chemical Battalion
“It shows the people of the U.S. how we respond when there’s an attack on our freedom and rights.”



Master Sgt. James Morbach
155th Force Support Squadron
“It brought back emotions I had on that day... there was nothing I wouldn’t sacrifice for our country at that time because it was personal. I was extremely motivated to serve my country and do what had to be done to protect our families.”



Spc. Tim Sanderson
126th Chemical Battalion
“It’s a reminder of how modern warfare keeps changing and how we always need to adapt.”



Spc. Lucas Hurlber
126th Chemical Battalion
“It brings back the memory of what we’ve been through and how we’ve evolved and came together.”

Enduring priorities, vision continue to shape Guard

On Sept. 23 I held a Joint Commanders Call that brought together all of our Army and Air National Guard commanders and command sergeants major/chief master sergeants as well as unit first sergeants.

One of my main goals was to continue to communicate my Enduring Priorities and Vision for the organization. I believe, and again ask you to consider, that these three enduring priorities,

■ **We CAN Provide the Best Possible Support To Our Military Department Members, Families and Employers**

■ **We CAN Remain Relevant and Ready To Respond**

■ **We CAN Make the Nebraska National Guard the Service of Choice**

support our shared vision to be “An organization of excellence postured to deliver capabilities needed by our state and nation.”

My intent is that you will continue to embrace these three enduring priorities and share them with others.

You can find posters around our facilities that show these Enduring Priorities. You will note that there are a number of “ways to get these done” listed under each of the three.

During the Commanders Call I also highlighted several of these as **Focus Areas** for the year within each of the above enduring priorities. I believe that these will be increasingly important as the bulk of our Guardsmen and women return from deployment and others prepare to deploy in FY12 for either our federal or state support missions.

I would like to share them with you as well.

■ **We CAN Provide the Best Possible Support To Our Military**

The Adjutant General

Major General

Judd Lyons



recruiting success, but more importantly ramp up our efforts to retain our members.

■ **We CAN Make the Nebraska National Guard the Service of Choice.**

◆ **Quality Boots Initiative.**

◆ **Sustain an organization that reflects the diverse communities we serve.**

◆ **Embrace and capitalize on diverse ideas, approaches and perspectives**

◆ **Foster opportunities for advancement through effective and transparent career management**

I am asking our commanders to continue their efforts to improve the readiness of our force. This means focus on Duty MOS/AFSC qualification, medical readiness, physical fitness and height/weight standards and weapons qualification to name a few areas of the Quality Boots Initiative.

If we are to be the Service of Choice, we have to be recognized both internally and from the outside as reflective of our diverse communities in Nebraska. We also benefit greatly when we embrace differing viewpoints and ideas.

Finally, we are in the midst of adjusting our career management programs to be more effective and transparent. This focus will continue in FY12.

We have the best people in our organization. They deserve the best leadership. Our Joint Commanders Call was an opportunity to get the Command Teams together and discuss challenges, opportunities and how best to serve our great men and women.

We can work together to meet the challenges ahead, accomplish our missions and support each other, our families and employers.

Let’s have a great year!

Department Members, Families and Employers.

◆ **Educate our members and their families on support programs available before, during and after deployment.** (Commander involved active partnership with unit Family Readiness Groups and State Family Program Office.)

For the last 10 years we have asked much of ourselves and our families. We have the most seasoned force perhaps in our history. I believe we have a responsibility to sustain our most efficient and effective support programs.

In a budget-constrained environment that we will face in FY12 and beyond, some programs may change or be discontinued, but our overall support will not.

Although the deployment cycle is emphasized, I also asked our Command Teams to focus on Resiliency throughout our force as evidence shows that challenges reside in our members who have not deployed as well.

Leaders, who personally know their subordinates as well as peers, battle buddies and wingmen are in the best position to help sustain a climate where help is sought without fear of stigma, build coping skills and reduce risky behavior.

■ **We CAN Remain Relevant and Ready To Respond.**

◆ **Army National Guard – Sustain or exceed Authorized Strength.**

◆ **Air National Guard – Sustain or exceed Authorized Strength.**

To do this, we must sustain our

Remembering Sept. 11, 2001, Part II

As hard as it is to believe the 10-year anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, has already passed on by.

We marked the 10-year anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy with numerous different memorials, services, ceremonies, TV programs and prayers going on throughout the weekend of the tenth anniversary of 9/11. We did this in remembrance of the lives lost on that fateful day and the lives lost since then.

Remembering what happened on that day is part of American history and this 10-year anniversary is marking that milestone.

Maybe it’s just me, but I can remember that day like it was yesterday.

I was a fifth grader at Diller-Odell Elementary School sitting at my individual desk, decorated with the name ‘Heidi Jo’ written in cursive and taped to it front, as I listened to my teacher.

This was a particularly important year to me then because I had finally gotten a little more freedom. For me, I liked the idea that I could finally get a little freedom to write “fancy.” The facts that I now had my own desk and locker to decorate just added to the year.

Suddenly, I heard the loud speakers go off. It was an announcement for all the teachers to go to the office. My classmates and I had no idea what was going on, we just figured it was about another school bus breaking down or if the school nurse was in.

When our fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Barb Vitosh, returned, she came back in tears. We had no idea why she was crying until she turned on the television and let us watch for ourselves the breaking news stories and video footage of the towers getting hit.

Another Voice

Specialist

Heidi Krueger



my part and maybe – just maybe – one day be someone’s hero like all those service members are to me.

A little less than eight fast years later I made the biggest commitment of my life. I raised my right hand and joined the Nebraska

Army National Guard.

I knew I was joining in a time of war, but that didn’t stop me one bit. I wanted to do my part like I always dreamed of, even though some of my friends weren’t supportive or told me I was crazy and that I was going to have to go to war.

To tell you the truth, that made me want to join even more.

Now, here I am sitting in my office doing what I have a passion for. I’m writing and telling about what Nebraskan Soldiers and Airmen have done not only by standing up for our country and state, but how they have gotten there through training, deployments and hands-on experience.

I write this column a little more than two years after I raised my right hand and a little over ten years since 9/11. As I look back, I wonder where the time has gone.

The Nebraska National Guard has proven that they have done so much and exceeded since Sept. 11, 2001. Alongside deployments and missions, the Nebraska National Guard has also grown by around 800 people – people who, like me, wanted to do their part and stand up for our state and country.

I know I can’t change or impact everyone’s life, but by spreading the word of the Nebraska National Guard and doing my part, I hope I can truly make a difference in one person’s life.

And who knows, maybe one day I, too, will be someone’s hero.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

First Lieutenant
Shannon A. Bertsche
Zane A. Downs
Jennifer M. Myers

Chief Warrant Officer 3

Dallas W. Bundy
James C. Hurley Jr.
Todd A. Wagner

Chief Warrant Officer 2

Michael J. Deforge
Robert A. Woita

Sergeant First Class

Joshua E. King
Christopher W. Morehouse
Jason W. Prieksat
Thomas T. Rowe
Chad E. Sample
Christopher L. Sterns

Staff Sergeant

Timothy T. Beckmann
Kyle D. Demaree
Oscar Garcia
Randy A. Graves

Sergeant

Melissa N. Becci
Benjamin D. Danch
Andrew C. Engel
Phillip M. Kapsa
James R. Koch
Colton C. Magill
Allen L. Mcintosh
Keith W. Tinnell
Laiya Y. Wells

Specialist

James A. Anderson
Jared D. Archer
Jeremy L. Breazile
Brian L. Broyles
Erica A. Cardenas

Mark A. Duncan
Alex J. Fritz
Cesar L. Guerrero
Richard A. Hadsell
Nathan D. Hampshire
Nickolas R. Hansen
Detrick R. Jacobs
Brandon J. Kapke
Derrick A. Knolles
John J. Lehn
Dillon E. Lupton
Maxwell M. Maguire
Max T. Mcshane
Jenna R. Medley
Saul Ortiz
Brendon C. Painter
James B. Ruffin III
Tyler J. Shreve
Albert S. S. Stvauldray
Sonny M. Swanson
Justin R. Teeters
Mikayla C. Walsh

Private First Class

Analeisha C. Androyna
Torey E. Armstrong
Brittany A. Battaglia
Neil A. Bestwick
Keith A. Blodgett
Jeffrey J. Burbach
Jared T. Cornell
Dylan J. Donnelly
Oakley J. Gilbert
Parker J. Gilbert
Christopher J. Hansen
Marc A. Hennings
Roman J. Maes
Nikolaus J. Mcracken
Erica C. Olivares
Grady O. Phillips
Jonathan L. Rhodes
Godofredis Rivera
Jeffery B. Stocking
Nicolis A. Todd
Michael J. Wesson

Derek A. Worman

Private Two

Rebecca S. Gonzalez
Tyler Q. Hill
Brenda L. Jensen
Gjohnte M. L. Nelson
Meka A. Nicksich

Air National Guard

Colonel
James R. Stevenson

Lieutenant Colonel

AnnMarie Anthony

Major

Randall Douglas
Wendy Squarcia

Captain

Patrick Matol

First Lieutenant

Edwin Martens

Technical Sergeant

Amanda J. Meyers
Paul J. Wood

Staff Sergeant

Seth M. Harrell
Aaron F. Karpisek
James W. Lieth
Bradley J. Metz
Victoria L. Pelan

Senior Airman

Zachary C. Bennett
Darren D. Davlin
Matthew A. Krepel

Airman First Class

Michael J. Morrison
Joseph A. Naumann

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Legion of Merit

Col. Kevin L. Neumann
Lt. Col. Martin R. Apprich

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Craig A. Anderson
Lt. Col. Shawn R. Edwards
Maj. Michael P. Akins
Sgt. 1st Class Steven L. Barnes

Army Commendation Medal

Capt. Jason D. Barber
Capt. Troy W. Dannehl
Capt. Cory N. Huskey
Capt. Kevin L. Janousek
Capt. Shane P. Varejcka
Master Sgt. Steven T. Harris

Sgt. 1st Class Michael S. Edmundson
Staff Sgt. Mark R. Brown
Staff Sgt. Bradley G. Huston
Staff Sgt. Andrew M. Siemek
Sgt. Jose A. Arguello
Sgt. Andrew P. Liss
Sgt. Timothy A. Ossowski
Sgt. Jean M. Pieper
Spc. Michael J. Block
Spc. Lyndon W. Griner
Pfc. Taylor R. Beck

Army Achievement Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Brian D. Blankenship
Sgt. 1st Class Eric E. Pearson
Staff Sgt. Brian T. Griess
Staff Sgt. Katherine K. Smith
Staff Sgt. Shawn W. Young

Sgt. Dustin L. Day
Sgt. Andrew G. Jarvis
Sgt. Jacob A. McCormack
Sgt. Matthew M. Stern
Spc. Nathaniel A. Betts
Spc. Jason J. Hansen
Spc. Tessa J. Harding
Spc. Clarisa S. Hazen
Spc. Logan W. Hoffman
Spc. Jauree R. Lenz
Spc. Jenna R. Medley
Spc. Amanda L. Odvody
Pfc. Brittney M. Backstrom
Pfc. Keith B. Jorgensen
Pvt. Timber T. Shannon

Air Force Commendation Medal

Capt. Matthew D. Bartling

Nebraska National Guard

Commendation Medal

2nd Lt. Roger V. Yant Jr.
2nd Lt. Derek D. Zulkoski
Warrant Officer Aaron R. Carpenter
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew T. Broman
Sgt. 1st Class Samuel A. Malone
Staff Sgt. D. J. Johnson

Nebraska National Guard

Individual Achievement Medal

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Torrey J. Baker
Capt. Scott R. Henrickson
Sgt. 1st Class John P. Hartig
Sgt. 1st Class Tamara L. Schmeling
Sgt. 1st Class Polly D. Wacker
Staff Sgt. Amber D. Engelman
Staff Sgt. Jeremy W. Hartwell

Staff Sgt. Christopher J. King
Staff Sgt. Zeb R. Noyd
Staff Sgt. Joseph L. Strack
Staff Sgt. Lacey J. Weber
Sgt. Jennifer L. Good
Sgt. Brandon M. Meyer
Sgt. Tomsam W. Witt
Spc. Bethany M. Donica
Spc. Travis W. Rupp
Spc. Kyle G. Yeramyshev
Pfc. Brittany A. Battaglia
Pfc. Libby L. Henschke
Pfc. Keith B. Jorgensen
Pfc. Jared M. Klassen
Pfc. Kyle E. J. Knievel
Pfc. Michael A. Lindgren
Pfc. Justin L. Mueller
Pfc. Larry R. Richards Jr.

Pfc. Kendal R. Sage
Pfc. Austin James Stamp

Combat Infantry Badge

Sgt. Maj. John D. Parfait III

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Sgt. 1st Class Mary K. Pease
Staff Sgt. Angela S. Fuehrer
Staff Sgt. Irma F. Gutherless
Staff Sgt. Scott J. Hanna
Staff Sgt. Kenneth M. Stenka

Shorttakes

Gold Rush Weekend

Find out more about the Nebraska Army National Guard's commissioning programs, Nov. 5, at Camp Ashland, Neb. The weekend begins at 9 a.m. at Memorial Hall (Building 50).

Lodging is available at the Camp Ashland Inn with a limited number of rooms reserved. Uniform for the event is the Army Combat Uniform (ACU).

For more information and to request orders, contact your unit readiness sergeant or the officer strength manager in your area.

- ♦Lt. Col. James Murphy (402) 429-1428
- ♦Capt. Tony Woodruff (402) 369-1640
- ♦Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jennifer Fotinos (402) 417-2965

Commissioning Requirements:

Age: Not to exceed 41 years and 364 days at the time of commissioning.

Physical: Chapter 2 physical, must be within 24 months prior to the first day of school attendance. Please coordinate with your chain of command and MED DET to schedule your physical.

College: Must have a minimum of 90 hours. If less than a BA/BS, the Soldier will need to provide an education plan.

GT Score must be a 110. If you need to retake the ASVAB please contact the Education Officer, Capt. Kuta, at (402)309-7263

Security Clearance: Must be able to possess a Secret clearance for commissioning.



Two Nebraska organizations lauded Guard, Reserve employee support

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Governor Dave Heineman lauded two Nebraska organizations for their outstanding support of National Guard and Reserve member employees, Sept. 23, after the organizations were presented with the 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award in Washington, D.C., the evening before.

Receiving the awards were the Burt County Sheriff's Department of Tekamah, Neb., and Electrical Contractors Inc., of Omaha, Neb.

"As the Governor, I am proud of these two outstanding organizations and the support they offer our National Guard and Reserve," said Heineman.

"Since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Nebraska's military, family members and employers have sacrificed and served in an incredible manner," said Heineman. "This award recognizes the support and caring attitude of Nebraska employers to ensure that our state's military members and their families are taken care of while they are called away to military duty."

The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the Department of Defense to large, small and public sector employers for their exceptional support of employees serving in the National Guard or Reserve.

This year a total of 15 Freedom Awards were presented to organizations and businesses from across the United States. They were recognized during a banquet held at the national Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) headquarters in Washington, D.C.

This year's two Nebraska recipients join two other state organizations that have received the award: Union Pacific, Omaha, Neb., (2008) and Eaton Corporation, Kearney, Neb., (2005).

The following are excerpts for Nebraska's 2011 Freedom Award recipients:

Burt County Sheriff's Office

Burt County, located in northeastern Nebraska, covers 493 square miles with the county seat residing in Tekamah. Burt County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) supports 3,170 households, with a total population of 6,881.

The office is led by Sheriff Robert Pickell and is comprised of 10 total employees with just five deputies, including Freedom Award nominator, Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Jamie

Keatts, U.S. Navy Reserve.

"I take so much pride in working for Sheriff Pickell, simply because he takes pride in me and what I do," said Keatts. "Sheriff Pickell is an amazing boss, person and friend."

Keatts says the daily e-mails and continuous care packages he received from BCSO while deployed kept him feeling as if he had never left home.

He added BCSO also supported him by checking on his home, keeping the yard presentable and shoveling snow to make sure the house did not appear empty. Sheriff Pickell adjusted Keatts' schedule to ensure he did not lose pay as a result of his military service, and personally covered Keatts' shifts while he was away for left weekends.

Before Keatts left for Afghanistan, and upon return, BCSO threw parties to show their appreciation of his service. "I cannot put into words what support I have from my boss and the Burt County Sheriff's Office," said Keatts. "I cannot express the gratitude and thanks I have for my employer."

Electrical Contractors Inc.

With more than 100 years of electrical experience among their licensed electricians, Electrical Contractors, Inc., is a family owned and operated business in Omaha, Neb.

Owner J.J. Williams has consistently supported his employee and nominator, Staff Sgt. Devin Brisbois, U.S. Army Reserve. "Mr. Williams has gone out of his way to support me and my family. He serves as an example to other employers who continually find ways to help and support me."

During Brisbois' deployment, his wife told him their refrigerator had stopped working. When his boss heard about it, he ordered a new refrigerator, had it delivered to their home and covered the cost.

Other deployment support included the company providing lawn care, snow removal and maintenance for the home, even offering to babysit for their three children.

When Brisbois' friends and family decided to thank him for his service by secretly restoring the 1969 Dodge Coronet Super Bee he never had time to work on, Brisbois' boss made a considerable donation towards the project and helped arrange the surprise unveiling.

"Mr. Williams didn't have to do any of these generous things, but he is a patriot and he understands what a sacrifice it is to serve in the military," said Brisbois. "I cannot thank him enough for what he has done for me and my family."

New-look marksmanship exercise attracts more than 150 Army, Air Guard shooters who were all...

Aiming For Glory

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

Shooters of all ranks and experience came together to compete in annual marksmanship competition, Aug. 12-14.

The Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise brought over 150 Soldiers and Airmen to the Greenleaf Training Site for the annual shooting competition. The Soldiers and Airmen competed individually and in teams in M-16 rifle and the M-9 pistol marksmanship matches.

"The diversity of rank goes from a majority of E-5s and below but goes all the way up to lieutenant colonel," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy W. Hartwell, a member of the Nebraska National Guard's marksmanship assistance team. "This makes the competition normally pretty tight all the way around with the different experienced shooters."

"The direction of the shooting is more for the new shooters, where in the past it was more for the same people competing and win-

ning the awards each year," added Hartwell. "It makes the experience a little more fun and brings more camaraderie."

Participants competed in three individual rifle matches, one rifle team match, two individual pistol matches and one team pistol match. They also compete in a combined arms match where they shot rifles, pistols and shotguns.

The final match of the competition was a plate match in which teams raced other teams to be the first to shoot down a set of free-standing metal plates.

"The last day from a spectators stand point is the best to watch," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Todd A. Wagner, property book officer for Joint Force Headquarters and match coordinator for the exercise.

A lot of the matches are new in the recent years, even to some of the more experienced shooters.

"Learning the new course of fire can somewhat be a challenge," said Hartwell, adding that many of the 150-plus Soldiers and Airmen who participated in the exercise



Photos by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Steady Aim: Cadet Jon Gronewold, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, fires during the individual pistol match of the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, Aug. 12.



Reload: A range safety sergeant loads a magazine for competitors during the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise.

were first-time competitive shooters. Each team consisted of four members chosen by their battalions with one team captain to help assist with any further help with the teams.

Team captain, Spc. Lyndon Raatz, a radio operator maintainer with Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron said, "On my team we

See MARKSMANSHIP on 20.



I'm Ready: Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Stanislav, a section sergeant with the 267th Support Maintenance Company, gets into the standing position to fire in one of the three individual rifle matches during the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise at Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., Aug. 12.

Medical battalion commander claims five golds at sports event

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Guard's physical fitness training proved once again that staying in shape and working hard can help you exceed in many ways other than the Guard.

Lt. Col. Shawn R. Edwards, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion's commander, placed first in all five events she competed in at the Cornhusker State Games, July 16.

Edwards competed in the Female Masters Powerlifting, Iron Woman (bench and deadlift), Master Women's 100 meter dash, 200 meter dash and 400 meter dash.

"I was nervous," said Edwards. "I have

competed in bench before when I was a part of the Guard Bureau Bench Team, but I had never competed in a full power lifting event before."

Even more impressive was the fact that Edwards won all five events in a single day.

She competed in the bench and squat lifting events, traveled across town to participate in her track events and then went back to do one final deadlift.



Edwards

"The hardest part was being there alone," said Edwards. "It didn't work out that my family or my son could be there. It would have been nice to have people there to encourage me, but I knew I could do it myself."

"My motivation was my son," added Edwards. "My son is eight years old and competes in summer track. I wanted to be a parent that doesn't sit on the sidelines and tells my kid what to do. I wanted to prove to him I could do it, too."

Edwards' son qualified for nationals in the 200 meter dash this summer. Edward's goal was to be able to beat his time.

"You have to be able to talk the talk and walk the walk," said Edwards, who was able

to beat her son in the 200 meter dash. Edwards' son did claim bragging rights in the 400 meter race, though.

Edwards said the Guard's physical training motivates her to stay in shape.

"If it wasn't for the Guard's PT standards, I wouldn't be in the shape I am in now," said Edwards, who ended her day by receiving five gold medals and qualifying for nationals in July 2013.

Edwards said she plans on attending nationals and competing in even more events in next year's Cornhusker State Games.

"The Guard really motivates me to stay in shape and compete like this, I would like to see more Guardsmen do the same."

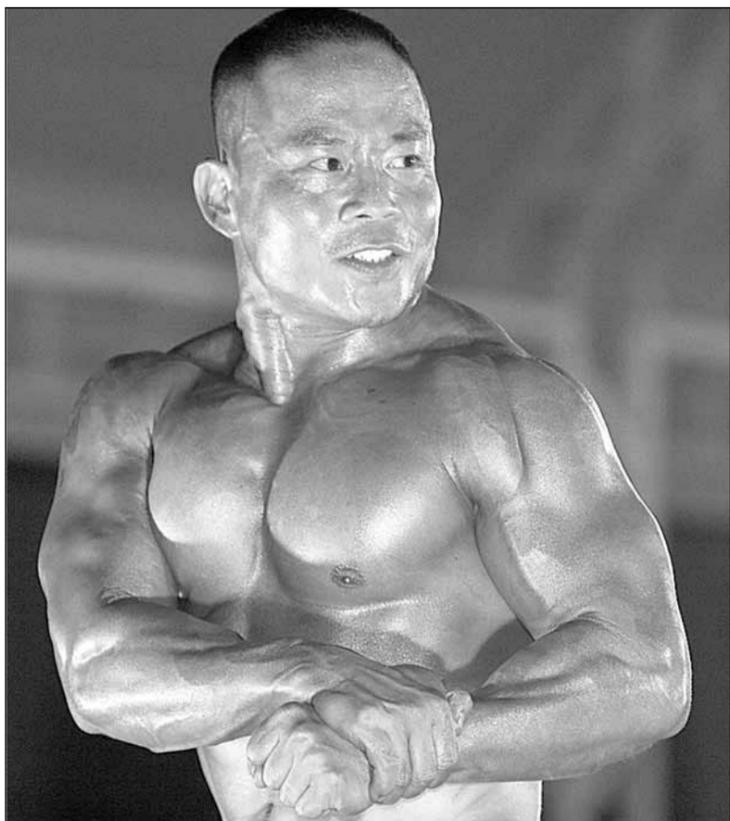


Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Hunter Isley

Flexing: Staff Sgt. Hunter Isley, a member of Detachment 1, 1167th Brigade Support Company, competes in the Desert Classic V Bodybuilding Competition, Sept. 25, at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Nebraska Soldier wins bodybuilding event while deployed to Kuwait

By Spc. Heidi Krueger

Staff Writer

The Army physical fitness program has once again helped a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier challenge himself physically when he competed in a bodybuilding competition while deployed to Kuwait.

Staff Sgt. Hunter Isley, a member of Detachment 1, 1167th Brigade Support Company, competed in the Desert Classic V Bodybuilding Competition Sept. 25 at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Isley is currently attached to Army Central Special Troops Battalion where he serves as the supply noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

The annual event was sponsored and hosted by the Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation program. According to Isley, there were 14 competitors: 10 males and four females.

Isley competed in the less than 142-pound weight division.

"I always have kept myself in good shape," said Isley via email. "There was a bodybuilding flyer at

"It's very challenging if you do it right and stick with the diet. The reward is you feel good afterward and look back saying, 'Wow, I put myself through that?'"

— Staff Sgt. Hunter Isley on competing in the Desert Classic V Bodybuilding Competition

the gym, so I decided to enter it and give it a shot."

The flyer for the event came out on the Fourth of July weekend. Isley did some research and planned a weekly workout schedule and diet. This gave him around three months to prepare for the competition.

"Personally, I think it takes about six months to be in really good shape for bodybuilding," said Isley. "But

I worked out once a day, six days a week and ate six meals a day including breakfast, lunch, dinner and three snacks throughout the day to prepare for the competition."

He said that maintaining his diet for three months was a challenge.

"It was hard walking by the pastry bar trying not to look at the ice cream and cheesecake," added Isley. "It was hard maintaining and eating high protein food, low fat food and counting calories. It takes discipline and commitment to do it."

Bodybuilding is essentially an unhealthy sport, said Isley, adding that it is hard on one's body, especially when they have to dehydrate themselves a couple days prior to the competition. Factoring in the dry desert heat and the stress of being in the deployed environment are other challenges a person must be aware of, he said.

"It's very challenging if you do it right and stick with the diet," said Isley. "The reward is you feel good afterward and look back saying, 'Wow, I put myself through that?'"

Unit physical training and doing See BODYBUILDING on 20.

Air Guard wing kicks off October weekend drill with annual 'Jack O'Lantern' run, walk

By Airman 1st Class Mary Thach
Staff Writer

Forty members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing kicked off the new fiscal year by hitting the pavement at 6 a.m. for a five-kilometer jog or one-mile walk, Oct. 1, at the Nebraska Air National Guard Base.

Several participants arrived in full costume including a cheerleader, a Red Sox baseball player and a skeleton in an orange flight suit, to name a few.

The runners and walkers who participated in the 2nd Annual Jack O' Lantern Jog said it was an entertaining way to incorporate fitness into their day and helps build morale.

Capt. Michael J. Kanter, acting installation deployment officer and officer-in-charge of the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron, said the Jack O' Lantern jog is an unofficial autumn event he hopes will continue to be held annually to build morale and incorporate fitness.

"We have our fit-to-fight test each year," Kanter said. "We need to incorporate that in everything that we do. We wanted to have an event at the end of the year that allowed us some down time, have some fun, and focus on fitness."



Photos by Master Sgt. Vern Moore

Cheered Up: Tech Sgt. Megan Zuver participates in the five-kilometer run at Jack O'Lantern Jog.

Last year, Nebraska Army and Air National Guard members participated in the brisk jog together. This year, the planning committee had little time to prepare because of the Sept. 10-11 "Guardians of Freedom" airshow, so advertising was limited to the Air Guard. Kanter said the goal for next year is to get both Army and Air Guard involved.

Master Sgt. Keith Bowder, hazardous materials pharmacy manager and vice president of the unofficial event, said the event serves multiple purposes.

"With the emphasis being on fitness, we decided we wanted to add morale-building and emphasize exercise at the same time,"

Airmen wake up early in to participate in fitness event



And They're Off: Runners begin the first steps of the 2nd Annual Jack O'Lantern five-kilometer run and one-mile walk, Oct. 1, at the Nebraska National Guard air base. The events have become an annual tradition at the air base where members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing have used it as a way to kick off the fall season and promote the benefits of physical fitness.

Bowder said, adding there are two annual 5-kilometer runs, the Saint Patty's Day Jog in the spring, and the Jack O' Lantern Jog in the fall.

"We are glad that the senior leadership is supporting it by coming out," he said. "I think it means a lot, too. That makes it special."

Staff Sgt. Anita Lovell, a member of the supply inspection team, sang the national anthem to formally begin the chilled morning assembly. She said it is a fun event and provides an excellent opportunity to integrate fitness into the lives of Guard members.

"It's good and healthy. More people should be health focused," said Lovell.

After the run and walk, medals were awarded to the men and women runners who placed first and second in either event.



Keeping Pace: Three participants begin the one-mile walk, Oct. 1, during the Jack O'Lantern Jog. Sponsored by the 155th Air Refueling Wing, participants are encouraged to dress up in their favorite Halloween costume for the event.



Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Hunter Isley

Award-Winning Form: Staff Sgt. Hunter Isley shows off his months of hard work during the Desert Classic V Bodybuilding Competition.

BODYBUILDING

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different Army abdominal exercises and push-ups on his own really helped Isley get to the shape he was in too.

"I have been here at Camp Arifjan for over a year and it was great to have friends and fellow Soldiers there to cheer me on during the competition," said Isley.

Isley ended up automatically getting first in his weight division because he was the only one in that division.

"For my individual routine my music was the Husker tunnel walk song and there were some Reserve Soldiers from Nebraska there," said Isley. "They were screaming and cheering with the music as I walked out."

"At that moment it made me very proud to be a Nebraskan and part of Nebraska Army National Guard," added Isley. "My posing was not as good as I would've liked it to be, but I did my best and that's all that counts."

Final Results Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise

Individual Service Rifle Championship-Open

1st- Spc. Luke Kelley; 2nd- Sgt. Tate Higgins; 3rd- Lt. Col. Todd Stevens

Individual Service Rifle Championship-Novice

1st- Sgt. Benjamin Briggs; 2nd- Spc. Evan Carlson; 3rd- Pfc. Jonathan Young

Individual Service Pistol Championship-Open

1st- Staff Sgt. Jason Meyer; 2nd- Lt. Col. Todd Stevens; 3rd- Sgt. Tate Higgins

Individual Service Pistol Championship-Novice

1st- 2nd Lt. Travis Wahlmeier; 2nd- Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Rundell; 3rd- Spc. Eric Moseman

Gary Anderson EIC Individual Aggregate

1st- Sgt. Tate Higgins; 2nd- Staff Sgt. Nathanael Rutter; 3rd- Lt. Col. Todd Stevens

Staff CSM Combined Arms Individual Champion

1st- Lt. Col. Todd Stevens; 2nd- Staff Sgt. Nathanael Rutter; 3rd- Staff Sgt. Jason Meyer

Combat Pistol Team Championship

1st- Twilight Sparkle (209th Regional Training Institute) - (Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Miller, Staff Sgt. Anthony Jensen, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Goldapp and Staff Sgt. Nathanael Rutter)

2nd- ROC 1 (41st Rear Operations Center) - (Lt. Col. Todd Stevens, Spc. Jerome Chess, Spc. Jamason Shed and Sgt. Justin Knapp)

3rd- Rolling Thunder (Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company) - (Sgt. Christopher Clouse, Pfc. Ryan Dean, Pvt. Johnathon Albaugh and Pvt. Jephtha Willoughby)

Combat Rifle Team Championship

1st- ROC 1 - (Lt. Col. Todd Stevens, Spc. Jerome Chess, Spc. Jamason Shed and Sgt. Justin Knapp)

2nd- ROC 2 - (Pfc. John Allen, Capt. James Seibert, Staff Sgt. Joseph Serkiz and Spc. Thomas Sorensen)

3rd- Twilight Sparkle - (Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Miller, Staff Sgt. Anthony Jensen, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Goldapp and Staff Sgt. Nathanael Rutter)

Adjutant General's Combat Team Championship

1st- ROC 1 - (Lt. Col. Todd Stevens, Spc. Jerome Chess, Spc. Jamason Shed and Sgt. Justin Knapp)

2nd- Twilight Sparkle (209th RTI) - (Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Miller, Staff Sgt. Anthony Jensen, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Goldapp and Staff Sgt. Nathanael Rutter)

3rd- Omaha Dragons - (Staff Sgt. Erik Becker, Staff Sgt. Richard Pedersen, Sgt. Tate Higgins and Spc. Jacob Lee)



Photo by Spc. Heidi Krueger

Where Did It Go? Pfc. Eric Zimmerman, 1075th Transportation Company, and Staff Sgt. Jason Meyer, 267th Support Maintenance Company, work together to find Zimmerman's bullet holes while calculating his shooting scores, Aug. 12.

MARKSMANSHIP

continued from page 19.

have a lot of new Soldiers that got back from training and they really haven't had a chance to get range time in, so I think this a great opportunity for them."

"After being on leave after my recent deployment, I kind of wanted to get back into the training aspect and see the people I deployed with," said Raatz. "I wanted to improve my marksmanship skills, too."

One factor that came into play during the competition was not having enough gear for the Soldiers who recently returned from deployment.

"Little obstacles pop-up here and there, like some of the Soldiers didn't have any gear because it is still on the way back from being overseas," said Wagner, adding that the problem was solved when other teams and supporters of the competition came together to supply the gear.

Wagner added that he was pleased with the competition, especially the amount of support the shooters received.

"A lot of the supporters have been doing this for many years," said Wagner. "They really try to make the best matches for the competitors."