



# The DOUBLE EAGLE

"Twice the Citizen! Army Strong!"

JULY 2014, Vol. 3 No. 4



*INSIDE THIS ISSUE*

# ARMY RESERVE 20 BEST 14 WARRIOR



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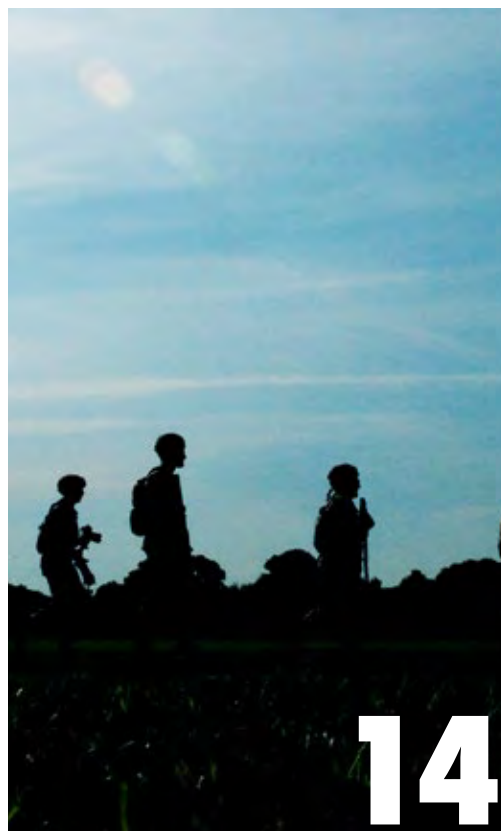
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## COVER STORY:

Sixteen of the 42 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior candidates pose for "fight photos" before the start of the Modern Army Combatives tournament at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior competition held June 22-27, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. The competition was held to determine the top noncommissioned officer and junior enlisted Soldier in the Army Reserve. (Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPASE)



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# DOUBLE EAGLE



JULY 2014 VOL. 3 NO. 4  
BEST WARRIOR SPECIAL EDITION

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
HEADQUARTERS,  
U.S. ARMY RESERVE COMMAND  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE,  
FORT BRAGG, N.C.

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## Then there were two ...

**F**orty-two U.S. Army Reserve noncommissioned officers and junior enlisted Soldiers arrived at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. full of hope and promise June 20.

Their goal was to test their own physical and mental limits to see if they had what it takes to become the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior winners.

Throughout the week, the "check engine light" came on for many of the Warriors. They faltered and fell by the side of the road.

Fatigue, heat, exhaustion, and blistered feet took their toll. The pain was too much to bear for some.

For others, their mental fortitude, that had been so strong at the beginning of the week, failed them. They too withdrew from the competition.

It almost seemed like something from *The Hunger Games*, just without the fatal price portrayed by those on the silver screen.

Still, others pushed through the pain and discomfort and set their sights on the finish.

Battered, bruised, and even bloodied, by the end of the week, there were 38 Warriors standing tall for the awards ceremony.

But there can only be two overall winners.

This year, Staff Sgt. Landon Nordby and Spc. Keegan Carlson overcame the heat and pain to become this year's Army Reserve NCO and Soldier of the Year.

They will now move on to the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition later this year at Fort Lee, Va.

In this issue of the Double Eagle, we bring you the stories of the Warriors who competed in this year's competition.

Compiled by members of the 372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment from Nashville, Tenn., and hand-picked public affairs journalists, the stories and images just a small snapshot of the men and women who serve as America's Warrior-Citizens.

They come from all walks of life, educational backgrounds, and military experience.

Even though there were only two overall winners, in reality, all who competed in this year's Best Warrior competition are winners because they were the "best of the best" from the 195,000-plus men and women serving in the U.S. Army Reserve.



Timothy L. Hale  
Editor



Timothy L. Hale, a U.S. Air Force veteran, is an award-winning photojournalist and editor of the USARC Double Eagle. A member of a number of professional organizations to include Nikon Professional Services, he also owns a photojournalism and graphic design service and freelances for an international photo wire service. The views expressed in this column are expressly his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Army Reserve Command, the Department of the Army, and/or the Department of Defense.





# Call him "The Protector"

Story & photos by SGT. BENJAMIN JOHN  
364th Press Camp Headquarters

JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST, N.J. - Comic book heroes stand for greatness. Some are driven by their past. Some are driving by their training. Some are driven by traumatic events. All are protectors of those around them.

"I love protecting," said Staff Sgt. Landon Nordby. "I care for people and that's what drives my military career. My favorite comic book character is Snake Eye from G.I. Joe"

In his civilian life, Nordby is a security supervisor for Section 8 housing complex in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The complex is in a rough neighborhood and crime is common.

"I get to run around and fight crime," said Nordby with excitement. "Many of my days at work I have to react under pressure and the Army has helped me with that."

If Nordby was a character in the comic books he read as a child, he would be a member of G.I. Joe. The broad-shouldered Nordby stands almost 6'2 and carries himself like a real American hero.

Right now, Nordby is competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

He is challenging 41 other Soldiers in events that tests their skills. They are all trying to come out on top as the Best Warrior. The competition calls upon all skills and abilities a "Joe" is required to have.

Nordby is a warrior that has served in Africa, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He did his job so well that one of the "Top Joes" took notice and personally recommended him for Ranger school.

Commanding Gen. David Petraeus "Top Joe" is one of the few people that has seen Nordby in action when he was a part of the protective service detail in Iraq. He impressed Petraeus so much, he was personally selected to join his protective service detail in Afghanistan as a member of the International Security Assistance Force protecting the general.

Ranger school updated Nordby's fighting skills and brought him into the ranks of squad leader. His duties as a military police officer, with the 79th Military

Police Company out of Wabasha, Minnesota, are to train new recruits into becoming a "Joe" like him.

We all look up to someone or something in life. The childhood dream of becoming a hero to others is Nordby's. Living by the Army values and being a warrior-citizen comes natural to him and the Best Warrior Competition is the perfect fit to test his abilities.

However, he said becoming a Best Warrior and a hero isn't just about physical stamina, it's also about overcoming the mental challenges like board appearances and written exams. He said knowing is half the battle. 🇺🇸

*EDITOR'S NOTE: In addition to winning the Best Warrior NCO of the Year title, Staff Sgt. Landon Nordby also recorded the highest score in the Army Physical Fitness Test.*



Staff Sgt. Landon Nordby, a military police officer and with the 200th Military Police Command, works through a scenario in a Reconfigurable Vehicle Tactical Trainer, June 23.



Staff Sgt. Landon Nordby, a military police officer with the 200th Military Police Command, reassembles an M240B machine gun as part of a WarriorTasks evaluation, June 23.



Staff Sgt. Landon Nordby, top, a military police officer with the 200th Military Police Command, gets the upper hand during the Modern Army Combatives Tournament, June 26.





Spc. Keegan Carlson, a civil affairs specialist with the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) and from Colorado Springs, Colo., plots his first point during the Night Land Navigation event at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, June 24, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. The Warriors were dropped off at 1 a.m. and had four hours to plot and find their map points in complete darkness. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

## There is no stopping him

By SGT. 1ST CLASS RYAN MATSON  
87th Support Command

JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST, N.J. - Many of the world's top runners and elite athletes have taken their shot at conquering the Manitou Incline in Colorado Springs.

About two thirds of the way up the grueling trail, which shoots more than 2,000 feet straight up the side of a mountain, is a point that allows one to go back to its base. Locals call this spot the 'Wimpout' point. It gives a hiker or runner a chance to go back to the bottom of the trail without conquering the steepest part of the Incline at the top.

You can bet Spc. Keegan Carlson, a 21-year-old civil affairs specialist with the 440th Civil Affairs Battalion from Fort Carson, Colorado, will never take the easy way out.

"He's a special person in the fact that he doesn't accept defeat or loss," Carlson's father, Ryan, said. "He simply refuses to lose - it may sound cliché, but

it's true. He will never quit."

Carlson has been scaling the Incline with a 75-pound ruck sack strapped to his back for the past several months in an attempt to gain the edge it takes to win the 2014 U.S. Army Best Warrior Competition, which takes place June 23 to 27 on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. Top Soldiers from the Army Reserve compete in a variety of military skills in an effort to claim the title of Best Warrior.

"I'm definitely here to win," he said.

Winning is something Carlson has achieved so far. He won his battalion Best Warrior competition, which allowed him to compete in the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command Best Warrior Competition April 24 at Fort Hunter Liggett, California.

After winning that competition, Carlson not only quit his job, but even took a break from college so

that he could devote all his time solely to training for the Army Reserve competition.

"I acknowledge the fact that this week is going to be a smoker, so I've been trying to focus a lot of emphasis on distance runs with a lot of weights," Carlson said.

With him every step of the way has been Carlson's sponsor in the competition, Sgt. 1st Class Angel Lechuga, also from the 440th.

"What Carlson has, above all others, is dedication to the uniform," Lechuga said.

"He takes time out of his personal life. He'd show up at 7 a.m. asking for training and he would continue until 11:30 or 12 at night, every night, then do it again. It gets me all giddy, because it reminds me of when I was a young junior Soldier just hungry for knowledge."

Carlson has known Lechuga since before entering basic combat training to join the Army, and has been a constant source of support ever since.

"He's my lion's heart," Carlson said.

With three brothers all serving on active duty in the Air Force, and father Ryan being a retired Air Force master sergeant, one might be surprised to find Carlson wearing an Army uniform.

The decision did not surprise his father in the least.

"He does his own thing," Ryan Carlson said. "He wanted to blaze his own trail."

Coming from a military family, Carlson said he was always interested in serving, but didn't know it was for him. Now that he has gotten his first taste of life in the military, however, the young Soldier said he is hooked.

"I wasn't sure if it was right for me, that I'd be able to adapt as well as my brothers did," Carlson said. "I want to pursue a degree and my goal now is to apply to West Point to see if I can get in."

They may seem like lofty goals for someone with 29 months in the military, but with his drive and determination, one would be a fool to bet against him.

It's just another mountain to climb. 🇺🇸

Spc. Keegan Carlson, a civil affairs specialist from Colorado Springs, with the 440th Civil Affairs Battalion, looks over the range before shooting at the 9 mm pistol qualification range during the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 23. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan C. Matson/87th Support Command)



# Just can't stop trying

Story by SGT. ANSHU PANDEYA  
318th Press Camp Headquarters

Sgt. Lance J. Clifford has the distinction of competing in the U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition for the third year in a row.

Most Reserve Soldiers never make it to this level even once.

"You just can't keep me away," he said.

His fighting spirit has pit him against 41 other Reserve Soldiers. Each of them has come here to win. Clifford fought and endured for two rounds in the Modern Army Combatives tournament. As hard as he fought, his opponent took him to the ground fast. He was injured and lost the match.

He didn't lose out of lack of preparation.

Clifford has been training in judo since high school. That would make it a dozen years. Later he transitioned into sambo. The two martial arts share similar elements. Judo fighters use their opponents' force against themselves. Sambo strikes with the same philosophy, but is of Russian origin.

The combatives tournament was just one of the many challenges he faced throughout the week during the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. The competition brought Soldiers bodies to their breaking point. During an eight-mile road march, a few of the Soldiers weren't able to finish. Clifford persevered. He had done this before.

The Army Physical Fitness Test was still there. The marks-



Sgt. Lance Clifford

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Saurel/416th TEC

manship ranges were still there. The uniform inspections were there. Some of the details may have changed, but the key challenges were there, and Clifford had already experienced them not just once, but twice.

Clifford just wouldn't take "No" for an answer.

He just really enjoys the experience and the preparation and journey it takes to get there.

The typical Soldier people picture when they think of the Best Warrior is an infantryman, a combat medic, or military police.

Clifford is a military intelligence analyst with the 364th Expeditionary Support Command. It's not a job people usually associate with warrior tasks.

"I do a lot of work behind a computer making PowerPoints and stuff like that, not the typical things that you think of when you think of Army training. So this is a really good way to go out and do the fun stuff."

Clifford is using what he has learned from his previous two

appearances at BWC at this year's competition.

"On some of the events, I definitely have a better idea of what I'm doing this go-around," he said. "I've definitely upped my [physical fitness] score. I got out and really hit land [navigation] and improved on that. Really all of it's kind of a challenge, so it's good to get a chance to work on it all."

So far he seems satisfied with his performance. "I think I'm doing okay," he said. "I think anyone can attest that they themselves could do better. I'm no exception to that, so I definitely could have been doing better out there, but I'm doing okay."

For him, it's not about the competition itself. It's about the journey. Getting there. It's about the training, the opportunity to go to schools, it's his thirst for knowledge. He trained for months traveling between Utah and Washington just to get here. Again.

This journey has not been in vain. The destination has been reached through the discipline he has learned each year.

On the civilian side, he is a freelance writer. Even in such a field, Clifford has taken his military experience with him. He writes content material to draw in audiences.

"I've taken a lot from the military approach to writing, just being more concise and upfront.

See **CLIFFORD**, Pg. 51



# Hong Kong missionary

Story by SGT. WILLIAM BATTLE  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Travel away from home gives some people the opportunity to find out who they want to be for the rest of their lives.

New experiences in foreign lands forge new ideas and perspectives as each day brings another adventure. One of these individuals was Keith Lewis of Gilbert, Arizona.

He comes to the Best Warrior Competition to challenge himself and test his limits as a Soldier.

The events of the competition are a way to train and find out what improvements a Soldier needs to their skills.

With the hopes of being able to take his experiences during the competition and help his fellow Soldiers advance, he believes that any soldier can be in the Best Warrior Competition if they have that desire.

"Every Soldier should be able to do these events," he said.

This philosophy of improving himself and helping others comes from his travel experiences before joining the Army.

When he was 19 years old, he volunteered his services to his church and went on a mission trip to China. It wasn't a mission to convert others to Christianity, it was a humanitarian mission where he spent two years with the people of Hong Kong helping whenever he saw people in need.

"Being over there made me who I am today," he said.

While there, his days con-



Spc. Keith Lewis

sisted of going to homes and asking if people needed food or help with any chores around their homes. It gave him the confidence to speak to people he didn't know, while also providing fulfillment with good deeds performed for others.

While in Hong Kong, he quickly learned to speak Chinese and even had a Chinese professor follow him around to study how he learned the language so quickly and easily.

"It took about two weeks being there before I knew enough Chinese to have simple conversations with the people in Hong Kong," he said.

During his time in China, he was unable to leave Hong Kong and go into mainland China. The government did not allow Christian missionaries to spread the gospel in country. Nor did they allow non-members of the church to attend Christian services. Violation of this law led to arrest.

Lewis explained that if a resident of mainland China wanted

to convert to Christianity, they generally sold all of their belongings to travel to Hong Kong to be baptized and become church members. When citizens showed up in Hong Kong for baptism, Lewis was one of the missionaries that would perform the ceremony.

During those two years, he was only allowed to call home twice a year; on Mother's Day and Christmas.

"I gave up two years of friends and family when most people my age were going to college," he said "but it was a great experience that I wouldn't trade for anything."

The biggest culture shock for Lewis was when he returned home to Arizona. People in Hong Kong live so close together and in such close quarters, that the large spaces here in the states was a little too much to handle for a while.

Everything he went through in China also prepared him for life in the Army. The periods of time away from home, being in unfamiliar territory, and living closely with others are all traits that began in China and were developed during his time in the Army.

His love of China continued as he enrolled in college to study Chinese language and culture. After three years of school, he transferred to the American Military College to study Counter Intelligence.

Participating in the Best

See **LEWIS**, Pg. 53

# Fighting “little brother” syndrome

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. RUFUS STUCKEY  
215th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Little brothers are often picked on, beat up and abused by their older brothers.

But as they grown up they are toughened and can take most anything life throws at them. Christopher Irizarry has a name for this.

“Ever since we were little, being the younger brother has put what I like to call the “little brother syndrome” in me. I have this competitive nature,” said Irizarry. “I can’t stand to lose.”

Spc. Christopher J. Irizarry has brought his little brother syndrome to the woods of New Jersey.

Irizarry is a licensed practical nurse with Alpha Company, 345th Combat Support Hospital on Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Florida. Representing the 3rd Medical Support Command, he is one of 42 soldiers competing in the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

Irizarry won two lower-level competitions to be selected to compete in this event.

The U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition tests Soldiers’ resiliency and warrior skills in events such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, M16 rifle and 9mm pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combatives, day and night land navigation, eight-mile ruck march, urban operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

When not competing or



**Spc. Christopher Irizarry**

training for warrior competitions, Irizarry is a full-time student at the University of Florida, majoring in Biological Sciences. He said he plans to continue on to medical school and become an emergency room doctor.

“I knew I wanted to be in the medical field when I enlisted,” Irizarry said. “Being a doctor is something I always wanted to be, it’s a job that has not only a lot of meaning, but a lot of value. You provide relief as a doctor.”

After almost a year and a half in medical training for the Army, Irizarry plans to use his training in his civilian life.

“I am going to go work as a nurse and stay sharp on my medical skills,” he said. “It is a perishable item, if you don’t use it, you lose it.”

“The Army has helped put me on the right track,” he said. “I have definitely learned a lot so far. I’ve gained some exposure to the medical field. Now I am more focused than ever on reaching my goal.”

With only two years in the

Army, Irizarry has proved he is committed to hard work.

“He’s a hard worker. He doesn’t quit. He’s always ready,” said Sgt. David Brooks, his sponsor for the competition.

Brooks from McAlpin, Florida, will be by Irizarry’s side throughout the competition to provide support and encouragement.

Brooks, a former Best Warrior competitor, said, “I first met him after a PT test - a young stud - I said, ‘Man, we’ve got this competition.’ Do you want to have fun in the Army or do you want to be just a regular Joe?”

The two have been working together ever since.

Irizarry gets his training from Brooks and he gets his competitiveness from his older brother.

Irizarry said, “I don’t know if he knows how much he instilled that competitive nature in me.”

His older brother, Jeremy, is currently on active duty in the Army stationed at Fort Drum, New York.

Jeremy told his little brother, “If you stay in the Army, the sky is the limit.”

The little brother syndrome clearly has Christopher Irizarry pushing his limits and reaching for the sky.

Only time will tell if his tough upbringing will push him onto the final round of competition at the Department of the Army Best Warrior. 🇺🇸

# It all started with a free pair of socks

Story by SGT. WILLIAM BATTLE  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

An advertisement for a free pair of socks 17 years ago started the unexpected journey of Staff Sgt. Antoni Bukowski of Montgomery, Illinois.

His father saw a television commercial advertising free socks and called the number to leave his information.

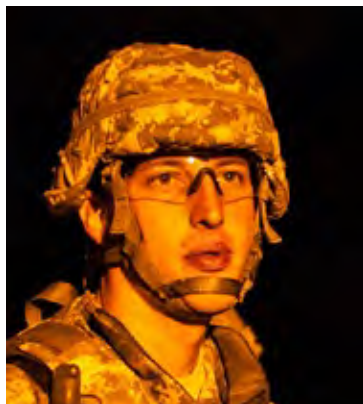
When the people called back looking for his father, he spoke with the caller and found out that she was an Army recruiter.

"Before I knew it, she was at my house and I was signing a contract," he said.

It was the sound of a challenge that ultimately swayed the young Bukowski to take the first steps on his Army adventure.

Representing the 1150th Transportation Company, he is a Train Crew Member who has served in the Army Reserve his entire career.

His participation in the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior



Staff Sgt. Antoni Bukowski

Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve

Competition was as unexpected as his entrance into military service.

As the runner up in his unit, the original winner was injured during combatives training and Bukowski was called to fill in just a week and a half before the first day of events.

"My sergeant major called me up and said 'you're the one to go,'" he said.

While he knows that his career is one of the longest amongst the competitors, he doesn't let that intimidate him.

"I'm in it to win it," he said. He also hopes to take more home than just the win.

"I want to train noncommissioned officers and a Soldiers in our company to compete in the next competition."

As he was trained by an NCO from his company to be in this competition, he wishes to pay that forward to the rest of his unit to watch them excel and succeed.

"I would like to pay that forward and hopefully get all of our Soldiers to where I am today," he said.

Much like the events of the Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, Bukowski's Army career has been a series of facing each and every challenge presented to him.

At a moment's notice he will be there giving his best to any task he is given with motivation, dedication, and a comfortable pair of socks. 🧦





# Calming his inner storm

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHEL SAURET  
416th Theater Engineer Command

Months ago, Sgt. Juan Jackson sat on a bus full of Soldiers staring out the window.

That moment. He remembers it still.

His palm supported his chin, arm propped up at the elbow against the window; hardly an image of a Warrior in most eyes.

The rest of the Soldiers on the bus joked and frolicked with a buzz of energy and high spirits.

Jackson's face, however, matched the mood of the Wisconsin late April weather.

Murky clouds blanketed the sky.

Rain started and stopped but mostly drizzled, making Soldiers wonder whether to bother with their ponchos and wet-weather jackets or just suck it up. The ground was a mixture of soft mud and patchy grass.

This moment - Jackson's window stare - is caught in a photograph depicting the waiting that unfolds between events at these types of competitions. It doesn't paint sadness or boredom or any intense drama, but fatigue.

"Right at that moment, I was stilling my heart, because I had not done good at the weapons qual," said Jackson, a resident of Lakewood, Washington. "So I was facing a difficult time with making sure that I continued to perform my best effort."

At the time, he was in the midst of the Best Warrior Competition hosted by the 412th and



**Sgt. Juan Jackson**

416th Theater Engineer Commands.

That turmoil would linger a while longer. Rain picked up again, and the schedule promised three hours of land navigation across the mountainous woods of Fort McCoy.

"Three hours," said Jackson, an internment specialist with the 493rd Military Police Company. "So you know that you're about to put in some work."

In fact, the course lasted longer than that. Competitors didn't finish until 10 p.m. that night and didn't go to sleep until almost midnight, before waking up again at 3 a.m. to brave a 6-mile ruck march.

From that photo of him looking out the window, it might be hard to guess that Jackson would be beaming two nights later when announced the Best Warrior winner for the 416th TEC in the noncommissioned officer category. That victory advanced him here: the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition.

After that win, he spent three straight weeks training. He filled his days with rigorous studying and even more rigorous fitness routines. He bear-crawled up hills, hit the gym and ran daily to maximize his body's potential.

This time around, the competition schedule has been more secretive, revealing only times and general event topics.

"I have no idea (what to expect next), but as each day passes, I get more and more juiced. I'm excited - I get more amped and pumped. So I'm just kind of excited to be doing this," said Jackson, who is a native of Rancho Cucamonga, California.

That's a far emotional stance from how he felt on that bus months ago.

That moment was a rare one; Jackson's personality is energetic. Confident. Infectious. He smiles when he talks, and there are few times when he's not joking around with fellow competitors. When he talks about leadership, caring for his fellow Soldiers or maintaining discipline, a quiet strength resides in his voice.

When the struggles come, he relies on meditation and self-focus to endure through the moment.

This practice of stilling his heart comes from both his faith in God and from the discipline of Muay Thai. Jackson has been training in the martial arts for

See **JACKSON**, Pg. 52

# I do it for him

Story & photo by SPC. AMBER SANDERS  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A major ingredient to being the Best Warrior is motivation.

Spc. Joshua Hawn gets his motivation from his newborn son.

A little over a week ago, he and his wife Sarah, became parents for the first time.

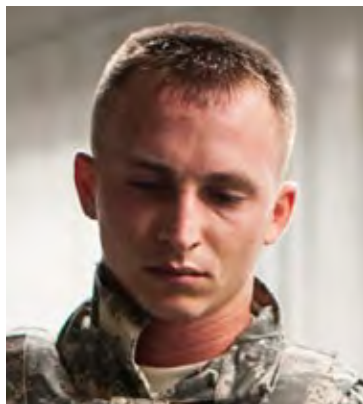
"Nothing can compare to that feeling," Hawn said. "Now your responsible for another life. Everything I take from this experience I want to be able to take back to my son."

Hawn is one of 19 junior enlisted Soldiers competing to be the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior junior.

The competition began June 23 and runs through June 27.

The Best Warrior consists of enlisted Soldiers in the ranks of private to sergeant first class who have won their local command levels. The winner will go on to compete to be this year's U.S. Army Best Warrior at Fort Lee, Virginia.

Hawn said he decided to participate in the competition to push



Spc. Joshua Hawn

Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve

himself to the next level.

"I want to push myself physically, mentally and personally as a Soldier," he said.

Dealing with the emotional aspect of being a new father, Hawn is torn between wanting to win the competition or be home with his son.

"It's hard," he said. "My wife wants me home and I want to be there for her."

A native of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Hawn enlisted as a Citizen Soldier in 2011 as a visual information equipment operator with the 78th Training Division.

His awards and decorations

include the Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and Army Service Ribbon.

"I enjoy serving in the military, while still being able to be involved in the civilian sector," he said.

Hawn works for Dish Network as a field service technician.

He has a Bachelor of Science in biblical studies with an emphasis on missions from the Philadelphia Biblical University.

"When my finances are good, I would like to become a missionary," he said.

Hawn said when its all said and done his most important achievement will be becoming a great father and role model for his son.

"Everything I do now, I do it for him," He said.

Whether he wins or loses Best Warrior, Hawn is happy he can one day share all he has learned from this competition with his son. 🇺🇸



# 2014 ARMY BEST WARRIOR





# Y RESERVE R CANDIDATES



U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior candidates make their way to board a CH-47 Chinook at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, June 24, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (Photo by Sgt. Hector Corea/366th MPAD)

# Rising from the ashes

Story & photo by SGT. BENJAMIN JOHN  
364th Press Camp Headquarters

"I was a meth addict," said Skyler Cordova. "I was ashamed of the person I was looking at in the mirror."

That moment shocked Cordova into changing his life forever.

He needed to get away from the methamphetamine that was controlling his life and leading him toward self destruction, prison and probably death.

"I went and joined the Army [in 2001] and chose to be stationed in Germany because it was as far away from Phoenix as I could possibly get," said Cordova. "And It saved my life."

The U.S. Army gave him the proper tools he needed to achieve his goals and the discipline to find the inner strength to walk away from addiction by providing another path.

Within the first six years of Sgt. 1st Class Skyler Cordova's military career he held every leadership position in the infantry and twice deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In 2008, he left active duty service and joined the U.S. Army Reserve where he was assigned to a drill sergeant battalion. He is currently a senior drill sergeant with Alpha Company 1-415th, 2nd Brigade, 95th Division, 108th Training Command.

He said he decided to compete in the U.S. Army Reserve 2014 Best Warrior Competition, because he wanted to be an example to his other troops.



**Sgt. 1st Class Skyler Cordova**

"I decided to lead by example," said Cordova. "I'm taking one event at a time and I know it will be challenging."

The BWC gives Soldiers in the U.S. Army Reserve an opportunity to step up and take on events competing against each other to find out who will go on to represent the U.S. Army Reserve as a whole at the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

The military also gave Cordova the tools to attend college through the use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. He graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's of science in psychology from Arizona State University. He is also now in a doctoral program at Argosy University in Phoenix, Arizona.

The discipline I got in the military helped me succeed," said Cordova. "I treat school like receiving a mission."

Cordova said the U.S. Army fills a void in his life, but he also gains strength by helping others who struggle with substance and alcohol addiction.

"He's driven by the ability to help people," said Rachel Cordova, Skyler's wife. "He wants to be that person. He has the ability to make people laugh in any situation. He gets them to open up and talk about anything in their life."

Every Sunday morning, the Cordova household hosts a group of about 50 men that are recovering from substance abuse. The group has breakfast and conducts meetings about how their lives have improved through the use of a recovery program. Every other week, they host a couples meeting for people dealing with substance abuse and their supporting spouses.

"My whole life now, is geared towards recovery," said Cordova. "I spend six to 10 hours a week working with other addicts and alcoholics. I see other people like me and I can show them a way out."

Cordova rose from the ashes of his past life and is back living in Phoenix, Arizona, as a new man ready to be an example to others. He exemplifies that no matter what happens in life, people can chose a different path. For Cordova, it wasn't an easy path out of addiction, but he found a military family to give him a new life. Now he's trying to be that support system for others who need it.

Now when Cordova looks in the mirror, a strong-jawed, focused Soldier with a crew cut glares back ready to take on any challenge in life. 🇺🇸

# The threat beneath the ground

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHEL SAURET  
416th Theater Engineer Command

Unlike the buried bombs he faced in Iraq, the danger beneath the earth's shifting layers is quiet. Not explosive or sudden, but gradual.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Kearns knows this.

From 2003-2004, he was a combat engineer in Iraq responsible for "route clearance," a term that wasn't officially coined until later on. Now, he's a trainer for the 75th Training Division, but his life in Houston revolves around the science of substrata movements.

This week, however, he's out of the big city trekking miles across swampy woods and somber range roads. He's been competing all week against the top Soldiers in the Army Reserve for the 2014 Best Warrior Competition. The competition is designed to evaluate the best of its Soldiers across various skills, from warrior knowledge to physical fitness and mental grit.

"I'm sore everywhere. My Achilles tendon hurts like crazy. I have blisters the size of these muffins on the bottom of my feet," he said, pointing at the rolls on his breakfast plate.

That morning he had just finished 8 miles in less than 3 hours. Beneath his feet, however, the earth's layers might shift a few millimeters per year.

Kearns is working toward his geology doctorate in sub-surface studies. He leads a team of grad-



**Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Kearns**

uate students, using geo-positioning technology to track the earth's movement beneath Houston's cityscape. With more than 2 million residents living across 600 square miles of land, those millimeters could lead to centimeters. Those centimeters could lead to fractures and instability to more than 360 high-rise buildings.

Cracks in pipes and walls could result in millions of dollars worth of damage. His aim is to help prevent that. Kearns wouldn't discuss his thesis in detail, not until he's had a chance to defend it, but he alluded to the dangers of pulling water from the earth leading to potential shifts in the ground.

"There's something fascinating about natural science," said Kearns. "Understanding geology is sort of like understanding a crime scene."

Being away from Houston has been rough for Kearns this week. Not just because of the miles, or the four-hour sleep nights or even

the 165-pound dummy lift, which Kearns carried with three other Soldiers for an entire mile.

"My professors generally say that if you take more than a Sunday afternoon off, then you're probably not going to make it through a Ph.D. program, or at least not the one we're in," said Kearns.

Spending a week away from the University of Houston's campus might as well be a year sabbatical. He usually works from 7:00 in the morning to 10 at night.

Even though Kearns' adviser is not a U.S. citizen, he has been extremely supportive of his military commitment. Dr. Guoquan Wang is a Chinese immigrant with U.S. residency who earned his Ph.D. from Peking University. Kearns refers to Dr. Wang as a friend and not just an adviser. Despite being on a stringent project schedule, Wang encouraged Kearns to participate in the Best Warrior Competition.

According to Kearns, Wang appreciates the hard-working mentality of the military culture. In Wang's eyes, military discipline helped his professional studies. He selected Kearns specifically for the project manager job because of the leadership skills he learned in the Army.

"Before I joined the Army, my grades were awful. After I joined, I came back and I was on the dean's

See **KEARNS**, Pg. 49



# Despite adversities, this Soldier succeeds

Story & photo by SPC. AMBER SANDERS  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Vanderlaan had just left training.

He was preparing for his second division level Best Warrior competition.

On his cruiser motorcycle, Vanderlaan was traveling about 45 miles per hour when all of a sudden a vehicle cut him off making a left turn in front of his motorcycle.

Vanderlaan, a native of Calabonia, Michigan, joined the Army Reserve in 2004 as a human resource specialist.

He has since graduated from college with bachelor degrees in criminal justice and psychology.

He has also deployed to Kosovo, and become an Army career counselor.

During his time in service he has earned numerous awards and decorations.



**Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Vanderlaan**

Now, he is competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior competition, here, representing Army Reserve Careers Division.

Vanderlaan said being an Army Reserve Soldier means he sets standards higher, balances a separate life and strives to be tactfully and technically sound.

He also said he chose to compete in Best Warrior to evaluate

his soldiering skills.

"I am competitive," Vanderlaan said. "Competition allows me to compare my abilities and to improve where needed."

Training for the competition was not a difficult task for him. His normal routine keeps him in shape.

"I workout six days a week," Vanderlaan said. "I do MMA (Mixed Martial Arts), jiu-jitsu, strength training and instruct a circuit training class at my reserve unit three times a week."

Vanderlaan said he loves working out and a lot of his motivation comes from his wife, Kayleigh Vanderlaan.

"We workout together," he said. "She is my best friend."

With the motivation from his wife and his drive and determination, he refuses to quit. 🇺🇸



# Swimming with the 'gators

Story & photo by SPC. AMBER SANDERS  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

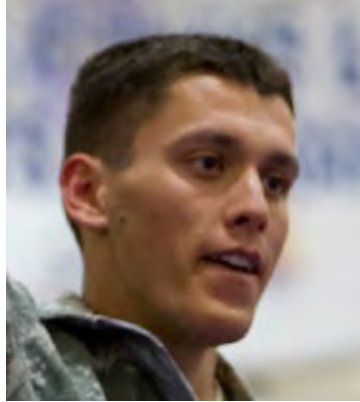
Imagine jumping out of a moving UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter 20 feet in the air and racing other competitors to shore. This is the type of activity Staff Sgt. Steven Alvarez enjoys.

"I thought it was really fun," he said. "There were life guards out there throwing flash bangs [stun grenades] into the pond to get the alligators out of the waters."

Whether in alligator infested waters or the forests of New Jersey, Alvarez lives to compete in dangerous situations.

He is among an elite group of Soldiers participating in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition here June 23 through June 27. The competition consists of enlisted Soldiers in the ranks of private to sergeant first class who have won at their local command levels. They are representing their command and facing-off to see who will be named the U.S. Army Reserve's Best Warriors.

The 5-foot 9-inch tall, slimly built Alvarez bettered noncommissioned officers at to previous in



**Staff Sgt. Steven Alvarez**

two competitions in order to participate in this year's Best Warrior.

"I have done a couple other competitions before and they are all fairly alike," he said in an even tone. "It's all military geared, so I am prepared."

Born and raised in the small town of Boonville, California, Alvarez joined the active Army in 2009 as a wheeled vehicle mechanic at the age of 20. He spent most of his active career in Germany and deployed for 15 months to Baghdad. After four years of active service, Alvarez joined the Army Reserve only a month later. He still works as mechanic in the

reserve as well as his non-military occupation.

"I chose to serve in the reserve because I wanted to continue to service my country after my service in active duty," he said. "I am able to serve my country and also my community."

Alvarez, 27, is a member or the 91st Training Division at Fort Hunter Liggett, California and represents the 84th Training Command.

"I chose to compete in the competition because I would like to push myself past my comfort area," Alvarez said. "Being in this competition means to me that I will be participating in a time honored tradition."

Alvarez said he is hopeful yet humble about how he will fair in this year's competition.

"I'm not expecting to win first but I'm going to try my best and not give up on anything," he said.

After swimming with alligators, competing with the Best Warriors in the Army Reserve doesn't phase Alvarez. 🇺🇸



# Setting his sights on victory

Story & photo by SGT. HECTOR COREA  
366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

It's dusk and the sun slowly lowers in humid air over the woods of New Jersey.

Brushing the sweat from his eyes, Staff Sgt. Anthony Diaz looks down his sights, trying to ignore the buzz of cicadas in the woodline.

In the prone position, Diaz attentively waits for the command.

"Place your selector switch on fire and watch your lanes," says a mechanical voice through loud-speakers.

As his grip tightens, eyes squint, and breath slows, the first of many shots rings out in the twilight.

Diaz, a chemical operator specialist and platoon sergeant with the 374th Chemical Company, traveled more than a thousand miles before finding himself on a weapons range in Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The Corona, California native traveled from his unit station for a reason - the chance compete among the best in the Army Reserve.

"I'm eager to compete and I want to put on a good show for the command," said Diaz, an 11-year veteran of the Army. "The Best Warrior Competition is a way to stay as sharp as possible and continue to grow as a Soldier."

Diaz is one of 42 competitors vying to win the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. The multi-day event consists of various Soldier tasks and battle drills, including an 8-mile ruck



Staff Sgt. Anthony Diaz

march, Army Physical Fitness Test, rifle marksmanship, land navigation, and several mystery events.

"When it comes to [these competitions,] it's like a fire comes to life inside Diaz," said Staff Sgt. Ross Wilbanks, a multichannel transmissions systems operator-maintainer with the 453rd Chemical Battalion. Wilbanks is sponsoring Diaz during the competition by mentoring and coaching him.

"It's interesting to see how other competitors boast, while Diaz is quiet and reserved," said Wilbanks. "That's because his actions speak for themselves."

His actions have spoken volumes, both on and off-duty. He is an 11-year veteran with three combat deployments under his belt. From dismounted patrols to warrior tasks, Diaz brought his skills to the previous Best Warrior Competitions hosted by the 505th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade and won. He plans to use that knowledge base to win at the

USARC-level and advance to the 2014 Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

"I've learned a great deal from my deployments," said Diaz. "I want to represent the Chemical Corps with an airtight, exciting performance - perfection," said Diaz.

"Target down!" says the mechanical voice.

Diaz has many targets off the range as well. Diaz is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Business at California State University, San Bernardino. He is also a candidate for an officer commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. After that, he plans to devote at least 20 years of his life to service in the Army. Diaz feels the Army has been and will continue to be a focal point in his life.

"After high school I was faced with three decisions: school, work, or military," said Diaz. "I chose the Army - one of the best decisions of my life."

"Target up!" dictates the mechanical voice.

Diaz shifts in his fighting position. Pop. Pop. Pop. Targets go down in a cloud of dust.

"In all my time in two different [military] branches, [Diaz] is one of the most focused and disciplined people I've ever met," said Wilbanks. "I'm sure he'll come out on top."

See **DIAZ**, Pg. 49



# Nigerian-born Soldier seeks top title

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. RUFUS STUCKEY  
215th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

At 19 years old, his family migrated to the U.S. from Nigeria. Twelve years later, he is a full-time Army Reserve Soldier competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior competition.

"Most people wouldn't migrate if they had it good where they were at, and it was the same case with my parents," said Staff Sgt. Folarin L. Durosawo.

Now 30, Durosawo is a health care specialist with 456th Area Support Medical Company out of Somersworth, New Hampshire, and a member of the Active Guard and Reserve. AGR Soldiers serve full time to provide support to the unit members.

Both, AGR and traditional part-time Army Reserve Soldiers are competing for Best Warrior.

The competition tests Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in physical fitness, rifle and pistol marksmanship, hand-to-hand combat, land navigation, 8-mile ruck march, urban operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

Durosawo's upbringing had taught him to look for opportunities to succeed in everything he does.

"Growing up in a country and not having much, you tend to have the drive to want to succeed wherever you go, whenever you have the opportunity," Durosawo said. "Ultimately, I do have the drive to want to do everything I can to succeed, especially in this



**Staff Sgt. Folarin Durosawo**

competition."

After growing up in Nigeria, Durosawo's family migrated to the U.S., settling in Dallas, Texas.

He now lives in New Hampshire with his wife, Adedimpe, and their 2-year-old daughter, Eniola.

Things weren't always bad growing up in Nigeria for Durosawo.

"The first ten years of my life," he said. "You could say my family was a middle-class family. I went to a private school all the way until I was in the fifth grade - it was somewhat of a decent upbringing."

He was enrolled in college in Nigeria and was dating his future wife. He had just finished his first year of college pursuing a degree in demographics and social statistics, but his plans changed.

Durosawo said things changed when his father lost his job as an accountant with the Nigerian Government after about 15 years. They could no longer afford to do many of the things they had grown accustomed to.

His family decided to move to the land of opportunity - the United States.

"When I came here I was trying to find schools that had something similar to that [a degree in demographics and social statistics]," Durosawo said. "I didn't really find anything."

A month later, with the help of his sister, he found himself in the Army.

"My sister was the one who called the recruiter on my behalf - she was supposed to join, too," but his sister never did, he said. "She was supposed to join the reserves and I was supposed go active - we still talk about it, Ætill today."

Durosawo admits he was considering the military before his sister put the wheels in motion.

"I thought about serving," he said. "I wanted something that was tangible - the military was definitely the right path for that. I wanted discipline and the chance to serve. It was during the time - with the whole thing - with Afghanistan and I wanted to do my part."

He did his part with two deployments to Iraq and continues every day with plans to stay until retirement.

He joined the Army late in 2002 and left for basic training in Jan. 2003. In 2007, after several years on active duty he transferred to the Army Reserve.

See **DUROSAWO**, Pg. 49

# Don't believe the hype

Story by SPC. AMBER SANDERS  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The transition from active duty to the Army Reserve was not an easy decision for Staff Sgt. Robert Jones.

While on active duty, he served as an infantryman, a drill instructor and deployed twice to Afghanistan.

During his deployments, his duties included an M249 assault rifle operator, a rifle squad leader and a fire team leader.

"On active duty, you hear a lot of rumors about the Reserve," said Jones. "They say these guys are lazy, they're not tough."

Jones, now a member of the Army Reserve and a participant in the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, no longer believes the hype.

"When you go to these



Staff Sgt. Robert Jones

competitions and meet these guys, you're like, 'Wow!'" he said. "These guys are outstanding!"

A native of Somerset, Kentucky, Jones has served in the Army 11 years. Eight years active duty and three years in the Reserve. During his career, he has completed numerous schools to include; Airborne, Combat lifesaver, Air

Assault and Rappel Master school.

He is currently a Warrior Leader Course instructor at the Noncommissioned Officer Academy here and is also pursuing a degree in information technology management.

As a WLC instructor, Jones stays in shape, and his normal activities served as his training for Best Warrior.

He said he was looking forward to many of the events.

"I love land nav (navigation), it's kind of my thing," he said. "I also like the 9 mm and M16 stuff as well."

Jones said he decided to participate in the competition because he likes a challenge.

"I challenge myself just to stay proficient," he said. 🇺🇸



# Carrying on the desire to serve

Story by SGT. WILLIAM BATTLE  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Maglott has known since he was young that he wanted to help people in any way that he could. His father was a firefighter and police officer for 35 years, inspiring Maglott to follow in his footsteps.

"I've always had the desire to serve," he said.

In his civilian life, he is further dedicated to serving his community as a career fire fighter and EMT. It is this compassion for his community and the people he serves with that makes Maglott a formidable competitor.

Living in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and serving with the 7236th Medical Support Unit as the Sexual Harassment/ Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) unit victim advocate, he continues a tradition of serving his fellow Soldiers that he started



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPA&E

**Staff Sgt. Jeremy Maglott**

when he enlisted as a Military Police Officer.

He made the transition from Military Police officer to Health-care Specialist as a way to gain skills that would help him better serve others in new ways.

This dedication to his fellow Soldiers has been the focus of his 12 year career.

With the philosophy that we serve each other as well as our

country, he is an advocate and protector of those that defend.

"One thing I've always been keen on is that Soldiers are taken care of," he said "I love taking care of Soldiers."

The drive to succeed and excel drives Maglott to find better ways and push past any obstacles that stand in his way.

His participation in the Best Warrior Competition is not about competing with his fellow Soldiers, it is about challenging himself and gauging his own skills to see where he needs to improve and expand on his abilities.

Each improvement that he makes to himself is an improvement that he can apply to his passion of service.

"The Army is a big Family and we have to watch out for each other," he said. 🇺🇸





# Don't judge a book by its cover

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS LYMARI SANCHEZ  
1st Mission Support Command

He's the oldest competitor in the U.S. Army Reserve competing for the title of this year's Best Warrior.

"The unit thought that I was an outstanding choice for this competition, but to be honest, I thought I was too old, but look where I am," said Staff Sgt. Victor M. Ramos.

At 46, he's older than all 41 of the other Soldiers living in the barracks with him this week.

While some people at that age will spend their time playing golf, Ramos, a paralegal noncommissioned officer, prepared himself for the biggest challenges in his military career.

Ramos, assigned to the 128th Legal Operation Detachment, is competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition representing the U.S. Army Legal Command.

From a humble farm family in Mexico, Ramos was born and raised in Los Angeles.

He enlisted at the age of 18 in the United States Marine Corps and served four years active duty as an ammunition technician.

As a Marine, he participated in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990.

By 1992, he joined the Marine Corps Reserve.

He finished his tour in 1996. He married, had two children and pursued a quiet life as a civilian.

After being away from the military for five years, a friend convinced him to put his boots



Staff Sgt. Victor Ramos

and uniform back on, and enlist in the U.S. Army Reserve.

"When I joined the U.S. Army Reserve, my plan was to test it out. To my surprise, I liked it," he said.

I like the legal command. I like the people. I like the Army Reserve and everything about it," he said while getting ready to perform his next task in the competition.

He moved on to the search and seizure event after getting up at midnight to measure his abilities in the swamps of Fort Dix, New Jersey, for the night land navigation course.

"I am really excited to be participating and enjoy this opportunity," said Ramos.

He added, he never expected the level of mental and physical challenges.

"I am going to do my best, now I feel more confident and more relaxed. If I can do it, anyone can," he said with a smile on this face.

In 2013, Ramos participated in his eighth consecutive Bataan

Memorial Death March. The event in New Mexico is one of the top 30 marathons in the United States.

He encourages his Soldiers to also participate and draws strength from the preparation for that challenge.

"As a Soldier, a typical day for me is get up early in the morning, get ready physically and mentally, to do my work and do my best in my job. That's how I do it here," added Ramos.

With a life full of responsibilities and the support of his wife and five kids, he challenges himself to complete the Best Warrior Competition and bring his experiences back to his Soldiers.

"I am promoting this in my lane of Soldiers and supporting them to train and practice to participate next year and be their sponsor," said Ramos.

Staff Sgt. Ramos left his paralegal books aside to gear up and carry a weapon to compete against the finest in the Army Reserve.

He said participating in the competition is something he never imagined he would be a part of prior to his retirement when he enlisted 13 years ago.

As the oldest competitor in this year's competition, he has his work cut out for him.

However, he hasn't slowed down and his experiences might just propel him to the final round at the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition. 🇺🇸

# The Chameleon

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS RYAN MATSON  
87th Support Command

Staff Sgt. Kristopher Stallard is a chameleon.

He can adapt to survive in any environment. But unlike the chameleon who will merely survive, Stallard will flourish.

In his eight years, six months in the military, Stallard, currently a medic with the 426th Civil Affairs Battalion, has held four military occupational specialties: multi-channel transmission systems operator, transportation management coordinator, information technology specialist - and has done well in each one.

"He can fix somebody's computer, he can help build somebody's resume, he can show Soldiers how to do different Army Warrior tasks, he knows different Army doctrine and training publications and where to find information. It's one of his top strengths," said Sgt. 1st Class Alec Appleton, who serves with Stallard in the 426th Civil Affairs Battalion.

Now, Stallard has his sights set on winning the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 23 to 27.

To do so, he will have to beat 41 of the top Soldiers in the Army Reserve in events ranging from shooting and ruck marching to answering board questions and even mystery events.

"These events expose what you're weakest at and that's what's important to me," Stallard said.

"I want to build around what



**Staff Sgt. Kristopher Stallard**

I'm weakest at and not just continually do the things I'm strong at."

Appleton, who is also Stallard's sponsor in the event, has been training with Stallard for about eight months for Best Warrior.

He said Stallard's wide range of knowledge will be a huge advantage in the contest.

Having gone through the grueling Army Mountain Warfare school, where Soldiers must scale mountains with heavy ruck sacks at high altitudes won't hurt either, Appleton added.

Next month Stallard will begin training in yet another MOS, civil affairs. In addition to all the training he has done through learning different jobs in the Army, Stallard has also completed several rigorous Army schools besides Mountain Warfare, to include Airborne school, Air Assault school and the Rappel Master course.

"The highlight of my career has been being versatile," Stallard said. "I've been fortunate through-

out my career to experience different MOSs and realms of support. It shows what a broad spectrum our profession is - it doesn't matter what your MOS is - you could wind up anywhere and be doing something completely different than what you were trained to do. You just need to remain adaptive."

Stallard's medical MOS came about after Stallard's father had a stroke. He spent a year with his mother taking care of his father early in his military career. Now, the 28-year-old Fontana, California native, is pursuing a degree in nursing.

"The deterioration of my father's health just opened up that whole realm of how little I understood with the complexities of the body," Stallard said.

He said he often felt helpless simply because he did not have a solid understanding of what his father was going through.

Stallard's outside interests are as diverse as the numerous jobs he has held in the military. He has tried everything from music to roller hockey.

"I'm probably as atypical as guys come," Stallard said. "I do a little bit of everything. I guess that's Southern California for you - you're exposed to so much."

Stallard laughs when he thinks about how he originally joined the Army.

"It started out with friends

See **STALLARD**, Pg. 50

# Relying on combat experience

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHEL SAURET  
416th Theater Engineer Command

When Staff Sgt. James Thornton reported to Fort Jackson for his battalion's Best Warrior competition, he got a surprise.

"Where's all your stuff? You're competing!" they told him.

Originally, that wasn't the plan.

He thought he was coming to serve as cadre: to help run the weapon qualification range as the safety officer.

Instead, he drove back home (fortunately, just an hour away), packed his combat gear and rushed back. Someone gave him a copy of the Army study guide, and he did his best on the fly.

He won that competition and moved up to the Theater Engineer Command (TEC) competition, hosted by the 412th and 416th TECs at Fort McCoy, Wis., in late April.

"I got to do absolutely zero train-up for the TEC level," said Thornton, living in Spartanburg, S.C.

That would make two competitions in a row: something that might seem like a troublesome pattern - lazy, distracted, procrastinator.

How is such a Soldier expected to compete in the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition?

Except, Thornton is anything but those things.

Rather, he's a portrayal of what an Army Reserve Soldier's life often looks like.

In his civilian life, Thornton



**Staff Sgt. James Thornton**

works 15 to 19-hour days as an emergency tire technician.

"I'm the guy who goes out on the side of the interstate and change tractor and trailer tires," he said.

Sometimes, he gets calls for a job late into the night after he thought his day was done. Plus he has a 9-year-old son and another baby girl on the way.

When asked about his personal interests on his data sheet, Thornton wrote: "All work, no play."

After the battalion-level competition, Thornton went straight into a three-week annual training with his unit conducting route clearance and base defense. Again: no time to study. He woke regularly at 4:00 a.m. and rarely went back to sleep before midnight. He's a platoon sergeant for the 323rd Engineer Company, keeping his life busy with administrative requirements even after battle assembly is over.

"It really is (hard to train) to be honest with you. Sometimes I

get home, and if I'm lucky, I get home by 5:30, 6 o'clock, and be able to go running, but most of the time, I get a phone call interrupting my run to go do other work," he said.

His ambitions have changed over time. Life will do that. When he first joined the Army, he had high hopes to collect as many specialized tabs he could fit on his shoulder. Unfortunately, those school seats are very limited, even more so for reserve Soldiers. Yet, competing as a best Warrior has given him a new perspective of the Soldiers around him.

"All I ever wanted to do was special forces (type) stuff - and getting up here with these guys is like a dream come true. I've always wanted to be the best, and nowadays, it's getting where I can get deployed and try out with the best, you know? And I love it," he said.

These Soldiers really do represent the best of all the commands across the Army Reserve. Unfortunately, this has been the third competition in a row where Thornton has barely had a chance to study or prepare. While his competitors were disassembling and reassembling rifles and 9 mm pistols for practice, Thornton watched his baby girl on the ultrasound monitor. Or forced a wheel lug loose as traffic blazed past him a few feet away.

See **THORNTON**, Pg. 50



# The Song of a Warrior

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS LYMARI SANCHEZ  
1st Mission Support Command

Every night before bed, he sings Mexican lullabies to his 2-year-old daughter.

For this week, however, his music comes from the sound of rifle ranges, feet stomping across the hot pavement, gear clinging and a ruck sack shifting across his back as he moves from place to place.

Staff Sgt. Francisco Vargas, a native from Las Vegas, has a passion for music.

His father gave him his first guitar when he was 15.

Since then, he taught himself how to play and never took classes, but plays every night to his little 2-year-old daughter.

"I am going to make it to the end, I think the competitors are doing really good; there's a lot of sergeants with a lot of experience," said Vargas while getting ready to perform his next task in the competition.

"I wish I could have brought my guitar with me to relax during down time," he said.

This week, he's among the top Soldiers in the Army Reserve to see who will claim the title of Best Warrior.

Back home, his wife of 13 years - high school sweethearts - waits for him.

They met in the church where his father was a minister, and from there on, his wife has always been very supportive of his career.

Now, she sends her love from afar after he searched vehicles for explosives and getting up at mid-



**Staff Sgt. Francisco Vargas**

night to trek the swamps of Fort Dix, New Jersey.

This week he endured road marches, land navigation and other events that challenged his warrior skills.

"This experience helps me to be a better leader," said Vargas, who counts the days until the end of the competition, so he can return home to sing to his daughter again.

Vargas enlisted the first time in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and spent five years out of the military when his tour was complete.

But that was not enough for Vargas; he wanted more.

After listening to his Army friends about their great opportunities and their experiences, he decided to try it.

"Being prior service didn't give me an advantage, but there are a few things that I was good at it while I was in the Marines: like land navigation and firing weapons," said Vargas who deployed twice, in 2003 with the Marine Corps Reserve in Iraq and again

in 2010 with the Army Reserve to Afghanistan.

He understands the level of challenges that he needs to overcome during the competition and the well-trained Soldiers he is competing against to become the 2014 USARC Best Warrior.

Though he misses his family back home, Vargas has his good friend with him through the competition.

"I am here for him a 100 percent. He is genuinely one of the few Soldiers that motivates people, the way he push it through, and his mental stability makes him a great Soldier," said Staff Sgt. Ricardo Ramirez, Vargas' sponsor for the competition.

Sponsors serve as coaches for the competitors. They are there to encourage them through their grueling challenges.

"I would take a bullet for him. My job as a sponsor is to take care of him, and be his main moral support during this process, but I think he is doing a great job," said Ramirez while remembering the first day.

Win or lose, Vargas said he will go back home to his unit and encourage others to participate in future competitions.

Meanwhile, his daughter will wait for her daddy to hear his lullabies again. 🎵



# Firefighter and thrill-seeker

Story by SGT. ANSHU PANDEYA  
318th Press Camp Headquarters

Adrenaline junkie may be a good word to describe Staff Sgt. Justin A. Wright. He's gone from firefights in Iraq and Afghanistan to fighting fires in California.

Wright is an infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade, 100th Division (Institutional Training), 80th Training Command (The Army School System) and is competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. He has served for 10 years, more than four of them on active duty with the 82nd Airborne Division.

He admits there are some differences serving as an infantryman on active duty versus reserve.

"There's a little bit of an adjustment period, but it's still the Army, so Soldiering is still the same."

As a civilian, Wright is a wildland firefighter and member of the Mendocino Hotshots, a hand crew in northern California. The Augusta, Maine native moved to Chico, California because he thought it would be a good place to be a wildland firefighter.

Hotshots are members of an elite group of wildland firefighters. They fight fires in some of the most remote and inaccessible locations.

"It just looked fun," he explained. "It's probably the closest thing to being an infantryman in the civilian world. You still eat MREs (Meals, Ready-to-Eat), sleep in the dirt, get dirty and



Staff Sgt. Justin Wright

work hard.

Wright decided to leave active duty so he could be a member of the hotshot crew.

"Every person is very important. Everyone has their role. There are two captains, two squaddies, then there are lead firefighters, and a superintendent. Each are broken into two different modules," he said. "We use tools, hand tools that we make, and chainsaws to cut firebreaks. To stop the fire, we don't use water. We work with helicopters."

Some of the skills Wright picked up as an infantryman transfer to his job as a wildland firefighter and vice versa.

"What I've brought from the Army, and I think [the firefighters] would agree with me, is leadership," he said. "Discipline is a big thing especially in a job that is dangerous. We're not always in danger, but it is a dangerous job. There is inherent risk there, so being disciplined really helps. And I learned that directly from the Army."

Physical fitness and teamwork are also crucial elements required of the job.

"When I first became a firefighter, I wasn't in a lead position, so I came from being a sergeant in the Army, team leader, squad leader, and then I was low man on the totem pole again. Definitely being in the Army helped me to transition into that and get back up to a leadership position," he said.

As if being a hotshot wasn't thrilling enough, Wright wants to be a smokejumper.

"You still fight fires with hand tools and chainsaws, but you don't have to hike to get to the fire most of the time," he said. "You parachute in. Next year, providing I stay healthy and barring any injuries or anything, that's what I'm going to try do next year."

In the meantime, he and 41 other Army Reserve Soldiers competed against each other in various challenges throughout the week in the USARC BWC to test their physical, mental, and tactical abilities. The winners will have the opportunity to represent the Army Reserve at the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

Because some of the skills transfer between his military and civilian occupations, Wright is also able to take things he learns at BWC.

"Land navigation is a good thing. We're always out in the

See **WRIGHT**, Pg. 50

# Driven by Family values

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. SHAWN MORRIS  
99th Regional Support Command

When Army Reserve Sgt. Henry Cocker is struggling to complete one more sit-up or carry his ruck sack one more mile, it's more than just training and toughness that drives him onward.

What gives him the drive to succeed is are the values instilled within him by his father.

"Dad was always the one pushing us to go to class and telling us what's good and what's not good, so that helped me stay on the right path," said Cocker, a supply sergeant with the Army Reserve's 228th Aviation Regiment headquartered at Fort Dix, N.J.

Cocker, a native of Honolulu, Hawaii, was raised in his family's home in the Kingdom of Tonga, a nation comprised of 176 islands in the South Pacific, before returning to the United States and joining the Army in 2007.

"I'm the first one in my family who joined the U.S. military, so it's an honor," said Cocker.

Cocker was also honored to compete in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, which tests Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in events such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, M16 rifle and M9 pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combatives, day and night land navigation, eight-mile ruck march, urban



Sgt. Henry Cocker

operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

"I love the competition, I love competing," he said. "This is my second time as a competitor. I didn't win last year, so I decided to compete again and try to win."

Cocker's tenacity and unwillingness to quit seems to come from his strong sense of family.

"As the oldest of five, I try to be the best at everything," Cocker said. "Instead of just sitting at my desk sending emails all day, I'd rather be out in the field or at the range shooting rounds, and that's exactly what this competition is - you have the chance to be a better Soldier."

Cocker added that he strives to better himself and his family at every turn.

"The most rewarding thing is just the experience of being in the military," he continued. "I com-

pare myself to some of my friends who I was in high school with, and there's no discipline to stay on path like we in the Army do and progress in their goals. Some of them are still back home and all they do is put a burden on their parents."

Helping to take some financial burden away from his family is one of Cocker's priorities.

"The military really helped my family. They're still back home in Tonga, so every now and then I send them money because money's kind of tight. There's nothing to really live off except the land," he explained. "My dad is retired now, and nobody has got a job except my brother."

Cocker plans to give the same kind of guidance to his future children as his father gave to him.

"I would encourage them, but of course I would let them make their own choice. I'm not going to take away their freedom," he said. "He always taught us that he expects us to make our own choices when we're older, so we get to live our lives just like he did."

As Cocker continues to build his military career and his family, the voice of his father will continue to guide him along his path. 🇺🇸



# Best Warrior is music to his ears

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. SHAWN MORRIS  
99th Regional Support Command

As Army Reserve Sgt. Gregory Doolittle prepared to execute his mission, he performed a final check of his equipment. His gear had to be fine tuned to perfection. Failure was not an option.

Doolittle and his squad-sized element readied their gear and waited silently for their leader to give the signal. This was the calm before the storm; that moment of silence before the sound of their equipment in action would come crashing down around them.

It was at that moment that their leader gave the signal for the Soldiers to move into action.

And as the bandmaster's baton began to wave to and fro, Doolittle and his fellow Soldiers in the jazz quintet played their instruments for all the crowd to hear.

"The Army Music Program is a really great opportunity to grow as a musician, to become better on your instrument, to build your musician's resume and to just put meaning into your music," said Doolittle, a trumpet player with the Army Reserve 191st Army Band headquartered in Camp Parks, California.

This week, the only music Doolittle is hearing is reveille each early morning wakeup and retreat as he trains through the night during the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. The competition tests Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in events



**Sgt. Gregory Doolittle**

such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, M4 rifle and M9 pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combatives, day and night land navigation, 8-mile ruck march, urban operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

Doolittle had to balance training for the weeklong event with the band's real-world mission to provide musical support to community events, military ceremonies and funerals.

"That's probably one of the biggest challenges, because we have our Soldier tasks and a lot of stuff we need to cover in just one battle assembly each month," Doolittle said. "Then on top of that, everyone's practicing their military occupational specialty."

Army bands must fulfill their training requirements like other Army Reserve units, but have the additional duty of performing real-world missions throughout communities and military installations.

"It's definitely a squeeze," he continued. "We have gigs on odd days of the week sometimes, and you may have to rearrange your plans and come into the band hall at 6 a.m. on a Tuesday. It really is a big time commitment."

This commitment may lead Doolittle to his military goals of attending Airborne school and one day becoming a band first sergeant.

"It's up to the individual to prove you're a Soldier," he said. "At the end of the day, everyone in the Army is a Soldier, so if you're a bandsman or a paper pusher or infantry, it doesn't matter - you still have to be able to fire your weapon, do physical training and complete all the Soldier tasks."

As Doolittle continues to try to prove he is the Army Reserve Best Warrior, he encourages young musicians to think about the benefits of service as an Army Reserve bandsman.

"As a young musician, it can be hard to build up your resume, and putting 'Army band' on your musician's resume is pretty impressive to a lot of groups," he explained. "And you get paid to play music, so what more could you ask for?"

There is one more bullet Doolittle could ask for on his resume - to earn the title of 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior. 🏆

# Accountant, Boy Scout, Best Warrior

Story by CAPT. MICHAEL MERRILL  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

For someone who carries the nickname “The Beast,” Sgt. Jedediah Hewson, a military intelligence collector with the 301st Military Intelligence Readiness Command, certainly has the credentials to validate the label.

The Mesa, Arizona, native is enduring the grueling course at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, here, June 23-27.

Taking on the demanding events at each of the U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior command qualifiers, he has dominated in combatives and has excelled at the other events.

His wife, Jaime, gave insight into the nickname as she recalled an experience during a Best Warrior qualifier in California.

“When he’s getting ready for a competition, he’ll go into what we call ‘beast mode,’” she said. “During a land navigation course, it was raining heavily and the mud was so thick on his boots it was slowing him down. So he took off his boots and ran the rest of the course barefoot. He finished the tournament with his feet full of splinters, blisters, and bruised all over from the combatives tournament. It was the worst I had ever seen him.”

But “The Beast” came home from the competition with the victory. In fact, he tore through his first three rounds of the command qualifiers to land in the finals.

This is a far cry from the im-



Sgt. Jedediah Hewson

Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve

age Hewson presents to the world: an accountant, father of three, Boy Scout leader and church choir volunteer with a soft-spoken, easy-going demeanor (He even wears what’s proverbially known in the Army as “BCGs” or “Birth Control Glasses,” due to their nerdy style). In addition, he’s also fluent in Korean and Mandarin.

His mentor for the competitions, Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Hazel of Phoenix, emphasizes his dual nature.

“He’s introverted by nature, but he’s like a lion, powerful and strong willed. And he’s also very intelligent.”

Hewson credits his life experiences for paving the foundation to his success, along with family support that goes far beyond cheerleading.

He identifies his experiences in the Boy Scouts, where he attained Eagle Scout, for helping him learn valuable lessons from hiking and field-craft to learning to work with different people and adjust to difficult situations.

“Dealing with adversity in Boy Scouts helps me to deal with whatever situations present themselves in the Army,” he said.

The experiences Hewson had during a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Korea would prove to be a major influence on his military career. The interpersonal skills he learned were a great fit for military intelligence. For his job as an intelligence collection specialist, the Army saw his knack for learning a difficult language, and selected him to learn Mandarin Chinese.

He attributes his experiences in Korea to increased maturity, time management skills, and resiliency. During an Iraq deployment, he developed the desire to learn conversational Arabic as well as the ability to connect with his Iraqi counterparts.

“I felt like when we were in Iraq we were serving the people there,” he said.

“It obviously wasn’t the same, but we helped train the Iraqi army and police, and helped Civil Affairs drop off goods, so it was nice to be over there and do some good.”

In addition to preparing for the Best Warrior competition he was also preparing for three major CPA certification exams when he returns home. With so much to juggle, he has often turned to his

See **HEWSON**, Pg. 51

# Run Julio, run

Story & photo by SGT. HECTOR COREA  
366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

As joints creaked and yawns echoed, 42 Soldiers stepped off the bus to prepare for a challenging physical test. Sgt. Julio Lopez Cintrón stretched from head to toe, awakening both body and mind.

"I'm ready to go!" exclaimed Lopez Cintrón, a unit supply specialist with the 393rd Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Sustainment Support Battalion.

The Army Physical Fitness Test began with two minutes of push-ups, two minutes of sit-ups, and culminated with a 2-mile run. It is part of the much larger 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, designed to test not only physical strength but courage and mettle, and see who can push themselves to their limits. The multi-day event consists of various Soldier tasks and battle drills, including an eight-mile ruck march, APFT, rifle marksmanship, land navigation and several mystery events.

Lopez Cintrón came a long way to reach the early morning twilight in the wooded landscape surrounding Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

The Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, native competed in two previous competitions at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, against more than 20 Soldiers to reach the 2014 USARC BWC.

With sweat rolling down his cheeks and the morning fog slowly lifting from the trees, Lopez



**Sgt. Julio Lopez Cintrón**

followed the brim hats of drill sergeants to the 2-mile start line.

It takes heart - both literally and figuratively - to finish the 2-mile run in less than 13 minutes. Lopez was set on his goal and bounded from the start line focused on keeping pace.

"I chose to compete in the Best Warrior Competition, because I am a high-speed Soldier who likes extreme challenges," said Lopez Cintrón.

His path to the 2014 USARC BWC was not easy; he prepared to compete while attending to his Web-based secondary studies through Grantham University.

He also made time for his two sons.

For Lopez Cintrón, his family is what keeps him going in the competition and what originally drove him to enlist.

"My father spent 20 years in the Army and retired as a major. And that makes me proud. 'I like the way he carried himself, his rectitude, his character,'" recalled Lopez Cintrón. "I wanted to

follow in those footsteps and here I am."

Footstep after footstep struck the gravel track where more than 40 competitors were pitted against time and distance. Lopez started off strong before the lactic acid simmered and burned the muscles in his legs. He kept going however. He wouldn't stop.

"[Lopez Cintrón] is a tough warrior," explained Sgt. 1st Class Dwayne Ramirez, an automated logistical specialist with the 393rd HHC, CSSB. Ramirez is Lopez Cintrón's sponsor who provides moral support, encouragement, and training throughout the competition."

He brings something to the table, not only physically but mentally," said Ramirez.

Lopez Cintrón mentioned that he was glad to be at the table, among some of the best Soldiers in the Army Reserve.

"I plan to make a career in the Army," declared Lopez Cintrón. "And [the BWC] is very good for career progression."

As the clock progressively ran down and the seconds passed by, Lopez saw the finish line at last. With loud cheers and strong encouragements, he sprinted to the end, finally relieved of the physical burden of the two-mile run. Lopez Cintrón wasn't satisfied.

"I always live at the maximum," said Lopez Cintrón. "I'm

See **LOPEZ CINTRÓN**, Pg. 51



# An uphill struggle

Story & photo by SGT. HECTOR COREA  
366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The air is damp and still in the early morning twilight. Before the first rays of light shine through the dense forests and heavy brush, Soldiers shine lights on their gear.

"Hurry up, get on line!"

U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. Adalberto Reyes-Ortiz breathes heavy and adjusts his gear.

Urgency is paramount. The stirring, shifting, and low murmur of troops throwing rucksacks onto their backs echoes down the long, seemingly endless blacktop cutting through the vegetation.

"I'm ready for this, I'm pumped," says Reyes-Ortiz, a Cayey, Puerto Rico, native.

Reyes-Ortiz, a military policeman and team leader with the 301st Military Police Company, is competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The multi-day event consists of various Soldier tasks and battle drills, including an 8-mile ruck march, Army Physical Fitness Test, rifle marksmanship, land navigation, and several mystery events.

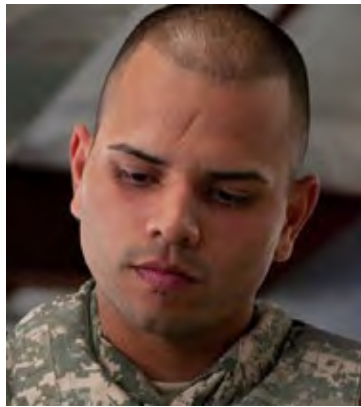
"Get ready!"

Anticipation leads to respiration, respiration leads to perspiration, and all three together ensure this dawn will be like no other.

"Go!"

The quiet murmur turns into a thunderous rumble as combat boots stomp forward on the blacktop.

It took blood, sweat, and



**Sgt. Adalberto Reyes-Ortiz**

tears to bring Reyes-Ortiz to the New Jersey countryside just east of JBMDL. He said he has wanted to compete in the USARC BWC for years.

"When I came from basic, I saw an article in *Warrior-Citizen* (magazine) about Best Warrior in 2012," said Reyes-Ortiz. "And I said, 'I want that. I want to go there. I want to do that.'"

To his surprise, however, Reyes-Ortiz was deployed soon after his initial entry training and was unable to compete in the 2013 competition. That didn't stop him from preparing.

"I remember when Reyes-Ortiz started studying in 2012 in Afghanistan," recalled Jose Diaz-Luquis, a military policeman with the 301st MP Co. Diaz-Luquis is Reyes-Ortiz' sponsor, who provides moral support, encouragement, and training throughout the competition. "He would study all the time in his room and for future training schools."

After Reyes-Ortiz returned

from his deployment, he set his sights on competing for the 2014 USARC BWC.

It was not an easy task. Reyes-Ortiz had to compete in two previous competitions within his command. From ruck marches to land navigation courses that stretched for miles, Reyes-Ortiz had his hands full while preparing for Best Warrior.

He also had to balance his civilian life. Reyes-Ortiz is a full-time student pursuing a bachelor's degree in Business Management at Turabo University. More importantly, he is a full-time husband and father. His wife, Keishla M. Lebron-Ortiz and his two children, are a great source of moral support. He relies on this support to persevere through hard times.

"She supports me in everything that I do," said Reyes-Ortiz.

With an eye toward the first hill, Reyes-Ortiz begins his ruck march with high spirits. Approaching the first of many steep grades, Reyes-Ortiz grits his teeth and bends under the weight to lessen the pull of the heavy rucksack.

Some might find it hard to understand why anyone would put themselves through the anguish and pain.

"I decided to compete because I love to do this kind of training and I want to show that I am one of the best Soldiers in the

See **REYES-ORTIZ**, Pg. 53

# Digging up bones

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. SHAWN MORRIS  
99th Regional Support Command

In movies, archeologists are often portrayed as a dusty explorer in a fedora wielding a bullwhip.

For Army Reserve Sgt. Kathleen Shetley, her experiences in archeology have never involved a bullwhip, although occasionally she'll wear the fedora.

And she most certainly embraces the dust.

"I like being in the dirt, I like the bones, I like seeing how people lived, how they died," said Shetley, who serves as a flute player with the Army Reserve 380th Army Band headquartered in Richmond, Virginia.

Shetley is bringing her affinity for getting gritty and dirty not to a movie set, but on location at the U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, which will test Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in events such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, M16 rifle and M9 pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combatives, day and night land navigation, 10-kilometer ruck march, urban operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

When not competing against her fellow Army Reserve Soldiers, Shetley focuses her efforts on bioarcheology, a discipline within traditional archeology that focuses on studying human skeletal remains in order to learn about past civilizations and the conditions in which they existed.

"I've had two field experiences on a Saponi Indian site that's



**Sgt. Kathleen Shetley**

about 10,000 years old," Shetley explained. "On one, I was actually the artifact supervisor, so I was in charge of cataloging and identifying all of the artifacts that we found."

Shetley began her college career studying music to become a teacher, but quickly realized her calling would take her down a different path.

"I went to college being dead set on music education, on being a teacher," Shetley explained. "Then I started thinking I'd like to be an archivist or in museum studies, so I transferred out of Kutztown University to Longwood University, but they didn't have a library science or museum studies track. So I started taking anthropology classes and immediately fell in love."

That love affair led Shetley to bioarcheology, including a semester as an archeology lab technician with the Dr. James W. Jordan Archeology Field School at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia.

"You dig down and you think you're not finding anything. And then suddenly, these pieces of ceramic are popping up, or a bone awl, or you start finding all of these projectile points. It's just fascinating to see how these people lived," she said.

Shetley is living in a age when only 16 percent of U.S. high-school seniors are proficient in mathematics and interested in careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The Army has followed President Barack Obama's lead in promoting STEM opportunities to increase Soldier engagement, interest and achievement in the STEM fields.

"I just want to do everything," said Shetley, a group fitness instructor who has a passion for expanding her horizons. "If I could, I would get a masters degree in ethnomusicology, and bioarcheology, and Middle-Eastern civilizations - everything!"

"I never would have been able to get even one degree on my own if I hadn't enlisted and used the educational benefits," she said. "The Army has really lent a helping hand."

Although she didn't bring her fedora, Shetley has her Army Combat Helmet in hand and is prepared to bullwhip her way through the Best Warrior Competition. 🇺🇸

# Carrying his own weight

Story by SGT. ANSHU PANDEYA  
318th Press Camp Headquarters

Five miles is easy for him: he runs it three times a week. It wasn't always easy, but he wouldn't let anything weigh him down.

Spc. Curtis Anderson, the Albuquerque, New Mexico native, weighs 160 pounds, a weight for which he worked hard to achieve. Three years ago, it would be hard to recognize him for the man he is now.

"When I was in high school, I was over 250 pounds," said Anderson, who is representing the 80th Training Command (The Army School System) in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. "I had to lose all that weight to join the military."

And he did. Within two months, Anderson had lost nearly 100 pounds. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the average person can safely lose one to two pounds per week.

Anderson found the drive to overcome that hurdle when tragedy struck his family. His father died and his grandfather was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

"He was pretty much like a father to me," he said of his grandfather. "My father had a drug and alcohol battle his entire life, and that was what killed him. Seeing him whither away, when you're placed with something like that in your life, you can take one of two paths: you can follow it, or you can lead it away and be a better example. I didn't want to follow his path.



Spc. Curtis Anderson

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Saurel/416th TEC

"After my grandfather got diagnosed with terminal cancer, I knew I had to do something that would make him proud, so I said, 'Enough's enough. I'm going to join the Army, but I know I have a physical barrier that I have to pass to get in there.' So I just ran as far as I could. I just ran everyday, every week as far as I could until I lost all that weight."

It was the most difficult challenge Anderson, a supply specialist with the 3rd Battalion, 95th Regiment (Signal), 2nd Brigade (SC) 100th Division (Institutional Training), had faced in his life, and he had his doubts, yet now he marches among the best Soldiers in the Army Reserve. Forty-two junior enlisted Reserve Soldiers and noncommissioned officers started the competition against each other in various challenges throughout the week in the BWC to test their physical, mental, and tactical abilities to win Reserve Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. The winners will have the opportunity to

represent the Army Reserve at the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

He remembered, "There were times I would say, 'What is the point? Why do you want to do this?' And I would say, 'Everything else you've quit in your life. Why would you quit this? You've got to keep going. If you quit this, it'll be like everything else in your life.'"

Anderson kept running farther each day, and by the time he entered basic training, he shed the weight bringing him down to 152 pounds. During the competition, Anderson put that weight back on. This time that weight was a rucksack, rifle, helmet and gear while navigating for miles across Fort Dix, New Jersey, for one of the evaluated events.

"There's just something inside that drove me to do it," he said, referring back to the weight loss. "I'm so glad I stuck with it because I never imagined in a thousand years that I'd be where I am today."

Anderson had always wanted to be a Soldier.

"Ever since I was a kid I just thought seeing a Soldier in uniform was something of pride and honor, so I always wanted to enlist and serve my country," he said.

Now that the 21-year-old has accomplished his goal of enlisting, he has his eyes set on a combat arms job as a Ranger or in special

See **ANDERSON**, Pg. 54



# From the islands to the woods

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. RUFUS STUCKEY  
215th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

With just three hours of sleep, day three opened to an eight-mile ruck march, plus two surprise miles at the end. For the last mile, teams of four Soldiers carried a 165-pound mannequin to the real finish line.

Yet, the day was far from over.

Spc. Ian P. Balag said he felt good at the beginning, but as the day went on, he pushed himself by focusing on taking one step at a time.

"People get tired - this is when they want to stop," said Balag. "Whereas, when I get tired, I try to push through it because I know that's the time other people are going to slow down."

Balag is an information management specialist with the U.S. Army Pacific Support Unit located at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, and one of 42 competitors in the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. At 21 years old, he is representing the 9th Mission Support Command based in Honolulu, Hawaii.

The U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior competition tests Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in events such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, M4 rifle and 9 mm pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combatives, day and night land navigation, 8-mile ruck march, urban operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

At home in Kapolei, Hawaii, Balag is a full-time student at the



**Spc. Ian Balag**

University of Hawaii Leeward Community College studying information technology. He said he plans to transfer to the University of Hawaii-West O'ahu or University of Hawaii-Manoa to complete his degree.

After the first eight miles, the warriors stopped to fire their weapons before picking up their packs again to finish the final two.

"At one point I was so tired I could hear my heart beat through the ear plugs," said Balag while on the firing range.

Balag admits he gets nervous at competitions.

"Once the competition starts, you get a little nervous - but once the first day is over, you just kind of forget about it and you go in this mode where you are just going," he said.

"You're not thinking about how well am I doing, how are the other competitors doing - you're just thinking about yourself and doing your best and try your hardest and that stress gets overcome by your determination and the

adrenaline - the nervousness just goes away."

Balag is not at the competition alone, Staff Sgt. Flor Velasco, Jr., also from the Pacific Support Command, is here as his sponsor providing support and encouragement along the way.

"Right from the beginning there were two candidates to represent our unit - I pushed for Balag to compete," Velasco said. "I just knew he had the drive."

Since winning the 9th Mission Support Command Best Warrior, Balag has learned how to focus.

"In the last competition, I always thought about the next event. What's tomorrow - a couple hours from now," he said. "But in this event I strictly thought about the event we're doing."

"The focus for the ruck march was to put all my attention to that, while we're doing it - not worry about anything else that's what really helped me out."

Balag he will keep going one step at a time and push through the pain to represent the 9th MSC.

"I get motivation from myself and not wanting to let my peers down or my unit - especially since I am representing the Pacific," he said. "Coming from such a long way - it's a long trip - I don't want it to be for nothing or take it for granted."

There is still a long way to go.

Day three is not over and day four is still to come. 🇺🇸

# Playing with the big boys

Story & photo by SGT. ANSHU PANDEYA  
318th Press Camp Headquarters

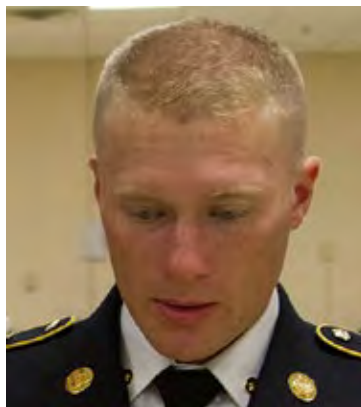
Spc. David J. Bass was offered two running scholarships for college, but he turned them down to enlist in the Army Reserve.

"I wanted to do something greater than myself," the 19-year-old Salt Lake City native said. "I wanted to follow my brother's footsteps because he actually got a full-ride scholarship to Marion (Military Institute) in Alabama."

His brother was medically discharged but has since enlisted in the Reserve. His grandfather also served in the Navy during the Korean War.

"They're supportive," said Bass about his family's reaction to his enlistment in the Reserve. "They weren't too happy I wasn't going straight to school and I wasn't going to take the scholarships, but the Army helps out with that. I'm also doing something greater than myself like I wanted to do. So I'm happy with where I'm at and they're proud of me."

The heavy-wheeled vehicle operator is representing the 79th Sustainment Support Command in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. He, along with 41 other junior enlisted



**Spc. David Bass**

Reserve Soldiers and noncommissioned officers, has competed in various challenges throughout the week in the USARC BWC to test his physical, mental, and tactical abilities. The winners will represent the Army Reserve at the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

Bass was hesitant when his first sergeant approached him about competing in the competition, but he was soon swayed.

"I thought, 'How's it going to hurt? I'm only going to learn some things.'"

He said it would help better train his Soldiers.

"Then, I got into it and realized the training is really fun and everything about it is really

challenging."

Bass said the competition will help him fulfill his dream of one day becoming a Green Beret, or as he calls them, "the Big Boys."

While Bass dreams of playing with the Big Boys in the Green Berets, he hasn't realized he's a Big Boy himself as he's competing with the best Soldiers the Army Reserve has to offer.

The Army Reserve also offers him the opportunity to follow his passion for automobiles. He is studying to be an automotive engineer with a minor in design at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah.

"You've got to have a backup plan," he said with a grin. "But first off, it's the Green Berets, Big Boys shooting big guns."

Bass is using the competition as an opportunity to advance his military career to become a Green Beret.

He sees it as a stepping stone to playing with the big boys, but he's already one of them, and he's been playing with them for the past week. He may or may not win, but he'll keep fighting for his dream. 🇺🇸



# A sense of community

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. SHAWN MORRIS  
99th Regional Support Command

The Apache helicopter landed with a thud, its movements not responding to the pilot's control stick. The crew chief jumped onto the tarmac and ran inside the hangar looking for help. The mission wasn't over, and this bird had to get back in the air fast.

Grabbing his tools, Spc. Cameron Caylor kept his cool and attended to the troubled aircraft, putting his countless hours of training as an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter repairer to use.

This is the type of scenario Caylor trains for regularly as part of his job in the Army Reserve, but it took special training and dedication to prepare for this week's 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

"We're all embracing the suck right now, but at least we're all embracing it together," Caylor said following back-to-back events consisting of an eight-mile ruck march, one-mile litter carry and M16 rifle qualification on a particularly hot and humid day in the New Jersey pine lands.

It wouldn't be long before Caylor would be called to the next event, but for now he had a moment to rest.

Caylor is part of a small community of Army Reserve Soldiers vying for the title of Army Reserve Best Warrior.

The competition tests Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in events such as the physical fit-



**Spc. Cameron Caylor**

ness, rifle and pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combat, day and night land navigation, 8-mile ruck march, urban operations and several mystery events throughout the week.

"The military itself is a tight-knit community," said Caylor, a Soldier with the Army Reserve 1st Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment headquartered in Conroe, Texas, representing the 11th Aviation Command. "The best thing to do is to create that community, because I could deploy with some of these guys tomorrow."

Caylor's attitude meshes well with being a Soldier in the Army Reserve, which is a community-based force whose Soldiers live, work and train in more than 1,000 communities throughout the nation. The local citizenry often supports those Soldiers within their community, becoming a force multiplier for Soldier morale and readiness.

"When we were coming back from annual training two years ago, we came in and there was ac-

tually a church that came out and welcomed us home," said Caylor, a student at Lone Star Community College. "It felt awesome that they welcomed us back with open arms. I thought that was pretty amazing that someone was proud of us when they didn't have to be."

Giving support back to the community became easier in 2012 when the National Defense Authorization Act allowed Army Reserve Soldiers to provide Defense Support to Civil Authorities during natural disasters and other emergency situations.

"The Apache can't really do very much (community support) because it's a gunship," said Caylor. "But because the Reserve is now drawing back on having Apaches and switching over to Black Hawks, not only am I getting to learn a new aircraft, but we can support the community in case a natural disaster does happen."

The balance between civilian and military life is something every Army Reserve Soldier has to manage. It's a relationship reflected in phrases such as "Citizen-Soldier," "Warrior-Citizen" and "2X Citizen."

Army Reserve Soldiers are required to meet the same standards as their active duty counterparts. Adherence to these standards keeps Soldiers physically, mentally and emotionally resilient while

See **CAYLOR**, Pg. 51



# The joy in pain, suffering

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHEL SAURET  
416th Theater Engineer Command

Fun is hardly a word associated with pain, suffering and sleep deprivation.

For most other 22-year-old college students, fun comes inside a room filled with rowdy friends shouting cheers or groans at the game on TV, stacks of pizza boxes on the table and plenty of beers making their rounds from the fridge.

But for Spc. Gregory Doty, fun comes inside a military uniform, tackling the challenges of the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition.

"I'm going to go there and have as much fun as I can with it, and my competitive spirit will do the rest for me," said the native of Peekskill, New York.

From waking up in the dead of night, to being tossed into the woods, half asleep, with just a compass, protractor and a map, having to find his way out in the light of the moon, that's where Doty finds his fun.

His favorite quote is from Mark Twain: "The secret of success is making your vocation your vacation."

So for every day this week, Doty is on vacation in the muggy woods and dusty ranges here.

Doty represents the 412th Theater Engineer Command (TEC) in this year's junior enlisted category.

During his last Best Warrior competition in April, Doty slept barely three hours between a land



**Spc. Gregory Doty**

navigation course that forced him across three miles of mountainous landscape at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, and the next morning's six-mile road march with a ruck on his back and ballistic vest strapped to his chest.

This was after the competition had already wrung him through a physical fitness test, a 200-meter swim and a gruesome obstacle course among other events he faced in just 48 hours with many more to go. At one point during his hilly and wooden traverse, Doty's legs actually buckled. He slipped a few times climbing a 45-degree slope carrying a rifle and combat gear.

Those hills were no roller coaster rides.

That word - "fun" - starts to sound like a bit of an embellishment.

But Doty actually likes this stuff, and remains unshaken despite the dirt and bruises.

At the end of the TEC competition, Doty was at his best when he stepped into a room full of

sergeants major wearing a neatly pressed dress uniform and spit-shined shoes. Most Soldiers find this to be the most intimidating part of the journey: Not the long miles or worn muscles, but the mental demands.

The dreaded appearance board can make sharp-minded Soldiers forget words to the creeds they've been reciting for months.

Instead, Doty rocked it with crisp facing movements and confident answers.

"The sergeants major want to see that you're confident even when in a simple situation, like standing in a room talking. They want to know that you've got absolute confidence, and if you can't have that then, then you can't do it in (combat) or anything else," said Doty, who is an allied trade specialist - a mix between machinist and welder - for the 854th Engineer Battalion.

He's barely spent two years in the Army Reserve and was promoted from private first class to specialist in March, only adding to his accomplishments.

Yet, despite his lack of time in the military, Doty stays sharp as Army ROTC cadet at Fordham University.

As a cadet, he spends six hours a week learning land navigation, troop movement, leadership and military knowledge. Plus, he invested another hour each day

See **DOTY** Pg. 53

# Being biggest, strongest has its limits

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHEL SAURET  
416th Theater Engineer Command

When he steps up to the mat in a hand-to-hand combat tournament, Spc. Rahmad Gholston goes by his warrior name: Ghost.

Yet, standing at 6 feet 1 inch and weighing 210 pounds, he's hardly invisible.

When he grapples with an opponent, it's only a matter of time before Gholston overpowers him to the ground. He's methodical. Patient. Powerful.

But his Goliath-like stature almost hampered his chances of competing at the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition held here.

In order to advance to this stage, Gholston won first place in the junior enlisted category for the 416th Theater Engineer Command (TEC), but he started from behind on the very first step. His last competition took place at Fort McCoy at the end of April.

Spring was a distant fantasy in the state of Wisconsin that month.

On the first day, Soldiers awoke hours before sunrise for the Army Physical Fitness Test. The early morning temperature reached just a few degrees above freezing, but it was the wind that felt most disheartening.

Record gusts reached between 30 and 40 miles per hour that day. Rain angled down from the sky. Because of the cold and the rain, Gholston wore the full physical fitness uniform, consisting of a windbreaker-type jacket and long pants. Except the jacket didn't



**Spc. Rahmad Gholston**

break through the wind. Instead, it formed a sail, catching every blow of air slamming against him. Nature was a howling beast, and his every step was a battle among Warriors.

He failed the required two-mile run by 20 seconds. By Army standards, that could have disqualified him. End of the road. Go back home. You're done here. Instead, he was given zero points for the event. If he wanted to compete, he'd have to catch up.

"I was far behind - and I was like, 'man, I just got to come out and win every event after this,'" said Gholston, currently living in Pullman, Washington.

He made up ground with each ensuing event: rifle marksmanship, pistol range, 200-meter swim, obstacle course, land navigation, six-mile road march, then, finally, the combatives tournament, where he - to put it lightly - dominated.

In the end, he took first place by less than a percent in overall points, just enough to make it to the Army Reserve level: one of

the toughest competitions most Reserve Soldiers ever face.

"I don't know what to expect - I just want to give it my best at the (Army Reserve) level. I'm expecting to have some great competition; some people who really push me past my limits," said Gholston, who serves with the 301st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade as an air defense battle management system operator. The unit is located near Lakewood, Washington.

He trained to square off with some of the best Soldiers in the entire Army Reserve. He knows his physical stature and strength might not be enough to cut it. He's quick to reassure others that he has a bit of David's savvy smarts in his Goliath-like physique.

"I can look physically intimidating in person - but I can still come back to the smarts, and turn it right back on. It's like a switch. My intellectual capacity is pretty high, so I just keep going," said Gholston.

Before the TEC-level competition, he had only a week of spring break to spare and prepare. Gholston is studying occupational therapy at Washington State University full time. Once the semester ended, he set aside three straight weeks to train both physically and mentally. He's been training with Sgt. Juan Jackson who took first place in the non-

See **GHOLSTON**, Pg. 52

# Don't be afraid to fail

Story & photo by SGT. BENJAMIN JOHN  
364th Press Camp Headquarters

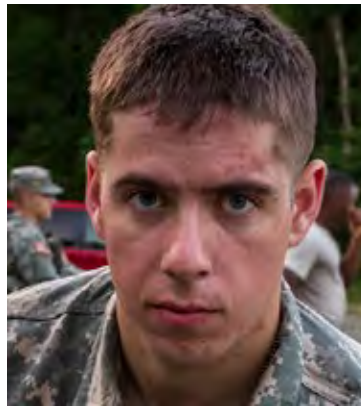
Sitting with his back against a tree on a beautiful sunny day, Spc. Jeremy Goerss rests his head on the rough bark and admits that he used to be afraid to fail.

He explained that the fear of failure stops a lot of people from trying.

"Every time I'm doing something tough I have to say to myself, 'Don't be afraid to fail,'" said Goerss. "That just makes me want to do my best and not worry about the outcome." If Goerss was not wearing a U.S. Army uniform he would fit right in with bearded philosophers talking about the meaning of life. The words of a much older man flow smoothly out of the mouth of a clean-shaven 23 year old.

Goerss said he learned about not failing from an audio clip he heard of Arnold Schwarzenegger and uses that advice in everything he does. Schwarzenegger talks about being told he cannot accomplish his life goals and his response is, 'Dig deep down inside. Find who you want to be and don't be afraid to fail.'

At the moment, Goerss is



**Spc. Jeremy Goerss**

participating in the U.S. Army Reserve 2014 Best Warrior Competition.

The Army Reserve BWC gives Soldiers an opportunity to step up and compete against each other to find out who will go on to represent the U.S. Army Reserve at the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

Goerss said his strongest event in the BWC will probably be the M16 rifle range.

"My favorite thing about shooting a rifle is seeing that target go down," said Goerss with a grin on his face. "Putting all the fundamentals together is rewarding."

The precision it takes to bring all the fundamentals together is

a lot of work and takes time, but Goerss is up for the challenge.

He deployed to Kyrgyzstan as a customs agent and is preparing to deploy with the 102nd Military Police Company to Guantanamo Bay within the year. His ultimate goal is to become a special forces Soldier like his younger brother who is now training for special forces.

"I gave him the advice to get into the military," said Goerss. "Originally, he was going to be a regular infantryman, but he got this opportunity [to be special forces] and he just went for it and he's doing well."

Desire and commitment is required to not only be a special forces Soldier, but also to compete in the Best Warrior Competition.

The want, passion, and drive to be one of the best has lead Goerss to this point. The next event is about to begin and the short time to rest is over. Goerss picks up his gear under the tree and collects his thoughts. He moves on to the next event with Swartchnezers words echoing in his head. 'Don't be afraid to fail.' 🇺🇸





# The collector of values

Story & photo by SGT. BENJAMIN JOHN  
364th Press Camp Headquarters

The grass moves as the wind pushes slowly across the range land.

The peace is strange here. Not because it is beautiful, but because soon there will be controlled chaos.

Quietly, Spc. Stanley Hale Jr. peers out into the berms. Targets will soon pop up from the mounds and he'll get his chance to fire away.

"This will be a learning lesson," said Hale. "How can I take this and move forward."

Hale is taking part in the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition. He is about to begin the M16 night qualification event, one of many events that make up the entire competition. More than 40 Soldiers came from across the U.S. Army Reserve to establish the best of the best. Two Soldiers will be proclaimed victors: one noncommissioned officer and one junior enlisted Soldier. Both will advance to compete in the Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition.

"I see the bright side of things," said Hale with a



**Spc. Stanley Hale, Jr.**

smirk. "I try to take advantage of a lot of the opportunities that have been given to me."

Before Hale joined the U.S. Army Reserve, he was in the U.S. Air Force as a logistics support supervisor. He now serves as a supply specialist with C Company 1-415th Drill Sergeant Battalion.

The ambition to become a Special Forces Soldier is strong with Hale. He wants to be one of the best because he knows he can. In moments of physical stress, Hale excels and stands tall.

Hale says that he feels the same way at age 33 that he did at age 19. He attributes his strength and endurance to staying active.

He spends a lot of his spare time in the gym, hiking or playing sports. Snowboarding is one of his favorite hobbies.

Staying fit and ready for anything are the skills he acquires from others. Every person Hale meets is an opportunity to learn.

"If you are patient and take the time, there is always something to learn," said Hale. "Regardless of how someone acts, there is something valuable in each person."

Collecting these values and skills over time has made Hale into man he is today. Hale pushes himself slowly towards his goals and moves himself into positions of opportunity.

A small smile appears on Hale's face as he looks forward to the chaos that is about to take place.

He remembers the skills he has learned up to this moment, and the people who helped him acquire them.

He is excited for the future.

No matter what it holds, he will look to find value in it. 🇺🇸



# Going with the flow

Story & photo by SGT. 1ST CLASS RYAN MATSON  
87th Support Command

It's as if he is a leaf in the wind, drifting from one place to another.

For most of his life, Spc. Saad Khokhar will tell you, he has gone with the flow, making major decisions at the drop of a hat while seeking new experiences.

Just coming to the United States was not something the soft-spoken 27-year-old said he envisioned while growing up in Pakistan.

"It just kind of happened," Khokhar, an infantryman with the 386th Civil Affairs Battalion, said quietly, with a smile. "I just applied to the University of Connecticut, got in, and my parents sent me over."

The wind has carried the quiet, shy Soldier 6,942 miles from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, to Fort Dix, N.J., where he is competing in the grueling Best Warrior Competition June 23-27 against some of the Army Reserve's top Soldiers in a variety of warrior tasks.

It has been a long journey, but it seems he has found a home in the U.S. Army.

"When it comes to decisions, joining the U.S. Army was probably one of my better ones," Khokhar said softly from behind a pair of thick glasses.

There have been many unexpected turns to get to Best Warrior.

Just like coming to the United States, he said he never planned to enter the Army. After nearly four years at the University of Con-



Spc. Saad Khokhar

necticut, where he was studying geographic information systems, Khokhar said it was a challenge he was seeking.

"I guess really I was just bored," he said. "Stuff was stagnant, and I just wanted to do something bigger. I just enlisted, and a couple weeks later I was in basic training, and I've just been playing it as it is."

He enlisted in the active duty Army as an infantryman in September 2009.

"I had no idea what the infantry was when I enlisted," said Khokhar, who never fired a weapon or worked out before joining the Army. "If I knew, maybe I would have done something else, but I'm glad I did infantry and have it under my belt."

Going with the flow is Khokhar's style, his sponsor, Staff Sgt. Michael Parodi, also with the 386th, said.

"He came to the U.S. pretty much on his own, which says a lot about his character," Parodi said. "I would sum him up as a quiet

professional. He just knows what he needs to get done, and he does it. He makes things happen, he just gets the job done."

Khokhar said his time attending school in Pakistan helped him make the transition to life in the military.

"In Pakistan the schooling is kind of military oriented," he said. "It's always about uniforms, having a clean appearance, and we do morning assemblies, a kind of 'attention' and 'parade rest' kind of stuff, and that's normal. It's much more structured. You wear uniforms and need to be at certain places at a certain time, so following instruction wasn't that hard for me. We even marched sometimes."

Immediately after basic and advance individual training, he deployed to Iraq with Company B, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment. Despite having been sitting in a classroom a few months before deploying, Khokhar said he was un-phased by the deployment.

"It wasn't bad," he said, calmly. "I know a lot of people go through culture shock and stuff, but for me it was a really similar culture to the one I had experienced in Pakistan, so I assimilated rather easily to the terrain, the locals and everything."

Speaking Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and - of course - English, didn't

See **KHOKHAR**, Pg. 55

# From German gold to Best Warrior

Story & photo by STAFF SGT. SHAWN MORRIS  
99th Regional Support Command

Spc. Joshua Meyer shifted the weight of his 22-pound ruck sack, trying to relieve the pain and fatigue in his back and shoulders.

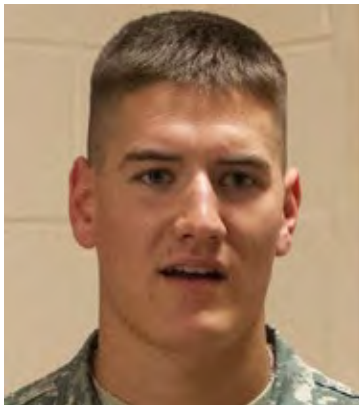
He blinked the stinging sweat from his eyes as the sun relentlessly tracked him through the 12-kilometer ruck march in the soggy heat of the New Jersey marshlands.

Meyer could hear the footsteps of his fellow competitors closing behind him, a sound that kept him moving forward long after his aching legs and blistered feet should have quit. But quitting was not an option, and neither was slowing down. Only a few more miles, he thought to himself. Only a few more miles to gold.

Meyer, a trumpet player with the Army Reserve's 198th Army Band headquartered in Rochester, New York, recounted one of his more grueling experiences competing for the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge here this past summer as he prepared for the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition this week.

"Going through the German Proficiency Badge event really felt amazing and just shot up my confidence level because you're able to do way more than you thought, pushing yourself mentally, emotionally and physically," said Meyer.

The weather here this week isn't quite as intense as Meyer experienced last summer, but the competition has been as Meyer



**Spc. Joshua Meyer**

and more than three-dozen of his fellow Army Reserve Soldiers participate in the competition, which tests Soldiers' resiliency and warrior skills in events such as the Army Physical Fitness Test, M16 rifle and M9 pistol qualification ranges, hand-to-hand combatives, day and night land navigation, 10-kilometer ruck march, urban operations and mystery events throughout the week.

The German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge is a skill badge that Soldiers can earn, officially recognized by the U.S. government. Competing for the German Proficiency Badge required many of the same skills and attributes that Meyer has been putting to the test during the Best Warrior Competition, in addition to certain unique requirements.

"The German Proficiency Badge competition was strictly just physical fitness," said Meyer, explaining that the competition consists of events such as a 100, 400 or 1,000-meter timed sprint, a 3,000 or 5,000-meter timed

run, a 1,000-meter swim, high jump, long jump, shot put, 25-meter marksmanship and the ruck march.

"The Best Warrior Competition is mainly different because of all the Warrior Tasks, all the written tests, all the educational knowledge you need," said Meyer, a student at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester. Soldiers are required to use their intellect during many events throughout the competition, such as making mathematical calculations during land navigation, applying medical techniques during first aid, knowing current policy during the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response Prevention event, and following rules of engagement during the search and seizure event, with points awarded for the level of detail provided in each instance.

"The Best Warrior Competition really tests you on leadership skills, on confidence level, and on the Army Study Guide. I found myself studying more than training physically," he said.

The resiliency needed to compete in these competitions is something the Army tries to instill in all its Soldiers, giving men and women in uniform the mental, physical, emotional and behavioral tools to face and cope with adversity, adapt to change, and recover and grow from setbacks.

See **MEYER**, Pg. 55



# A competitive spirit

Story by SGT. WILLIAM BATTLE  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

With a competitive spirit forged by sibling rivalry, Spc. Zachary Nickels is determined to be the best of his brothers and sisters in uniform at the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition.

Hailing from Montgomery, Illinois, he represents the 801st Combat Support Hospital Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

The youngest of four children, all of whom serve in the military, Nickels comes from a family with a deep military connection.

Both of his brothers serve as staff sergeants, his sister is a captain in the Air Force, his brother-in-law is retired from the Navy, and he has multiple aunts and uncles that have all served in the Marines.

"In addition to being an Army Reserve Soldier and a very competitive person, that also makes me a competitive athlete," he said.

While he loves to play every sport, his dream is to one day



**Spc. Zachary Nickels**

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPASE

play in the U.S. Open.

His fascination with golf started when he worked as a caddy at the age of 13 and he can be found at the golf course once or twice a week with various family members.

"It's a game that is much more enjoyable when you are spending that time with your family" he said.

While he does not feel that he is at the level he needs to be to compete as a professional, he feels that he is getting very close.

"I've got a few things to work on," said Nickles.

His love of sports, combined with his dedication to serving his community, has led him to coaching eighth grade boys basketball at Annunciation Grade School in Aurora, Illinois.

While the children he coaches do not know about his participation in this competition, there are things that he has learned from this experience that he can carry over to help the children excel, not only in sports but in their every day lives.

"I know there will be things that I can carry on and teach," he said.

While he does enjoy competition and rising above his opponents, Nickles states that his biggest competition is always himself.

"There's only one person that I have to compete against and that's myself" he said. 🇺🇸



# Suck it up

Story by SGT. HECTOR COREA  
366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The pain is infectious.  
It started in the soles of his feet, formed by friction and the pure force of his boot stomping against the ground over and over and over.

He felt it in his knees and up his legs, creating a twilight zone between numbness and agony.

Muscle cramps may only be a step away.

It's almost as if he shouldered the world for Atlas; moments that seem endless.

This pain has been commonplace at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition.

It's a pain that Spc. Brandyn Sprague felt and still remembers. After an eight-mile ruck march with more than 50 pounds on his back, Sprague and fellow competitors were then tasked to carry a 180-pound litter almost a mile.

"This (mile-long litter carry) was the toughest one," said Sprague, a computer detection systems repairer with the 319th Signal Battalion. "I thought it was going to be hard but ... man."

Hard.

Grueling.

Demanding.

Exhausting.

All of these words can be used to describe the 2014 USARC BWC, a multi-day event consisting of various Soldier tasks, battle drills, an eight-mile ruck march, an Army Physical Fitness Test, rifle marksmanship, land navigation



Spc. Brandon Sprague

and several mystery events. In the span of five days, more than 40 competitors were pushed to their limits.

Sprague traveled the continental span of the U.S. to reach the New Jersey countryside near Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. He is here to prove his mettle against the best in the Army Reserve.

"I am determined in showing off my keen skills as a Soldier and standing out amongst my peers," declared Sprague, a Sacramento, California, native. "I have high intentions as far as my military career goes and my success in this competition will reflect on my status as a leader."

Sprague's performance in the competition and in the Army has already reflected well in his family. Serving in the Army is almost a tradition in the Sprague family lineage.

His mother retired with 20 years of service. His father was an airborne parachute rigger. His

grandfather was the command sergeant major of United States European Command, a drill sergeant, a veteran of the Vietnam war and a Purple Heart recipient. Sprague has nearly half-a-dozen cousins who have or currently serve in the Army.

Sprague said the Army runs deep in his veins, and pushes him forward to his future goal of becoming a Special Forces Soldier.

"My grandpa was a Ranger," recalled Sprague. "All the stories he told me have made me want to join (Special Forces). I've always found it interesting."

For Sprague, the 2014 USARC BWC is a train-up in preparation for the Special Forces Qualification Course.

"It's always fascinating to see him pursue his path," said Staff Sgt. Ross Wilbanks, a multichannel transmissions systems operator-maintainer with the 453rd Chemical Battalion. "This is a litmus test for where he's at, before trying out for SF selection."

So far, the 2014 USARC BWC is living up to Sprague's expectations.

"I came out here for the suck," said Sprague. "I enjoy the Army life and when things suck."

At the end of the event, Sprague was finally able to drop the weight of the world from his shoulders, prop up his battered knees, and take a rest from the suck. 🍷

# Hook, line, and sinker

Story & photo by SGT. FRANCESCA STANCHI  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

It's the weekend. Early morning.

Spc. John Wiles, remembers looking out on the still clear waters of Black Bear Lake, California, with a peaceful feeling.

He says it's a time he can reflect on his life, personal achievements and growth. Also, a time to be with Family. His most memorable time was when he taught his wife to fish. That's what Wiles looks back on while competing at the U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition to see him through the end.

"For me it's just getting out there," said Wiles, from Upland, California, with the 78th Legal Operations Detachment out of Los Alamitos, California. "It's something you have to think through. It's not just putting something in the water. There's a challenging part to it, and you have to think about what you're doing."

Just like when he is fishing, Wiles stays calm and clear as he attempts to face the next challenge in his life.

"If you don't challenge yourself, you are doing yourself a disservice," said Wiles. "This competition is one of those things for me. I like challenging myself and the Army helps me do that."

Personal growth is very important to him. After enlisting, he's seen parts of himself develop better, especially in discipline, attention to detail and organiza-



**Spc. John Wiles**

tion. The Army just continues this growth.

Wiles explains that he has always been interested in joining the service, like his father, who flew helicopters in Vietnam, but had a few transitions in life before he felt he was able to join. When the timing was right he signed up as a Citizen-Soldier in the Army Reserve.

He says that just like in basic training, opportunities like this challenge, being a Citizen-Soldier, getting his Associates in Arts emphasis in paralegal studies, and getting married, have all been steps on this journey and he is ready for more.

"Experiences like this reminds me of basic training, sometimes you hate going through it but by the end your glad you did," said Wiles. "Each step pushes you farther, and I wanted to do this. Not just for myself, but to represent my unit and get a chance to refine my warrior skills."

To him, a Warrior-Citizen

allows him to defend his country while pursuing his individual goals. Being in a legal detachment gives him an opportunity to work with like-minded individuals that support each other in working towards these goals and dreams. He says it makes him feel like being part of a team that defends the nation, while working with supportive people inside and outside of military duty.

"I work with amazing people and wanted to make sure they get the recognition they deserve and this competition gives me that opportunity," said Wiles.

He first started as a battalion paralegal at the 393rd a Military Police Battalion (Criminal Investigation Division) and now is attached to the 78th Legal Operations Detachment, representing the Army Reserve Legal Command.

"I've always been interested in law," said Wiles. "I got my associates in paralegal studies and my next step is to get my bachelors in philosophy, then law school."

He said philosophy will help him in his career as a lawyer.

"Philosophy is actually analyzing. It teaches you how to break down reasonings and arguments. Law is mostly about writing arguments, or giving arguments or points of views. Philosophy is a big part of that and my focus is in law and society," said Wiles.

See **WILES**, Pg. 54



# The Underdog

Story & photo by SGT. FRANCESCA STANCHI  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

School's out, and this one man takes off his graduation cap and puts on a patrol cap.

Another chapter in this young man's life begins.

Being raised to help people, whether offering advice to his wrestling team or joining the Knights of Columbus through his church, this upstanding 19-year-old chooses to help another way and steps into the recruiting office.

"I still help my high school wrestling team, along with my family and my church," said Pfc. Matthew Creavey, from Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, a Chaplains Assistant with the 1185th Deployment and Distribution Support Battalion in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

"Because we are of the Catholic faith, I decided to join the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic Charity starting in the 1800's that helped Catholic immigrants when they arrived in America," he said.

"Now they help people all over the world. Because my Family is all military I decided to serve."

Creavey is one of the youngest competitors that has been training for this challenge.

After graduating high school, Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training in December 2013, his home unit prepared him for the 377th Theater Sustainment Command Best Warrior Competi-



Pfc. Matthew Creavey

tion. Which he won, and since the beginning of June, he has mentally and physically been setting himself up for success in the U.S. Army Reserve Command Best Warrior Competition.

"I am competing because I was asked to. I won, because I love the Army and being a Soldier. This competition is a test to see what I am made of," said Creavey.

Drawing from his strong commitment to Family, military and religious background, he said he feels this will give him the motivation to keep him going.

Even though he feels a little homesick.

"I grew up in a military Family with strong religious values and we are very close. My mother and father were both in the military when they met, stationed in Germany, both my brothers served and one is still serving with the Army," said Creavey.

Although being young, he knows he will face a set of challenges against the other contestants.

"My strongest event will be land-navigation. My weakest event will be the physical training test. I've seen some of these guys and they're pretty big, but I don't mind. I like being the underdog," said Creavey. "My unit chose me to participate because I am just out of basic. My Soldier skills are strong and I'm in great shape. Everything is still fresh for me and I am always a Soldier first," added Creavey.

Right now his goals are to learn as much as he can, and not only has he been preparing for this event, he received his Modern Army Combative Program level 1 certification and his combat lifesaving certification.

Being an underdog he has always moved forward, tried new things and succeeded.

"One of my latest accomplishments is learning how to play the banjo," he said.

"I've always enjoyed folk music and bluegrass. My long term goals are to pursue a degree in Architectural Engineering at Penn State and earn the rank of staff sergeant" said Creavey. "And I am confident I will be able to complete these missions." 🇺🇸

## DIAZ

### from Pg. 20

Hit or miss, Diaz said his experience at the 2014 USARC BWC will serve both his unit and himself in a myriad of ways. "I enjoy these competitions, they give me ideas to help me train my Soldiers," said Diaz. "Even more, it's a way for me to lead from the front and set the example for my Soldiers."

"Ceasefire! Ceasefire! Cease-fire!" announces the loud, mechanical voice.

Diaz wipes the sweat from his eyes, dusts off his gear, and heads off the range, ready to confront the many challenging events ahead of him. 🇺🇸

## DUROSAWO

### from Pg. 21

"I've always wanted to do at least do 20 years in the military - that was after my first five or six years," he said. "I like the camaraderie. I like the organization. I just like everything military-wise."

Although he still misses family in Nigeria, Durosawo has no regrets about moving to the U.S.

"It's what we wanted to do, and it came at the right time," he said. "It's great, good enough to make me want to serve and protect the culture - the things that make the country great. It's just like any other place. It's got its ups and it's got its downs - but it's got more ups than downs," he said. "More than anything ... you have the opportunity to better your life." 🇺🇸

## KEARNS

### from Pg. 17

list almost every semester," he said. "It's really hard to tell exactly when my civilian life ends and my military life begins - The Army instills in me a desire to become better than what I am every single day."

The discipline and experience the Army provided also came with some consequences, however.

"I was so wound up when I got back from the war," he said.

In Iraq, other dangers lay beneath the earth. Insurgent attacks threatened his life more than once. Fortunately for him, insurgents were inexperienced with improvised explosive devices back then. They were still new to the conflict.

"They buried the South African 155 (mm artillery round) so deep that when the blast went off, it went straight up into the air, and so it saved us from a lot of shrapnel. But I still remember pieces of ground hitting me in the hands," he said.

As he shared his stories, it seemed as though Kearns couldn't escape the earth's ground. His combat uniform was covered in New Jersey dust from firing in the prone at the M-16 rifle range. The dirt clung to his clothes, made into a filmy paste from the ounces of sweat that had poured from his body on the ruck march.

"The most exciting thing is just being able to compete against

the best of the best in the Army Reserve. It's really something to be able to test my skills against theirs," he said.

When he had come back from Iraq, a college mentor from Sam Houston State University steered him toward an outlet that provided relief. In 2004, Kearns began training in Hapkido, which is a martial art that focuses on minimal, not brute, force. Hapkido allowed Kearns to shift the trauma of war away from his mind and body. He stuck with it for five years, earned his black belt, then elevated to Kendo, which is Japanese sword fighting.

Kearns alluded to the parallel between these two disciplines of Army and Hapkido a few times. Soldiers are taught to kill from the early days of basic training. While Army warriors scream while penetrating the flesh of dummies with their bayonets, Hapkido empowers warriors with a quiet strength. It teaches to restrain violence in self-defense. Even with a sword in hand, Kendo is more of an art form than a kill strategy.

That contrast extends to Kearns' double life of a Warrior Citizen: He moves with force and quickness as he trains to fight America's enemies throughout the world, yet he's cerebral and studious as he aims to keep the earth's gradual threats at bay. 🇺🇸

## THORNTON

### from Pg. 26

Some competitors have been training for months. Thornton had to rely on a different edge to compensate for his lack of studying.

Three deployments.

His first one was to Iraq in 2004-2005, barely six months out of high school. His second was back to Iraq in 2007-2008, where he performed route clearance missions as a combat engineer.

Then a third one to Afghanistan in 2010-2011 where his unit ranked in the top two percentile of units with combat interaction during that period.

"All the little individual skills stuff, like treating a burn, searching a vehicle, I've done that in real world operations," said Thornton.

Despite that, the TEC competition was a tight one through the end. The winners for the 416th and 412th were decided by just a few points. There were a few occasions when Thornton wasn't sure he'd actually come out on top.

"My (physical fitness) test

absolutely sucked. Like, I was nowhere near 270. I think I might have gotten a 210. And I don't know if you saw, but I was dead last on the ruck march," said Thornton, of his last competition.

Still he persevered and pushed through the end. He made up the points with combat experience where he lost them due to lack of preparation.

He made it to the Army Reserve level where he fared better on his run and march times. Just before coming here, he managed to squeeze in a modern Army combatives course. Between ultrasound appointments and changing tires on the highway, he tried to keep his knowledge fresh as much as possible.

This week, Thornton will find out if his deployed experience still counts enough toward the competition's challenges.

At least, this time, he didn't have to drive back home to grab his gear. 🇺🇸

## STALLARD

### from Pg. 25

of mine wanting to join, and I was tagging along," Stallard said. "They didn't meet the height and weight requirements to join, so they looked at me and said, 'Hey, you're the perfect fit.'"

At the time, Stallard didn't think he would join. But a few months later, when he turned 18, he changed his mind.

He said he wanted to go to college but didn't have the money.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew I needed to do something," he said.

The decision did not initially go over well with his parents, whom he told the next day, and who were worried about his safety with the high rates of deployments to combat zones at the time.

"It was one of the only days I've seen my father cry," Stallard admitted.

Now, Stallard said both he and his parents look at the decision as one of the best changes of his life.

The chameleon continues to change. Now, he is set on changing his colors once again. This time to wear the color of the U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior. 🇺🇸

## WRIGHT

### from Pg. 28

forest for my civilian job," he said. "When I'm at work, I'm usually teaching guys about maps, compasses, lats and longs, and GPSs and stuff like that. I bring back anything I've learned out here.

He uses his military skills to help his fellow firefighters and he uses his civilian skills to help his fellow Soldiers. Wright helps other

Soldiers at BWC, and, in turn, they help him.

"You always learn new stuff. It doesn't matter who it is from. One of the specialists out here the other day corrected my handgrip on the M9. That doesn't transfer to my civilian job but it certainly made me shoot better," he said.

Whether he gets a rush or not,

Wright has enjoyed his time at BWC.

"I'm happy to be here," he said. "Staff Sgt. [Robert] Jones is here. He was in my company. We've served together in Afghanistan, and I haven't seen him in like six years. He's here competing so I thought that was pretty cool. I'm honored to be here." 🇺🇸



## CLIFFORD

### from Pg. 8

That's actually good. That's what you want," he said.

In turn, going to college helped his research and writing skills in his military intelligence job.

To overcome the physical challenges of this competition, he's had to train his body. But when it comes to critical thinking and writing, he really loves this stuff.

The Seattle resident is an avid reader and writer. He reads books ranging from science fiction to philosophy. His favorite author is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

"It's just his approach," he said. "You take Slaughterhouse-Five, you take something very, very serious and put such a comical spin on it, but not making fun of it, but in a way that's just pointing out the absurdity of it, and I think that just takes a pretty special talent to be able to do that without going too far on one end of the spectrum."

He also writes in his free time for joy.

"I do a lot of essays and stuff like that on particular topics that interest me, not anything formal but satirical or pop culture," he said about his personal writing. "I really only write for myself. I don't want to share it with the world."

Though his body is battered and bruised from three years of competing, his mind has remained sharp. Whether it's intelligence analysis or freelance writing, the wounds from Best Warrior can only invite him for more.

He may be hurt, but he'll return next year. For a fourth time.

Win or lose, Clifford intends to return next year, but this time as a sponsor. If he were to share his experiences with other Soldiers, he would say: "Just train hard. It's nothing super complicated. It's really more about the amount of work you put into it, so just train hard." 🇺🇸

## HEWSON

### from Pg. 31

family to incorporate training into their schedule.

On a recent family trip to the Grand Canyon, he wore a weighted vest to train for the ruck march.

They often go the YMCA together for physical fitness training. His brother, Jeremy, who has a background in Jiu Jitsu, has helped him train for the combatives tournaments. Jaime covers additional household duties to ensure he has enough time to train.

And yes, in addition to all of the real-life support, his family is in fact his biggest cheerleader.

"The kids are really big into superhero movies right now," said Jaime. "So that's what they think their dad is, too. A superhero."

Whether his family sees him as "The Beast," or regular guy, you could say his "BCG" glasses are more akin to those worn by Clark Kent. 🇺🇸

## LOPEZ CINTRÓN

### from Pg. 32

never satisfied with simply accomplishing a goal. I like giving it my maximum and reaching the highest level that I can."

With days to go and many late nights and early wakeups ahead, Lopez Cintrón will have plenty of opportunities to test his maximum effort. 🇺🇸

## CAYLOR

### from Pg. 38

training, when deployed and during events such as the Best Warrior Competition.

As Caylor's moment of rest ended, he rose to his feet, shouldered his ruck sack and grabbed his gear.

Like the Apaches he keeps airborne, Caylor was off to complete his next mission. 🇺🇸

# JACKSON

from Pg. 12

more than a year. Soldiers are expected to assemble and disassemble half a dozen different weapon systems at these competitions, but Muay Thai frees the body to use its own weapons.

"I fill my free time with the art of eight limbs," said Jackson. "In the martial arts, it teaches you that you have eight weapons of your body. (They) are your hands, your feet, your knees and your elbows."

In Muay Thai, striking your opponent is allowed, but in modern Army combatives - a key event in most Best Warrior Competitions - there's none of that.

It's all about grappling and applying joint pressure to force a submission. Despite this difference, Jackson takes his stamina and strength from Muay Thai to the combatives mat.

At the engineer competition, he had defeated every one of his

opponents. He earned extra points through submissions. This allowed him to edge for the lead, and ensured him a spot in New Jersey, where the air fills with muggy heat even in the early hours.

"Your mental grit is what keeps you in a competition," said Jackson.

One of his favorite anime series is "Naruto," based on a ninja with a character that never quits, even when the world seems to cave around him, he said.

For Jackson, these competitions are about perseverance and resiliency, words he correlated to his character. His fighting spirit, he said, is what allowed him to win the TEC competition in spite of taking hits in a few events.

"When you're fighting, there's no time-out. There's no, 'OK, I'll come back tomorrow and do it better.' So I take that, and, you

know, I take my fighting character, and I incorporate it into this competition, because when you do it, you do it today," said Jackson.

That's the same fighting attitude he's brought to this competition.

He knows that every day he's among the best Soldiers he's ever met. He welcomes the challenge. He's excited to be among a group of the highest caliber of Soldiers. He knows this will be more intense than all the previous competitions.

It doesn't matter.

He'll continue fighting, regardless of weather or internal turmoil.

"I came to get it in. I didn't come to play around. So regardless if the competition is hard or a breeze, I'm going to put in work," said Jackson. "I'm going to come through like a tornado." 🌪️



# GHOLSTON

from Pg. 40

commissioned officer category for the 416th TEC.

From bear-crawling drills up hills to constantly quizzing each other on Army knowledge, Gholston prepared to reach a much higher score this time. Already, he improved his run time by 90 seconds on the first day.

"I don't care if I do bad on one event because there's still a lot more to go - No matter what

comes in front of me, I'm willing to push forward and always willing to drive on," said Gholston.

At least New Jersey is not known for howling gusts. During most of the events, Soldiers have to prove how well they can endure as individuals. It's a "Soldier Against Self" battle at every turn. But once they square off on the combatives mat, they'll have to face a 200-pound ghost. 👻

# REYES-ORTIZ

## from Pg. 33

Army Reserve,” said Reyes-Ortiz. “I like the physical challenge- its about challenges [that require you] to always step up and be better.”

As the sun rises and the pace fades, the end is finally in sight. With renewed vigor, Reyes-Ortiz shuffles his feet faster and faster, intent on finishing strong.

Soldiers who have worked with Reyes-Ortiz are accustomed to his driven mentality.

“He has an aura about him,” said Diaz-Luquis. “... a thirst to win.”

Reyes-Ortiz said he believes this competition will be an integral stepping stone for his future goals. He is already set on a promotion to staff sergeant after his recent promotion to sergeant.

Reyes-Ortiz also plans to become a drill sergeant and seek a direct commission as an Army officer in the future.

“I’m going to do my full career in the Army for 20, 30, 40 years - or whenever I get too old for this,”

declared Reyes-Ortiz.

His desire to serve stems from his selfless nature.

“I am a leader, and I like to project that and help people,” said Reyes-Ortiz. “That’s what the Army does - we help people.”

He also wants to continue his civilian education, eventually planning to finish his bachelor’s degree and earn a master’s degree in Business Administration. For Reyes-Ortiz, the Army Reserve fits perfectly into his life vision.

“I joined (the Army Reserve) because I like it and I can accomplish my personal and educational goals through the Army,” said Reyes-Ortiz. “Being a Citizen-Soldier means everything to me. I can do it every day of my life because I love it - and (can) do something good for my country in the military.”

While the ruck march ended at the line, the competition continued through June 27. And even after the competition finishes, Reyes-Ortiz will continue moving forward. 🇺🇸

# DOTY

## from Pg. 39

studying field manuals and army regulations, while in full swing of his college semester.

However, the Army Reserve level competition is more intense than anything he has done yet.

Doty knows Soldiers were good at the last level.

Here, he will be up against the best of the best competitors from each reserve command.

“I expect a lot more of a competition from these guys - I know a big competition [like this] is going to be way more intense,” he said.

And yet, he doesn’t plan on changing his outlook, nor his preparation.

“I’m just not going to really worry about how the competition is because that’s only going to demoralize me. I like to think of it as just another training event. I get to shoot a pistol. I get to go shoot a rifle. A ruck march,” he said. “Stuff that I love.” 🇺🇸

# LEWIS

## from Pg. 9

Warrior Competition is an extension of his military career much like going to school and studying Chinese once he returned to the states. Lewis plans to combine both of these passions into one career. His hope is that his love of linguistics and interest in Chinese culture can further his Army career and his goal to one day be a command sergeant major.

“I love responsibility and being there for my fellow Soldiers,” he said “and being a sergeant major can allow me to help more Soldiers achieve their goals.” 🇺🇸



# ANDERSON

## from Pg. 35

forces in the Army Reserve. He also plans to attend airborne and air assault schools.

He said, "I'm competing in this competition trying my best to show everybody within my unit and the Army that I'm willing to set the standard high and do whatever it takes to be deserving of those schools and show them I'm willing to go the extra mile."

On the civilian side, Anderson wants to serve in a law enforcement capacity be it as a police officer, detective or FBI agent.

"Pretty much anything in law enforcement is my end goal," he explained. "Wherever I end up, I've no doubt I'll be happy."

His goal to serve in law enforcement stems from his desire to

help people, he said.

"I just love helping people. Anything I can do to help anybody in any way, I enjoy. There's no more rewarding feeling than that feeling you get from helping somebody out."

This Warrior-Citizen tries to help someone every day and has taken every opportunity he's had to help competitors with tasks they may be unfamiliar with.

In his free time, he enjoys target shooting, hiking, being outdoors and reading. And, yes, he loves running.

Anderson looks forward to seeing his mother and grandfather after the competition. He said his grandfather, whose cancer is in remission, is very proud of him.

"Don't let anybody tell you (that) you can't do anything," he encourages others that feel they have impossible goals. "You can do anything you put your mind to. I've overcome and accomplished so many goals that I thought I'd never accomplish in my lifetime. Just go out and do it. Have the will, the determination and the motivation to go out and do whatever you want to do with your life."

Anderson's may have lost weight, but he has certainly grown in strength of character. His outlook on life, ambition and desire to help others have motivated him. Whatever challenges may come his way, he's more than willing to run down the path and carry that weight. 🇺🇸

# WILES

## from Pg. 47

Philosophy, he says, is a sense of perspective. A way to live your life.

"Perspective changes everything," said Wiles.

Two weeks after he got married, he told his wife he wanted to join the Army. At first she was surprised, but her outlook changed, and now she's part of the Family Readiness Group for the unit and is enjoying living the military life.

"Your perspective really determines your success or failure in anything you attempt to do. Or your enjoyment in it," added Wiles.

Because his Family and wife

are supportive, he says there is nothing he can't accomplish.

"Family support, especially my wife, that's my big strength," said Wiles. "For me, she's the big strong point in my life," said Wiles. "I also like to surprise people. I'm a smaller guy. People sometimes see me and make a judgement, and I like to prove them different. It's kind of a motivational thing for me."

His journey will continue as he pursues his dreams of becoming a lawyer, earns his commission and becomes a JAG officer. If he's patient, he will catch more than just fish. He will hook a win. 🇺🇸



## MEYER

### from Pg. 44

“Doing each event back-to-back on a daily basis where your body gets physically tired, and you wake up the next day and have to push yourself to do those same events - it’s a real mental game to get thorough that week,” Meyer said. “The German Proficiency Badge competition gave me the confidence to compete and hopefully win at this level.”

During the German Armed Forces Proficiency

Badge competition, Meyer overcame the heat, exhaustion and blisters to receive top scores and earn gold in the ruck march, as well as every other event in which he participated.

This week, he’s going to lace up his boots, weigh his ruck sack and listen for those footsteps once again.

But this time, his sights are set on Army gold. 🇺🇸

## KHOKHAR

### from Pg. 43

hurt either.

After serving three years on active duty, he left the military in October 2012.

He completed his geographic information systems degree in Connecticut. He also finished his emergency medical technician certification in California. He said his move to the West Coast was also random.

“I’d never been there and it seemed nice,” he said, almost as nonchalantly as if he had been deciding where to eat that evening.

Khokhar missed the Army lifestyle and structure and re-entered the Army Reserve. His road to this competition was also unplanned.

When asked why he wanted to participate in the Best Warrior Competition, he answered with a slight smile, “Why not? Just for the heck of it, I guess! I’ve just been seeing where the chips fall and playing it as it is.”

To look at Khokhar, one might not initially think he is one of the top Soldiers in the Army Reserve. He has a lean

build with glasses and one might expect to be more likely to find him in a computer lab than on a rifle range. Despite having only been in the country for 10 years, he doesn’t carry an accent when he speaks. But to overlook the even-keeled Khokhar as a fierce competitor might be a mistake for other Soldiers in the Best Warrior Competition. Inside his slight build is the tactical expertise of a trained infantry Soldier who keeps his emotions in check, and did not come here to lose.

“I’m pretty confident, and it should be fun,” Khokhar said. “It’s not about winning or losing for me. It’s about having fun and doing better than you did yesterday, that’s all that matters.”

Getting schools as a reward for winning the qualifying Best Warrior competitions leading up to the Reserve-wide competition has been the best part of the experience thus far, Khokhar said. He completed Air Assault School a week before this competition, and is excited about the possibility of attending Airborne School.

Khokhar said for the first time in his life, he feels like he really knows where he wants to be and what he wants to do with his life. His goals are to return to active duty and to pursue trying out for the Special Forces as a medic. In the meantime, he’s working toward another degree in nursing.

Ironically enough, his interest in the Special Forces came not from his time on the battlefield, but in a homeless shelter instead.

“I try to volunteer at St. Anthony’s shelter up in San Francisco as much as possible,” he said. “I enjoy helping people, and it does fall in with the whole Special Forces idea. I talked with the SF people and they said the best way to see if you can handle the community is to work with the homeless, and people who need help, because their job is more to help people and train them up and stuff.”

Until then, the quiet warrior continues on his journey, taking each new day as it comes, not knowing where the breeze may take him next. 🇺🇸

# 2014 ARMY BEST WARRIOR





# Y RESERVE R IN PICTURES



U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior candidates make their way in the darkness during the eight-mile ruck march during the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)



Staff Sgt. Alicia Staples, a drill sergeant with 1st Battalion, 317th Regiment, 98th Training Division, grades sit-ups during the Army Physical Fitness Test at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, June 23, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

More than three dozen Army Reserve Soldiers participated in the physical fitness test during the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition June 23. (Photo by Sgt. Jedidiah Hewson)

Sgt. Jedidiah Hewson, a human intelligence collector from the 1st Battalion, 317th Regiment, 98th Training Division, rests his shooting eye while waiting to shoot at the 9 mm qualification range June 23. (Photo by Sgt. Gregory P. Doty)

Spc. Gregory P. Doty, resident of Lake Peekskill, New York, fires a 9mm pistol at pop-up targets during a marksmanship range June 23. (Photo by Sgt. Jedidiah Hewson)





## FROM TOP RIGHT

perform the 2-mile run during the Army Physical Fitness Test  
(Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris/99th Regional Support Command)

Desa, Arizona, with the 301st Military Intelligence Battalion,  
(by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan C. Matson/87th Support Command)

an allied trade specialist with the 854th Engineer Battalion,  
(1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)





Spc. Stanley Hale, Jr., a supply specialist with the 1st Battalion, 415th Regiment, 2nd Brigade, uses a red light to check his map and reconfirm that he is heading in the correct direction at the night land navigation event during the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 23. (Photo by Sgt. Benjamin W. John/364th Press Camp Headquarters)

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Maglott, a medic from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, assigned to the 723rd Medical Command, searches for points on his map on the night and day land navigation course.

Sgt. 1st Class Marcum James, with the 244th Aviation Brigade, watches the night and day land navigation course. The helicopter and its crew are from Bravo Company, 5th Battalion (Medical), 11th Theater Aviation Command, Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Spc. Gregory Doty, an allied trade specialist with the 854th Engineer Battalion, searches for points on his map on the night and day land navigation course. (Photo by Sgt. Benjamin W. John/364th Press Camp Headquarters)



## FROM TOP RIGHT

36th Medical Support Unit and representing Army Reserve  
 rse, June 24. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPASE)

s as a CH-47 Chinook approaches a pick-up zone, June 24.  
 General Support), 159th Regiment, 244th Aviation Brigade,  
 rt Eustis, Va. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

talion, looks out the window of a CH-47 Chinook, June 25.  
 1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)





Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Kearns, combat engineer and trainer with the 75th Training Division, living in Houston, Texas, conducts an early morning road march that spanned eight miles while carrying a 35-pound ruck and a rifle during the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)

Spc. Gregory P. Doty, left, an allied trade specialist representing the 335th Signal Command, and Sgt. Kathleen Shetley, an Army band member representing the 6253rd United States Army Hospital, are seen from cadre at the finish of the 8-mile ruck march, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)

Spc. Curtis Anderson, left, a supply specialist representing the 80th Training Command (TASS), a Staff Sergeant representing the 335th Signal Command, and Sgt. Kathleen Shetley, an Army band member representing the 6253rd United States Army Hospital, are seen from cadre at the finish of the 8-mile ruck march, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)

Spc. Keith Lewis, a behavioral health specialist with the 6253rd United States Army Hospital, is seen from cadre at the finish of the eight-mile ruck march, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michel Sauret/416th Theater Engineer Command)





## FROM TOP RIGHT

Specialist with the 85th Engineer Battalion, receives guidance by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan C. Matson/87th Support Command)

Staff Sgt. Anthony Diaz, a chemical operator specialist representing the 99th Regional Support Command, carry a litter with a mannequin, June 25. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

Specialist, waits to receive medical care on his foot following a training exercise. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan C. Matson/87th Support Command)



Spc. Ian P. Balag, an information management specialist with the U.S. Army Pacific Support Unit located at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, fires his M16 rifle at the night qualification event at the 2014 Army Reserve Best Warrior competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPASE)

U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior candidate watches his lane for targets. Parachute flares and flash grenades helped illuminate the targets for the competition.

A U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior candidate watches his lane for targets. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPASE)

Spc. Brandyn Sprague of the 505th TTSB, searches for targets during the M16 Night Fire qualification, June 25. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell/JPASE)





## FROM TOP RIGHT

Candidates engage targets at night with the M16 rifle, June 25.  
the Warriors. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

for a target during the M16 rifle night qualification, June 25.  
Sgt. Hector Corea/366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

ches for targets with the aid of a parachute flare during the  
Sgt. William Battle/372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



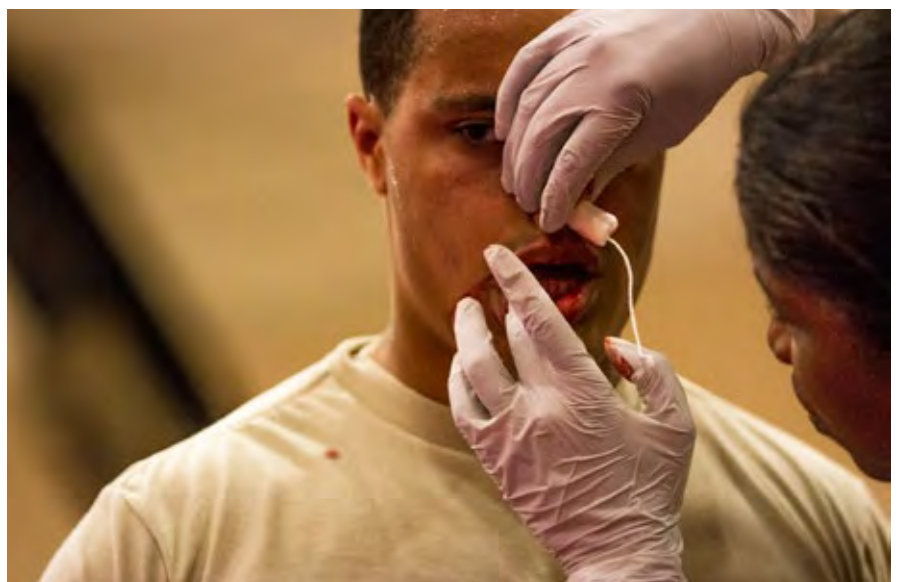


Sgt. Julio Lopez Cintrón flips over Staff Sgt. Victor Ramos during the Modern Army Combatives tournament at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, June 26, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. The tournament concluded the four-day Best Warrior competition. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

Sgt. Lance Clifford, top, works to get an arm bar on his opponent during the Modern Army Combatives tournament at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, June 26, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

Sgt. Jedediah Hewson, a human intelligence collector with the 101st Airborne Division, works to get an arm bar on his opponent during the Modern Army Combatives tournament at the 2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition, June 26, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)

Spc. Rahn receives medical care from medics June 26. (Photo by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve)



## FROM TOP RIGHT

During the Modern Army Combatives tournament, June 26.  
(Sgt. Hector Corea/366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

The 301st Military Intelligence Battalion, right, congratulates,  
specialist with the 493rd Military Police Company and the  
by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan C. Matson/87th Support Command)

Mad Gholston, with the 416th Theater Engineer Command,  
by Sgt. Benjamin W. John/364th Press Camp Headquarters)



# CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE BEST WARRIOR CANDIDATES

For more photos and videos from the  
2014 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior competition,  
visit the USARC DVIDS page  
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- U.S. Army Reserve Command Public Affairs
- Joint Public Affairs Support Element
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- 99th Regional Support Command