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on the cover

A competitor engages his target during the M4 qualification range of the 64th Troop Command Best Warrior Competition at Fort McCoy Nov. 8. Four Soldiers and five noncommissioned officers competed to represent the Wisconsin Army National Guard at the state competition in April. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Pfc. Christopher Enderle

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From the Adjutant General

This month we commemorated the 63rd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. This attack caught our nation off-guard and pulled us into the second World War. Our nation mobilized and met this threat head on and defeated the Axis forces, preserving liberty at home and abroad. Each year on this anniversary, we also honor the survivors of that fateful day of infamy as a national treasure and a subset of our nation's greatest generation. Pearl Harbor led our country to declare war and to also declare — never again will we be caught unprepared. A hard-learned lesson.

A few days later, the Governor and first lady hosted an event for Wisconsin's Gold Star families. Many families who have lost loved ones gathered at the executive residence and shared stories and perspectives with each other for a few hours. There are many wonderful take-aways from this event, but two that seem particularly noteworthy. The first is the incredible pride that these families have in the memory of their loved one who served this nation. There is a tremendous sense of loss, but a foundational thread of pride in a son or daughter, husband or wife who served his/her nation by choice. The second is the resilience of these remarkable families. The ability to share a smile or a laugh despite the loss of something so precious is inspiring.

In between these two events, we welcomed home Soldiers of the 829th Engineer Company, a portion of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, and Detachment 52 — all of



whom completed combat deployments and performed magnificently. For many of these Soldiers it was their first deployment, and for the other half it represented their second or more. Returning at this time of year is an added blessing. The Christmas season in America is a special time for our nation and for these soldiers, regardless of personal traditions and customs, and it brings an opportunity to be with family during the holiday season. Lastly, we welcomed home the 32nd Base Defense Operations Center (BDCO) from a unique mission in

Kuwait.

Amidst these events, we are reminded of this legacy we share. What a debt of gratitude we owe these men and women, who volunteered to serve their nation, endured the rigor of hard training and deployed into a combat zone for several months. It is a legacy shared with the greatest generation who served in WW II and shared with those few remaining Pearl Harbor survivors. It is a legacy of honor and reflects greatly on these men and women who serve the United States. It also reflects greatly on those

who serve in Wisconsin's National Guard.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the men and women of the Wisconsin's National Guard, all of our veterans, and their families. Let us hope that 2015 finds us prepared for unforeseen events and home with our families.



Mission ACCOMPLISHED

Families of the approximately 150 Soldiers of the 829th Engineer Company reunited at Volk Field Dec. 8 after the unit completed a successful Afghanistan deployment. The 829th, a vertical engineer company, was tasked with deconstructing U.S. military bases in Afghanistan as part of the responsible drawdown of forces there. Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Vaughn R. Larson
Department of Military Affairs

VOLK FIELD — Wind, snow and freezing rain couldn't douse the warm welcome families and friends gave the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 829th Engineer Company Dec. 8.

"This is the best weather I've seen in nine months," said Pvt. 2nd Class Hayden Panzer, a plumber with the 829th, as he walked from the passenger jet to the hangar where dozens of families eagerly awaited their Soldiers. His family was unable to make it to the welcome home ceremony, but visiting them was on top of his agenda after the ceremony.

"It will be real good to see them again, I'll tell you what," Panzer said.

The 829th, a vertical engineer company headquartered in Chippewa Falls, with detachments in Ashland and Richland Center, normally erects buildings. However, the

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829th Engineer Company celebrates successful completion of Afghanistan mission

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unit deployed to Afghanistan earlier this year tasked with an atypical mission.

“Our job was actually to make things smaller and to get people out,” said Capt. Kyle Gruber, company commander. “It was a lot of work — we had to make up a lot of things as we went. It’s not necessarily something the Army does every day.”

The 829th disassembled U.S. military bases, reclaiming materials and in so doing, saving money and denying resources to the Taliban. Gruber said his company racked up more than 114,000 man-hours retrograding five bases. The 829th deconstructed more than 300 structures, turned in more than \$18 million in equipment, and built a \$400,000 housing area — all ahead of schedule, all while dodging indirect fire.

“It’s a combination of good old-fashioned Wisconsin work ethic, and we trained really hard,” Gruber said. “It comes down to courage.”

Turning to Gov. Scott Walker and Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, Gruber said, “It is my honor to report that the 829th Engineer Company, vertical, has executed all missions assigned and exceeded the standards across the board, and is now mission complete.”

Dunbar praised the 829th, saying they may never fully realize the lives they positively impacted in Afghanistan.

“You should be proud of the mission you have accomplished,” Dunbar said. “We sent the very best to get the job done, and that’s the 829th.”

Walker agreed. He shared how he had recently spoken with many World War II veterans, members of “the Greatest Generation.”

“I think that tradition is still with us here today,” Walker said. “We saw it not only in World War II veterans, but in Korea, in Vietnam, in Desert Storm — and for many of you here today, this wasn’t your first return home from a deployment,

but one of many.

“I think about this proud tradition, not just in this country but in this state, of men and women like each one of you here,” Walker continued. “On behalf of a grateful state and nation, we say ‘thank you.’”

Spc. Nathaniel Hitchcock and

his younger brother, Spc. Johnathan Hitchcock, from Ashland, each have less than three years in the military but now have one deployment under their belt. The deployment proved to be a different experience than they anticipated, but they’re not complaining.

“I thought we’d do convoys to places,

but we ended up taking airplanes and helicopters everywhere,” Nathaniel said.

“It was nice to come together as a squad,” Johnathan added. “It was nice to see friendships being made.”

“We did great things over there,”

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829th Engineer Company prepared Afghanistan for reduced U.S. troop presence

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Nathaniel said. “It feels great to accomplish that.”

Many of the returning Soldiers spoke of the excitement of reuniting with loved ones, starting new careers or going back to school. In one Soldier’s case, she was looking forward to starting a whole new chapter of her life.

“I had just graduated, so I have no home or anything, so I’m going to find my own apartment, get my own car, hopefully find a new job, and now I have educational benefits, so hopefully I’ll go back to school,” said Spc. Laura Van Remortel of Green Bay.

Van Remortel graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a biology degree in December 2013 before deploying to Afghanistan as part of a deconstruction team. She now hopes to start a career working with animals or go back to school to pursue a graduate degree or another undergraduate degree.

The deployment was a great experience, she said, because she met so many new people and got to be a part of something bigger.

“What was really cool was we actually got to shut down some of the airfields and give them back to the Afghan people,” she said.

Like Van Remortel, Spc. Johnathon Dittman of Portage has plans to go back to school. Dittman is in the middle of pursuing an industrial engineering degree at UW-Platteville and is looking forward to resuming his studies for the spring semester.

He said the deployment presented its challenges, but the camaraderie that existed within the unit helped get everyone through it.

“You knew everyone had your back and you had theirs,” he said. “I met a lot of great people, and I’m glad I got to be a part of this experience.”

Dunbar observed that few Americans

wear the military uniform, and fewer still deploy to a combat zone. While that experience is rare, he said, time with family is even more precious.

“You’re home, it’s the eighth of December, we’re about to go into the holiday season,” Dunbar said. “I would encourage you to drink deeply — of the time with your family. The chance to spend the holidays after a deployment with your families is a rare gift.”

“I hope you take advantage of that time together,” he continued, suggesting that his words were more than a warm sentiment: “Anybody here who’s full-time in the Guard, if you try and show up in the armory before Christmas, you’re fired.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s senior enlisted advisor, told the returning Soldiers that they were now beginning

the reintegration phase of their mission. He cautioned the 829th that their families had spent several months navigating life without them, so returning to life as it had been before the deployment would take time and effort.

“Be patient with each other,” Shields said. “Everybody has changed during this time of separation. Leave time to get to know each other again. There are a lot of resources here to help with that.”

Gruber thanked the unit’s Family Readiness Group volunteers for their resilience, caring and understanding during late nights, absences for training, and their efforts during the unit’s deployment.

“I believe they are the best family readiness group in Wisconsin National Guard history — period.”

Gruber also thanked the families,

crediting them for the unit’s success.

“You have raised incredibly motivated, disciplined, mature and hard-working Soldiers,” Gruber said. “This is the only unit in the task force that always completed work ahead of schedule and above the standard. The accolades and awards received by your Soldiers bear witness to this. Your Soldiers received more than double the number of awards and accolades of any other unit in the task force.”

“This is your honor, too,” he told the families. “You are all master builders, evident by the strong men and women I brought back to you and who are standing here today. Thank you for lending them to me for service to this great nation. Very shortly, you can have them back.” 📷

Capt. Joe Trovato contributed to this article

Capt. Kyle Gruber, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 829th Engineer Company, applauds the members of the unit’s Family Readiness Group during a Dec. 8 welcome home ceremony at Volk Field. Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson
Click on this image to see additional photos

[Story online](#)

Making a difference

**Capt. Joe Trovato
and Sgt. Katie Eggers**
Wisconsin National Guard

Roughly half of the Sussex-based Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery is back in Wisconsin, but the other half is still conducting fire support missions in Afghanistan.

"These guys are the most committed and hard working group of individuals I've worked with," said Capt. Aaron Ammerman, Battery A's commander. "They certainly make my job easy with their motivation and their level of knowledge that they bring to the table every day."

Since arriving in Afghanistan, Battery A has provided 24-hour HIMARS fire support to a joint special operations task force. The unit's fire support operations provided coverage for nearly half of Afghanistan and supported more than 200 combat missions.

Sgt. Jason Kollmorgan said he has enjoyed seeing another culture, but Afghanistan's weather took him by surprise.

"The weather is hotter than you can prepare for," he said. "Temperatures nearing 120 degrees nearly every day during the day is something that takes time to get used to, however, we have gotten used to it."

Other Soldiers echoed the same sentiments, especially given that the snow in Wisconsin was just beginning to melt when the unit left the Badger State for mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas.

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Wisconsin National Guard file
photo by Staff Sgt. Sean Huolihan

Alpha Battery keeps pace in Afghanistan as half of unit returns safely to US

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"The deployment life is all about making a routine that fits the individual's schedule and keeping to it," Sgt. Matthew McIntyre said. "All of the Soldiers that are with us have adjusted to their hours and have a functional routine that keeps everyone busy."

And while the harsh wind and sandy conditions that define Afghanistan wear on many of the Soldiers, they have found many positives in their surroundings.

"The best part about Afghanistan would have to be the view," McIntyre said. "The horizon view of the mountains is picturesque, and with the sunrise or sunset looks like something out of a photo-shopped screen saver."

The unit's commander said his unit has grown a lot since the team was originally assembled.

"The most rewarding part has been the ability to watch Soldiers mature and develop," Ammerman said. "We were quite a young unit when we deployed, and to watch these guys grow as Soldiers and leaders has been nothing short of incredible."

Fifty-one of the unit's nearly 80 Soldiers are on their first deployment. For many, the hardest part has been the distance from home.

Spc. Shane Shuster said that adjusting to the daily routine was not difficult, but being separated from his family and missing his daughter's second birthday was hard.

"My family and friends have been supportive," he said. "They make sure I have everything I miss from back home."

The unit has been receiving care packages from family, friends, employers and community groups on an almost weekly basis, and the Soldiers have had access to Skype, computers and phones to help bridge the distance to loved ones back home.

Spc. Noah Kummrow said, "The most challenging part of this deployment has



been being away from my family and friends. Being away from them for so long will only allow me to cherish the time I get with them when I get back home – more so than I already have."

"I wouldn't change the fact that I am here for anything," said Spc. Jeremy Whiting. "I'm happy to be here with my military family."

Back in Milwaukee, emotions ran high Dec. 13 as families began to gather in the Milwaukee Room at General Mitchell International Airport. Melissa Kluka was one of the first to arrive at the airport, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Jason Kluka.



Above, Soldiers from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery arrive back on U.S. soil at Fort Bliss, Texas, Dec. 2, after six months in Afghanistan. Directorate of Mobilization and Support photo
Left, Staff Sgt. Matthew Wheelen, of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, hugs his 16-month-old daughter Charlotte as his wife Katie looks on at Gen. Mitchell International Airport Dec. 13. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Sgt. Katie Eggers

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Returning artillery Soldiers reunited with families after six-month deployment

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As Kluka's wife waited alongside their daughter, Mya, she grabbed an extra pack of tissues and a bottle of water. She waited for about 10 minutes before walking over to the concourse gate to wait there, almost 45 minutes before her husband's flight was scheduled to land.

"I'm excited to be on vacation," Melissa Kluka said. "We're not going anywhere, but I took time off. From here, we're going to go surprise his other two children, my step-children."

The flights that carried the Soldiers returning home were staggered throughout the afternoon with the last flight arriving around 10 p.m. The Soldiers had been in the United States since arriving at Fort Bliss, Texas on Dec. 2, where they completed demobilization activities before returning to Milwaukee.

Soldiers were greeted at the gate by Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, deputy adjutant general for Army, and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, the Wisconsin Army National Guard's senior noncommissioned officer, before making the walk up the concourse to be reunited with their families.

As they approached the concourse, Soldiers were greeted with music played by the Wisconsin National Guard's 132nd Army Band, followed by hugs from family member as they walked past the security checkpoint.

Before Soldiers departed the airport, they were sent off with encouraging words from the senior leadership.

"Phenomenal job," Dunbar said. "You may never really know how much you've contributed to our nation by serving in Afghanistan, but you guys did a tremendous job. Well done!"

Dunbar also gave a message of thanks to the families present. Both Shields and Anderson took the time to give thanks and reiterate how important the families



Left, Sgt. Steven Eckels grabs his luggage as he prepares to leave with his family at Gen. Mitchell International Airport Dec. 13. Bottom left, Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, speaks to returning Soldiers. Approximately 40 Soldiers returned from a combat deployment to Afghanistan. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Sgt. Katie Eggers



are.

"For all the family members in the back, these Soldiers could not do what they do without the love and support of each and every one of you," Anderson said. "The support that you provide to your individual Soldier directly affects the success of this organization as a whole. What they've accomplished in theater is a result not only of their capabilities, but the love and the support of all the family members that are standing behind you, so thank you for your support."

One such supporter is Katie Wheelan,

the wife of Staff Sgt. Matthew Wheelan. She said her family didn't understand why she was happy for her husband on his deployment.

"They asked, 'Don't you want him to stay safe?' Wheelan said. "You don't join basketball just to sit on the bench — you want to play. This is his job. He wants to do this, and he's good at it."

The couple has a daughter named Charlotte who is 16 months old. When Wheelan left for his deployment, Charlotte wasn't even crawling. When he arrived at the airport Saturday, his daughter slowly

walked to him. It was the first time that he had ever seen his daughter walk.

As Soldiers left the airport with their families, many of them expressed how good it felt that they would be able to spend Christmas with their families. As Sgt. Steven Eckels walked with his family towards their car carrying a duffel bag on his back and another on his front, he had a huge smile on his face.

"I try not to," Eckels joked. "But then I just have this huge feeling of happiness inside." 📸

[Story online](#)

Red Arrow Soldiers building partnerships in Middle East

Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin National Guard

The importance of military-to-military partnerships and cooperation has been on display in recent months as the U.S. and partner nations work to combat the growing threat posed by extremist militants in the Middle East.

A group of Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard has been hard at work building and strengthening similar relationships in the region since it deployed to Kuwait and Jordan last spring.

The 65 Soldiers of the 32nd Military Engagement Team and the 32nd Base Defense Operations left Wisconsin in February en route to the Middle East.

The BDOC Soldiers are responsible for mission command of security and camp operations at a facility in Kuwait. Meanwhile the military engagement team, headquartered partially in Kuwait and partially in Jordan, has been busy travelling throughout the region engaging with key military and government leaders, and in some cases, royalty.

Their work has taken on an added significance as tensions in the region have grown.

"The world is currently filled with conflict and confusion," said Col. David Monk, the commander for the two deployed units from the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. "The mission that the Soldiers of the 32nd MET are performing helps to bring clarity and understanding of the different cultures that are at odds with each other. Strategic leaders value the information that we provide and make decisions that may affect the countries where we are involved and possibly even the national security of the United States of America."

Monk, who deployed three times previously, said the nature of this mission distinguishes it from the others.

"My personal engagements with royalty have been the most unique experience I



Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar (center) and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields (center kneeling), with Soldiers of the 32nd Military Engagement Team and 32nd Base Defense

Operations Center in Kuwait during a visit earlier this year. The two teams of 32nd Brigade Soldiers are supporting U.S. interests in the region. Submitted photo

have ever had in my entire military career," he said.

The MET's travels has also taken the team to places like the Dead Sea, ancient villages and Roman ruins, Monk said. He also had an opportunity to see the pope when he visited Jordan.

The team has built relationships and partnerships in nine different countries thus far and may ultimately travel to as many as 18 in places like Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Tajikistan and Oman. The MET shares

best practices, engages with U.S. and foreign military leaders in the region, foreign royalty and even members of Congress travelling through the region on state visits. Perhaps most importantly, their efforts are supporting the collective national security interests of the United States and positively impacting U.S. humanitarian aid efforts in Syria and Iraq.

Many of the Soldiers on the deployment have deployed previously or have years of experience operating at the tactical and operational level. For most,

however, their current deployment is their first experience operating at a strategic level.

"Morale is very high and everyone understands how important the work that they are doing contributes to the various missions and the United States' foreign policy goals," Monk said.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Gaier, an operations non-commissioned officer with the MET, sees the big picture role his unit

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Engage Forward: Red Arrow Soldiers positively impact Middle East mission

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serves.

"Most Soldiers have full and fruitful careers working at the tactical and operational level and don't receive the opportunity to conduct missions at the strategic level allowing them to see the bigger picture or connect their specific duty with the operational picture," he said. "With our mission, we have to keep strategic goals in the forefront of our minds at all times when we are engaging with another country's military or civilian population."

That experience gained at the strategic level will have a lasting impact on each of these Soldiers' careers, Monk said.

Besides the military experiences, the Soldiers will return to Wisconsin with a wide array of cultural experiences that will only help them grow as Soldiers and leaders. Gaier said being immersed in the various cultures they have visited broadens their understanding and facilitates their mission.

"When you go out and truly enjoy someone else's country and culture and develop a better understanding of it, it sets the stage for a meaningful, positive experience, which leads to one of our goals of building partner capacity," he said.

Ultimately those experiences are going a long way toward building positive face-to-face interactions between the United States and its partners.

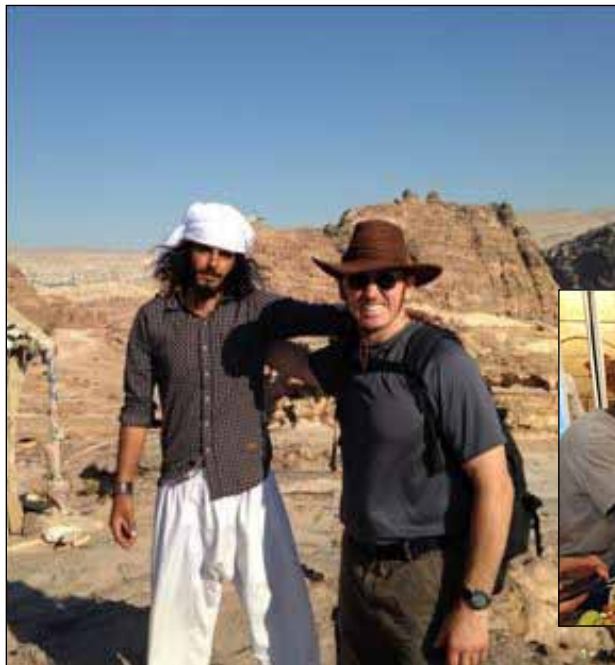
"This mission puts a face, a name and an experience that connects the U.S. military directly to other countries," Sgt. 1st Class Natalie Koffarnus said. "It's the difference between getting a card in the mail on your birthday or having a party. Both are nice, but the party is more memorable."

The MET conducts an initial engagement with key leaders and then works to make sure that leads to follow-on engagements.

"We want there to be a series of engagements in our partner countries, not just a one-time date," Lt. Col. Brian Leahy said.

Leahy highlighted an engagement the MET conducted in Kazakhstan in June where the MET discussed peace-keeping operations with Kazakh military leaders. Now the team is preparing for future engagements to discuss non-commissioned officer development with them.

Capt. Jesse Lewis, an intelligence officer, said he's learned that the military leaders in each nation have similar goals as the U.S. military — protecting their homes and families and ultimately making the world a better place. In that sense, he and other Soldiers said, it's



Members of the 32nd Brigade's Military Engagement Team interacting with locals and counterparts in Jordan and Kyrgyzstan.
Submitted photos



easy to relate and find commonalities.

"We have a great team that is doing great things," Lewis said. "I am extremely proud to be a part of it. It is a once in a lifetime experience."

The Red Arrow Soldiers, some of whom also hail from the other major subordinate commands within the Wisconsin Army National Guard, have earned high praise for their work overseas.

"The performance of the individual members and the entire team is something that I am very proud of," Monk said. "The quality of this team continues to impress leaders and organizations that we interact with at all levels. It seems that wherever I go, I am congratulated for the positive impact that these leaders have had."

That's impressive for a unit that had never operated together prior to the deployment. Both the MET and BDOC were created solely for this deployment and pulled from a variety of commands around Wisconsin. Despite the initial lack of familiarity, the teams have bonded into tight-knit units.

The BDOC too has earned its share of admiration as it supports the MET while also running the day-to-day operations of multiple facilities in Kuwait. As tensions

have risen in the region and troop configurations have changed, the BDOC faced logistical challenges as they work to support service members moving in and out of Kuwait.

The deployment has posed its challenges though. Being separated from friends and family is always difficult no matter the mission, but the Soldiers have been able to keep in touch via the Internet and telephone. Many also mentioned the steady flow of care packages sent from family and friends back home.

They've also endured the height of the sweltering summer heat in Kuwait and Jordan. Despite the desert climate, the MET and BDOC has dealt with the high levels of humidity that accompany the 120 degree-plus heat in Kuwait.

"There are also bug seasons here," Koffarnus said. "When we got here it was big black beetles. Then it went to ants and then to locusts."

The unit left Wisconsin in late February before travelling to Fort Hood, Texas for mobilization training. From there, they deployed to the Middle East. The unit is expected to return home sometime this winter. 🦋

[Story online](#)

Making Afghanistan a little safer for others

Vaughn R. Larson
Department of Military Affairs

While U.S. operations in Afghanistan are changing — military bases are closing, fewer troops will deploy there in the future, and Operation Enduring Freedom will transition to Operation Resolute Support — the need to keep traffic routes clear of roadside bombs has not changed.

That important job will soon fall to the 950th Engineer Company, which completed several weeks of pre-deployment training at Fort Bliss, Texas, before hitting the roads in eastern Afghanistan.

“Every time we do our mission and we find one of those devices on the roads, we make the world a little safer for other humans,” Capt. Andrew Redd, the 950th Engineer Company’s commander, told family and friends at an Oct. 15 sendoff ceremony at Superior Middle School. “Whatever country we’re deployed to, our mission directly impacts and saves lives, and it’s why I’m proud to put this uniform on every day. I look forward to getting over there and doing my part.”

The unit spent time at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, and Fort McCoy over the past several months training with its route clearance equipment and learning from subject-matter experts on some of the finer, more technical aspects of its route clearance mission. The unit has trained with its mine-resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles, which can be outfitted for different missions. One MRAP, the Husky mine-detection vehicle, has ground penetrating radar and metal detection systems on board that help it find and mark improvised explosive devices buried in roadways by insurgents.

The unit’s heavily armored Buffalo MRAPs have long arms with a fork and cameras to be able to dig around suspected IEDs and other threats. The 950th can also employ unmanned aerial vehicles, robots and handheld detection systems to combat the threat while working closely with explosive ordnance demolition teams to neutralize the bombs and IEDs that would otherwise jeopardize coalition forces and Afghan nationals.

The 950th has deployed twice before, to Iraq in 2003 and 2010, and roughly half the Soldiers in the unit have prior deployment experience. Clearing traffic corridors of roadside bombs was a part of both prior deployments.

A Soldier from the 950th Engineer Company moves between vehicles during a training mission Nov. 24 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato



“You’re not going to find a better company of route clearance anywhere in this nation,” Redd said.

The unit’s training evaluators at Fort Bliss heaped praise on the 950th’s professionalism and skills during a command visit in late November, and they’ve been honing their craft with intense training scenarios.

“These guys are throwing a ton of stuff at us,” Redd said. “I’d love a couple months or even a year down here training with these guys, but I feel really confident about where we’re at and how we’re going to perform on our mission. They’re challenging us, and they’re really making our guys think about it and develop new stuff and work together to succeed and do well.”

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Gov. Scott Walker prepares to present a state flag to Capt. Andrew Redd, commander of the 950th Engineer Company, during a sendoff ceremony at Superior Middle School Oct. 15. The approximately 95-member unit will perform a route

security mission in Afghanistan, and is expected to return to Wisconsin in 2015. This is the third deployment for the 950th Engineer Company. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Clearance company ready for Afghanistan deployment

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Their route clearance mission takes on added significance as the U.S. works to reduce the number of U.S. troops on the ground in Afghanistan from approximately 30,000 now to less than 10,000 by the end of December.

Sgt. Matthew Justice, a team leader with the 950th, also knows the vital role that secure infrastructure and freedom of movement plays in helping Afghanistan rebuild its economy and a stronger, more stable society.

At left, a Soldier from the 950th Engineer Company provides security during a training patrol at Fort McCoy Oct. 16. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato [Click on this photo to see additional photos](#)

“You just can’t do that without freedom of movement,” he said.

Justice has deployed before, but this deployment marks his first as a team leader. He was very confident in the unit’s abilities, readiness and preparation.

“I can honestly say that this unit that I’m with right now is the most well-trained unit that I’ve ever been with and that I’ve ever seen,” he said. “That comes from that knowledge and experience that we’ve gained over the last 13 years of a very active role in the U.S. military.”

Staff Sgt. Bill Connolly, of Superior, was a specialist when the 950th deployed to Iraq in 2010. Now he is a truck commander, responsible for his equipment and the lives of his crew. He said the unit is focusing on battle drills to develop the

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Engineer unit hones its skills for Afghanistan

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instinctive response needed overseas.

"We want them to know that they're the tip of the spear," Connolly said. "And we want them to know that we're the fight. At this point, especially with Afghanistan drawing down, we're going to be a small percentage of people that are the fight there."

Redd was a platoon leader in the 950th during the 2010-11 deployment, and said he feels blessed to lead the company for this mission.

"In my wildest dreams, I never thought the cards would fall like this," he said during the sendoff ceremony. "It's a very big honor for me."

Senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders applauded the Soldiers who extended their enlistments specifically to be available for this deployment.

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, cited Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Concord Hymn" to compare the Soldiers of the 950th with the militia who fought at Lexington and Concord during the Revolutionary War. He also promised family members that the Wisconsin National Guard would be there for them while their Soldiers are away.

Gov. Scott Walker noted the patriotism and courage of Wisconsin's Civil War Soldiers, and drew a connection to the members of the 950th Engineer Company. He also said he has a special track record as governor, one he asked the 950th to continue.

"Since I've been governor, every Guard member who has deployed has made it back home safe," he said, drawing applause.



Staff Sgt. Bill Connolly, of Superior, talks over the radio during a training mission with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 950th Engineer Company Nov. 24 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato

2nd Lt. Phillip Brewer has no wife or children to leave behind when he deploys, but understands the sacrifice his colleagues will experience.

"It's still hard for me, but it's harder for my guys," he said. "They're leaving behind brand-new kids — I feel for them."

1st Sgt. Jason Miller expressed confidence in his Soldiers.

"I would not rather take any other group of individuals over there with me than the guys I have with me right now," he said. "I trust them with my life."

The 950th Engineer Company is expected to return to Wisconsin in autumn 2015.

Capt. Joe Trovato contributed to this story



At left, Gov. Scott Walker, Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, and U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy greet 950th Engineer Company members after an Oct. 15 sendoff ceremony in Superior. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Always ready, always there — even up to 15,000 feet

Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode
115th Fighter Wing

VOLK FIELD — When a fire struck the Chicago Air Traffic Control Center on Sept. 26, Air National Guard air traffic control Airmen from Volk Field were called into action.

“It was about 6:30 in the morning and we were getting ready to open the tower here but we couldn’t get a hold of the Chicago Center,” said Chief Master Sgt. Wayne “Buck” Reynolds, Combat Readiness Training Center air traffic manager.

Reynolds eventually got in touch with the Minneapolis ATC Center where he was informed there was a fire at the Chicago Center and that they would not be opening. Following a morning of trying to figure out whether or not Volk could open its airspace, Reynolds got on a conference call where he was given the go-ahead from the Federal Aviation Administration to open up the airspace.

“I got on that conference call and immediately indicated that Volk is willing and ready to support in any way we can,” Reynolds said. “They immediately said to open our airspace and then they asked if we could take up to 15,000 feet.”

Volk usually covers up to 10,000 feet but was willing and ready to take on the extra altitude.

“Then FAA asked us how late we could stay,” Reynolds said. “Well, because of our crew limits, the longest a controller can work in a day is 10 hours, so we were able to work until 6 p.m. that night. By that evening I was in communication with FAA and they asked if we could open on the weekend.”

The Volk ATC center is usually closed on weekends, but Reynolds indicated they could be open both Saturday and Sunday for 10 hour shifts each day.

“There was a lot of volunteerism,” Reynolds said. “We didn’t have people on the schedule for that weekend but they volunteered right away and said, ‘just tell me when you need me here.’”

That level of commitment was no surprise to Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, the Wisconsin adjutant general.

“This is a perfect example of how Guard skills can be used to assist civil authorities in the event of a state or national crisis,” Dunbar said. “Not only were the necessary assets available, but the willingness of our Air

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Master Sgt. Andrew Jackson, Combat Readiness Training Center RADAR approach control chief controller, and Jeff McCluskey, Federal Aviation Administration air traffic control specialist, work together to control airspace at the ATC center at Volk Field Oct. 6. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode

Volk Field Airmen combine military, civilian expertise to direct critical commercial air traffic

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National Guard members to step up and do what was needed speaks volumes about the character and selfless service of our Citizen Airmen.

"This is also a great example of how the National Guard can support another agency for continuity of operations" or COOP, Dunbar continued. "In this case, we partnered with the FAA to assist them in their important and critical role to our nation."

On Saturday, the FAA asked Reynolds what he would need from them to stay open for 16 hours a day. He requested six controllers.

Early on in the conversation, Reynolds chose Master Sgt. Kenneth Evans and Tech. Sgt. Gabriel Torres, both of whom are traditional CRTC ATC Airmen who also work at the Chicago Center as ATC specialists, to support the mission.

According to Torres, he was waiting for that call.

"When I first heard about the events, I immediately wondered whether or not they'd need us up at Volk to help out," Torres said. "I got the call from Chief Reynolds on Saturday asking if Ken and I would be willing to come up. I said, 'of course, anything to help out.'"

Evans and Torres' knowledge of the systems and airspace at Volk made them an ideal solution.

"These traditional Airmen dropped their headsets down there, and came here, picked them up, plugged in and started controlling," Reynolds said.

William Wills also came up from the Chicago Center. He was previously a traditional Airman from the CRTC ATC, so he was another ideal choice for Reynolds.

The additional FAA ATCs — Jeff McCluskey, Steve McGreevy and Glenn

Albanese — happen to work Volk's airspace from Chicago.

"When we close at night, we give the airspace back to the north area of the Chicago Center," Reynolds said. "Those controllers are already familiar with the frequencies and instrument approach procedures into the airport and all the surrounding facilities — so it made a lot of sense to have controllers from that area come up."

All six of them arrived on Sunday, and all six of them were trained, certified, and up and running by Monday.

"We basically formulated a specialized training program for them — a certification process just to make sure they were able to work on our equipment and work the airspace," Reynolds said. "Every one of them checked out very quickly. Within a day we had all six of them certified and ready to control."

Even though Torres hopes no one sees a situation like this again, he's found the experience exciting.

"The mixture between the FAA traffic and the Volk traffic is the coolest thing about it," Torres said. "The first time I talked to a Delta here it was a little weird because its Volk approach, and we don't talk to Deltas here. Being able to do both jobs melded together has been an amazing experience."

The Volk Field CRTC ATC radar approach control will be up and running from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week until Oct. 13, FAA's estimated return date for normal operations. Until then, they'll be continuing operations.

"We've worked more traffic in eight days than we typically do in a month," Reynolds said. "It's been a challenge working more traffic manually — but we like challenges. I think everyone feels accomplished."

[Story online](#)



Master Sgt. Andrew Jackson and Jeff McCluskey, a Federal Aviation Administration air traffic control specialist, at Volk Field's air traffic control center Oct. 6. The FAA sent civilian air traffic control specialists to Volk Field following a fire at the Chicago ATC Center. Two of the FAA air traffic control specialists were also Volk Field Guardsmen. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode



Photo by Joe Oliva

Summer camp: Wisconsin Air Guard engineers renovate veteran haven

Staff Sgt. Jenna Lenski
128th Air Refueling Wing

More than 30 U.S. Airmen with the civil engineering squadron of the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, completed hands-on annual training while gutting and renovating a cabin that belongs to Camp American Legion in Lake Tomahawk Sept. 13-27.

Camp American Legion, owned and operated by the American Legion of Wisconsin, is a haven in the north woods for Wisconsin veterans and their families to reintegrate, relax and recuperate.

The 128th Civil Engineering Squadron (CES) has a base engineer emergency force team — known in the Air Force as Prime BEEF — whose mission is to provide engineering support in order to construct and maintain fully-functional bases in deployed locations, or to recover bases damaged by natural or man-made causes.

During the two weeks of training while renovating the cabin, 128th CES members got their hands dirty with planning, construction, electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilating and air conditioning.

“Our squadron got a vast training benefit from working up at Camp American Legion,” said Col. J. Heath Duncan, commander of the civil engineering squadron with the 128th Air Refueling Wing. “Not to mention the teamwork and camaraderie we all shared.”

The 128th CES gutted the run-down cabin and replaced the flooring, cabinets and roof. They also replaced the plumbing and electrical, and installed an air conditioner.

Near the cabin, they replaced the rotted dock and removed the unkempt outhouse.

The American Legion of Wisconsin provided funding for the project and obtained a \$5,000 grant from the Home Depot Foundation. Local area businesses also donated supplies to support the effort.


“You have all the different construction trades and it’s always good to get some

hands-on training, where you can physically be doing the work,” said Chief Master Sgt. Harry Wilkinson, the project manager. “We just saw this as the perfect opportunity for all the different specialties.”

Camp American Legion is open to all Wisconsin veterans and offers food

and lodging free of charge for those who qualify to participate in the program. The camp offers recreation such as fishing, boating, hiking trails and their well-known chipmunk crossing area. The program’s mission is to help veterans and families take their minds off of hurting and help them find relief and revitalization through

the serenity of the camp.

“The camp’s sole purpose is to support wounded veterans and their families,” Duncan said. “This is a tremendous service for Wisconsin military members that no one else in the nation has. The camp has a great mission set.” 

[Story online](#)

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode
115th Fighter Wing

As winter finally gave way to spring, the topic was brought up: Could the 115th Fighter Wing help a local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8483 move an F-4S Phantom II static display from Indiana to Wisconsin?

"I had been working hand-in-hand with [115th Fighter Wing maintenance group commander] Col. Donald Hamilton to see how we could put this together and how we could pull it off," said Senior Master Sgt. Dave Dahlke, 115th Fighter Wing maintenance squadron structures. "Then it came to me — we could use it as a training exercise."

Dahlke focused on the training piece from a crash recovery team standpoint.

"There are three brand-new team chiefs out there who needed to have a hands-on training on an instructional aircraft or a real-world aircraft every two years to be qualified," he said. "This fit the bill for three brand-new team chiefs as well as the remainder of the crew out there. They need to be certified every three years, so the timing couldn't have been more perfect."

Dahlke had approximately two weeks to pull everything together.

"Luckily I had already been planning,"

Right, Tech. Sgt. Alex White, of the 115th Fighter Wing Crash Damage or Disabled Aircraft Recovery (CDDAR) team, guides a forklift operator during the reassembly of an F-4S Phantom static aircraft on the grounds of Truax-Longmire Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8483 in Madison Sept. 20. Far right, Staff Sgt. Tracy Hermanson guides the fuselage as it's relocated for display. 115th Fighter Wing photos

by Master Sgt. Paul Gorman

Click on this photo to see additional images

Dahlke said. "Once I was given the go-ahead, I just called everyone up and put the plan into action."

He had already coordinated several local companies in the Madison area and others from the Camp Atterbury, Indiana area to help out. The volunteers were abundant.

"We had a lot of volunteers and companies who gave us huge price breaks," Dahlke said. "We couldn't have gotten the work done without their help."

The crew departed Madison Sept. 14. By Sept. 20, there were several people at the VFW waiting to welcome the jet to its new home.

"This was really an unprecedented training exercise for us primarily because of the community involvement that we're doing with this aircraft," Hamilton said.

At the ceremony that welcomed the aircraft to Wisconsin, Hamilton declared it was "a great day."

"We not only had an opportunity to take some of our fine maintainers and accomplish some of our training goals, we also had a chance to give a little bit back to the community in which we serve every day," he said.

[Story online](#)



Wisconsin National Guard, state agencies work on unified emergency response

Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode
115th Fighter Wing

VOLK FIELD — Thirty-two military personnel and 23 civilians, all from the state of Wisconsin, joined together for three days of unified reception, staging, onward movement and integration training and exercises at Volk Field Air National Guard Base, Camp Douglas, Nov. 17-19.

The three-day training and exercise event was designed to test the knowledge and response capabilities of all personnel involved, should an emergency situation arise in the state. Development of the URSOI process integrates state agencies and the National Guard during state emergencies and allows them to work together efficiently.

“We are pioneering an enhanced set of processes for uniformly bringing military and civilian responders to an incident site in order to make the response efforts more integrated,” said Mark Greenwood, Wisconsin Emergency Management response supervisor.

Greenwood was part of the working group that began in November 2013, following a request from the Wisconsin Homeland Security Council to develop a unified response package.

The first step of this working group was to create a concept plan. The initial working group design included both training and exercise scenarios and this three-day event at Volk Field allowed them to exercise that plan and look for improvements.

“The mixture of both training and exercises was a great approach,” said Capt. Charles Teasdale, incident commander for the Wisconsin Incident Management Team. “It has given us a chance to crawl before we run. In my civilian role as a state patrol commander, I utilize the Guard resources on a regular basis — this is a lot more intense, though. It’s a much larger scale exercise that has allowed us to integrate — we came together and


identified a common objective, and accomplished it successfully.”

Now that the first step the working group developed has been completed, they plan to meet regularly to work on process improvements.

“This has been a really good step —

necessary and beneficial,” said Col. Julie Gerety, Wisconsin National Guard director of domestic operations. “There has been great collaboration between the civilian responders and the National Guard. The National Guard is always in a support role, and this exercise allows us to be up here

supporting the civil authorities.”

The Guard’s support will not end here. Another exercise has been planned for next July, to give the working group a chance to refine the processes and implement them again at a much larger scale. 

[Story online](#)



Guarding against EBOLA

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, (second from right), Wisconsin adjutant general, looks on as a member of the Wisconsin National Guard's Joint Health Assistance Team decontaminates her protective suit during training for an Ebola Virus Disease

response Oct. 31 at Volk Field. Two teams of Soldiers and Airmen were validated by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to respond in the event of an Ebola outbreak in the state. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato

Capt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

Two hand-selected teams of Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen trained at Volk Field, Oct. 30-Nov. 2 to respond in the event of an Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the state.

The teams, known as Joint Healthcare Assistance Teams, could augment hospitals and medical professionals if the virus were to surface in Wisconsin.

The National Guard trained and prepared a third JHAT in December.

Made up of Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard nurses, physicians' assistants, doctors and medical liaison personnel, the teams trained at the state's Regional Emergency All-Climate Training Center at Volk Field, where officials from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services validated their training. The partnerships between the National Guard and other state agencies have been crucial to preparing the teams.

"The Wisconsin National Guard is a welcome partner and a vital part of the state's overall Ebola preparedness," said Karen McKeown, State Health Officer. "I and other representatives from the Department of Health Services had an opportunity to observe their training for an Ebola response, and we are confident they would be ready to respond if needed. We are grateful for their willingness and abilities to protect the health and safety of Wisconsin

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Wisconsin Guard Ebola response team trains at Volk Field

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residents.”

During their training, the teams received background information on the virus, how it can be transmitted and information on treatment procedures. Members of the Wisconsin National Guard 54th Civil Support Team and hazardous materials team representatives from the Appleton and La Crosse Fire Departments also instructed the JHATs how to properly don and doff protective suits without contaminating themselves or others and how to handle hazardous materials.

The JHAT is made up of Guardsmen who already work as medical professionals in their civilian lines of work. In the National Guard, they also serve as doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. The teams were called to state active duty by the governor to prepare for a potential response.

As a civilian, Capt. Jennifer Reetz is a nurse at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Madison. She also serves as a nurse in the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s medical detachment. She is relishing the opportunity to serve her state in a military role.

“I am very excited, because as a nurse, sometimes my roles are limited in the military setting, and years ago when I became a nurse, I did it because I was passionate about patient care,” she said. “So this is actually a chance for me to combine the two entities into one and really do what I’m passionate about, which is to take care of the ill.”

Her role on the team, she said, would be similar to what she does as a floor nurse in a civilian hospital, but the training at Volk Field taught her how to properly use protective equipment and procedures to ensure she keeps herself, her patients and the greater community safe.

Fellow Army nurse Capt. April Nelson works as a civilian in the Tomah VA



Staff Sgt. Ed Schmitt looks on as Sgt. Ava Kielisch, of the Wisconsin National Guard’s 54th Civil Support Team, demonstrates proper donning and doffing procedures for protective equipment during the Joint Health Assistance Team’s training for an Ebola Virus Disease response Oct. 31 at Volk Field. Two teams of Soldiers and Airmen were validated by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to respond in the event of an Ebola outbreak in the state. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato

hospital. In her mind, the JHAT represents the best of the National Guard and its ability to serve both a state and federal mission.

“This was all voluntary,” she said. “We

were approached with the mission to want to be part of this select team, and the selflessness of putting a person out there in the situation to care for a patient with this disease and be able to want to do it...It’s

definitely a great organization.”

“I think that it shows our commitment to the community,” Nelson added. “I think it shows our willingness to want to protect them and put ourselves in front of the actual population.”

Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, the state’s adjutant general, noted that the National Guard has a unique ability to respond to the needs of the state and nation, whatever they may be.


“Whether we’re serving in combat overseas, or we’ve been called to a wildfire, flood, tornado or to combat the spread of a deadly disease, the National Guard remains ready to answer the call when asked,” he said. “Our organization was proud to partner with the Department of Health Services to develop this capability.”

Wisconsin Air National Guard Maj. Karice Stern, a physician and flight surgeon with the 176th Fighter Squadron, agreed.


“It proves as Guard and Reserve troops that we are huge assets to the United States military,” she said. “We are people who have civilian lives, civilian careers and civilian expertise that we can integrate into this military response but also enhance what the military is trying to do.”

Stern said the training that the JHAT received was well-researched and well-organized. She also noted the National Guard’s ability to respond so quickly and build a professional team ready to assist.

“I think that as Guard and Reservists we take a lot of pride in our ability to multi-task and to have multiple responsibilities, and I think the fact that we can step away from our civilian lives and or civilian jobs to respond when called upon is something we can be very proud of,” she said.

The training the JHAT received was in accordance with Center for Disease Control decontamination protocols and Wisconsin Department of Health Services training validation guidance. 

[Story online](#)



54th Civil Support Team members Sgt. Penny Marsh, left, and Staff Sgt. Dusty McCormick collect samples of a simulated chemical weapons agent during a U.S. Army North evaluation exercise in Milwaukee Sept. 9. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Master Sgt. Paul Gorman

24-7, even on 9/11

Capt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

As the nation reflected on the 13th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks, the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team was hard at work training to combat terrorism here at home.

The Madison -based unit concluded a multi-day exercise in Milwaukee where evaluators from U.S. Army North assessed the unit's ability to respond to the myriad scenarios the CST could encounter.

The Sept. 11 exercise required the 54th to enter a vacant office building in Brown Deer, where civilian investigators believed a terrorist had manufactured a bomb and nerve agents that had been deployed in a fictional scenario at a Milwaukee concert venue two days earlier.

A survey team entered the building in full protective gear to assess the situation using sophisticated equipment to monitor the air for threats and hazards. As part of the exercise, one of the survey team members simulated an incapacitating injury that tested the team's aptitude at

extracting an injured team member and decontaminating him before medical treatment.

Every 18 months, the CST gets a full-scale evaluation from U.S. Army North, where it tests everything from the unit's ability to analyze hazardous materials, to providing medical treatment, decontamination, and even the unit's logistics and communications operations.

They get tested beginning with the initial alert to assembly, deployment, arriving on scene, conducting their

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54th CST hones skills needed for real-world emergencies

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mission and re-supplying, according to Jeff Taylor, one of the U.S. Army North evaluators on-site in Milwaukee. The unit must be able to sustain itself for up to 72 hours without resupplying.

All 57 civil support teams in the nation are graded on the same criteria every 18 months in addition to each unit's requirement to complete at least one collective training event every month. The 54th CST conducts an average of 20-24 collective training events each year, according to Lt. Col. David May, the unit's commander.

That sort of vigilance and preparation is required for the unit to be on call 24 hours a day for 365 days a year.

But the hard work has paid off. The 54th CST is considered one of the best in the nation, and its importance has only grown in the communities in which it serves.

A part-time predecessor to the 54th existed in the 1990s, but in 2004 the unit became a full-time asset. Senior Master Sgt. Chris Brown, the unit's enlisted leader, has been with the unit since its inception and wanted to join the unit because of the mission and a desire to serve his community.

And while Brown hopes the team never needs to be called into action, it gets called to several real-world missions each year in addition to standby missions at sporting events or other large-scale events.

"It's always a hope for everybody that those things don't happen," Brown said. "But you have to be ready to help if it does."

The events of Sept. 11, 13 years earlier illustrated the importance of vigilance and preparedness, and the significance of that day's events were not lost on the unit, which observed a moment of silence in the midst of the exercise.


"That was certainly a day that had an impact on all of our lives certainly and all Americans, so we thought it would be fitting to have a moment of silence and

reflection on this 13th anniversary," May said. "I think that it's significant that we're all out here training."

The Milwaukee exercise provided Sgt. Ava Kielisch, the team's newest member, with an opportunity to get hands-on experience almost immediately. Kielisch returned from training just two weeks prior to the exercise and is now on the unit's survey team, which enters potentially contaminated areas in hazmat suits.

"This is a huge exercise to walk in on," she said. "And it really has helped me to put it together and see everyone work."

The unit acquitted itself well in its evaluation. Of the more than 600 individual tasks on which it was evaluated, the U.S. Army North evaluators rated it fully qualified in every single one.

The 54th CST is made up of 18 Soldiers and four Airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard. The full-time unit's role is to support civil authorities when requested by providing an analytical capability to determine unknown substances using its mobile lab. The unit can rapidly deploy and provide medical, communications and technical support to civilian agencies in the event of a terrorist attack, emergency or other event that involves weapons of mass destruction, toxic industrial chemicals or natural disasters. 

[Story online](#)

Cyber hygiene

Summit emphasizes five steps to protect perimeter of data

Vaughn R. Larson
Department of Military Affairs

Cyber crimes in the news recently have included the electronic looting of credit card information from large retail chains, and posting explicit or compromising celebrity photos lifted from supposedly secure accounts.

But cyber criminals are capable of acts rising to the level of terrorism, according to a panel of experts who spoke at the second annual Wisconsin Cyber Security Summit, held Oct. 8 at Marquette University in downtown Milwaukee.

"When you think about all the threats to our society ... it's not just threats from abroad," said Gov. Scott Walker, noting that successful cyber attacks on government agencies and private enterprises such as power generating plants, financial institutions and communication networks could seriously disrupt daily life. "I don't think any of us shouldn't think that a terrorist wouldn't shift gears. We have to be vigilant every day of the year."

While technology has made industry more efficient and provided new opportunities to obtain or exchange information electronically, reliance on a cyber network exposes vulnerabilities that can be exploited.

"I'm saddened to say the message I have today is the same message I gave in 2001," said William Pelgrin, the

president and chief executive officer of the Center for Internet Security, and chairman of the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC). "There are two classes of cyber victims — those that know they have been attacked, and those that don't."

Pelgrin recommended five steps to "protect the perimeter" of data: Count — know what is connected and running on the network; Configure — install security settings to protect systems; Control — limit administrative privileges that can change or bypass security settings on the network; Patch — regularly update applications, software and operating systems; and Repeat — follow the previous four steps to regularly patrol the network.

"You cannot unwind the cyber from the physical," he explained to the 233 summit attendees. "They are connected."

The human element is a key variable in cyber security, in that programs, devices and networks do not upgrade or violate security policies on their own. David Cagigal, Wisconsin's chief information officer, noted that common business and communication practices can jeopardize cyber security efforts. For example, informing employees about

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Summit emphasizes 'cyber hygiene' to protect data networks

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the new protocol for safeguarding the business network by e-mail is efficient, but the sender no longer controls the e-mail once it has been sent. Directing employees to review the new protocol at a secure website is a better practice.

"There's no difference between your computer at work and your computer at home," Cagigal said. "The vulnerabilities are the same."

Though the early presenters focused on threats to data network security, Cagigal wanted to leave the audience with a positive note.

"We can do this," he said.

Ronald Yearwood, a section chief in the FBI's cyber division, offered a brief outline of some of the bad players in cyberspace. "Hacktivists," for example, conduct cyber attacks in the name of political activism. Cyber criminals steal data that they can convert into profit or access to more information. Cyberterrorists seek to intimidate or coerce their victims through disruptive or destructive actions on behalf or in support of a terror group or a terror ideology.

"The only way to stop this kind of crime is through coordinated effort," Yearwood explained. "Through partnering and collaboration, we will be able to protect our nation's vital information."

"This problem is pervasive and advancing," he continued. "The adversaries are innovative and capable. No agency can do this alone."

Yearwood said cyber criminals succeed because they have no boundaries. He argued that the response to cyber criminals is to have the same boundary consideration — to go after every facet of cyber crime.

"The future holds threats that are global," Yearwood warned. "We want to take the fight back to the enemy — we don't want to just respond. We want to take back our cyber territory."



Dan Lohrmann, a security analyst with Security Mentor, speaks about adaptability and mitigating potential cyber network challenges at the Wisconsin 2014 Cyber Security Summit. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Dan Lohrmann, a former cyber security official for the state of Michigan and now a security analyst for Security Mentor, challenged conventional information technology and network security thinking.

"State government is not known to be the leading edge on technology," he said — due, in part, to network security professionals resisting new or popular technology trends.

"Security pros are known as disablers," he continued. "Stop saying 'no' — become an enabler."

Lohrmann recounted his own career-threatening decision to tell the chief information officer of Michigan that installing a wireless network in all the conference rooms was out of the question due to the unsecure nature of such networks. The CIO replied that the Big Three automakers were using wi-fi in their corporate headquarters, so a solution to the security issues must have been available.

Then the CIO gave Lohrmann one week to figure it out.

Lohrmann urged network security professionals to stop being "no" men and

become trusted advisors by building a different kind of network — with their colleagues outside of the IT or security departments. He also encouraged adhering to a cyber code of ethics, which he warned can degrade one click at a time.

Marcus Sachs, Verizon Communications' national security policy vice president, spoke about measuring risk to data networks. Citing former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's famous "Unknown unknowns" press conference, Sachs said that focusing on the unknown reduces risks.

Four examples of "unknown unknowns" include unknown devices or applications, unknown data stored on the network, devices with unknown network connections, and assets with unknown accounts or network privilege.

"These four unknowns bite you in the rear," Sachs said. "But now they are no longer the unknown, because you know."

Cyber criminals have gotten to the point where they can break into networks in a matter of minutes or seconds, Sachs said — and the security breach may not be noticed for weeks or even months.

"There will always be risks you don't

know, but you want to make that area of risk smaller," he said. "Spend your time and resources digging — that's how you improve risk management."

Israel is pursuing a wholistic cyber security initiative, said Rami Efrati, former head of the Civilian Division of Israel's National Cyber Bureau. In addition to developing a robust government cyber security program and building information-sharing partnerships, civilian businesses are encouraged to develop strong cyber security practices as part of their license renewal.

"It is a process, and it is taking time," Efrati said, "but it is beginning to work."

Brig. Gen. John McCoy, deputy adjutant general for civil support, explained that the National Guard has a logical role in cyber security.

"We're the governor's first military responders in the event of a local disaster," McCoy said. "Cyber is just an extension of that."

Underscoring that, Walker appointed Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, to serve as the senior state official for cyber security matters. The next update of the state's Homeland Security plan will include a cyber security plan.

Dunbar said the goal of the state's "Cyber Hygiene" campaign is to make complex ideas understandable. The five steps Pelgrin described — count, configure, control, patch and repeat — do that, and Dunbar called on the IT personnel and security professionals to spread the word.

"The goal is to be 100 percent protected," Dunbar said. "While we may never achieve that, this is a great place to start. If we can get the citizens in Wisconsin to take these five steps, if we can get the businesses in Wisconsin to take these five steps, we can increase our [cyber security] posture." 🐼

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

Portage armory showcases renovation, dedicates memorial

PORTAGE — The public had the opportunity to honor a special part of the past of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 132nd Brigade Support Battalion headquarters, and see new training accommodations, during an open house Dec. 6 at the unit armory.

Visitors could stop at various displays explaining the storied history of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team and see current equipment the unit uses to conduct its mission.

Capt. Craig Giese, 132nd Brigade Support Battalion training officer, explained that the armory had recently completed a year-long \$6 million renovation that added new offices as well as more storage and training space.

"Now we finally have the opportunity to open it up to the public and show everybody what's going on here," he said.

The renovation required the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion headquarters to drill in Baraboo. Giese said the unit was happy to be back in its own armory.

The renovation also delayed plans to honor the unit's former commander, Capt. Karin "Kari" Deimer, who died from cancer four years ago this month. Rather than possibly damage the memorial — a large, heart-shaped stone with plaque — during construction, the decision was made to dedicate the memorial once the renovation was complete.

Capt. Jonathan Meyer, commander of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion headquarters company, spoke about his friend Deimer, who was sometimes better known as "Captain Sunshine." They first met during the 32nd Brigade's deployment to Iraq in 2009, where they were both assigned as screening officers in the Green Zone badging office.

"After working with her for a short time, I realized how much of a caring, charismatic person she was, and how her personality made people around her feel at

Above, Sgt. 1st Class Jassen Hinchley, food service noncommissioned officer in charge for the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 132nd Brigade Support Battalion, explains food service equipment to visitors during a Dec. 6 open house and dedication for the armory in Portage. At right, Sgt. Maj. Dean Muller, who served as first sergeant under the late Capt. Karin Deimer, unveils a memorial in her honor. Department of Military Affairs photos by Vaughn R. Larson [Click on the image above to see additional photos](#)

ease," Meyer said. "I also quickly realized how fond of her the Peruvian guards and the Iraqis were. She was the full package — attractive, smart, and blonde."

Meyer said he was pretty sure Deimer received more than one marriage proposal from her Peruvian and Iraqi admirers.

Deimer spent her entire career as an officer in the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion, and served as the acting commander of the headquarters company for several months in 2008 before the brigade deployed. Deimer was part of the team coordinating the 32nd Brigade's redeployment to the United States, and assumed command of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion headquarters company

in June of 2010.

Col. Leah Moore, a former commander of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion, spoke glowingly of "Captain Sunshine." Sgt. Maj. Dean Muller, who served as Deimer's first sergeant, unveiled the memorial. Deimer's Meritorious Service Medal, which was approved after her death, was presented to her parents Jim and Judy Deimer.

As Col. Douglas Fleischfresser — who served as the 32nd Brigade chaplain during the 2009-10 deployment — rose to speak, he noted the afternoon sunshine beaming over the ceremony.

"How appropriate," he said. 📷

[Story online](#)



951st 'Sappers' now part of Red Arrow

Sgt. Alexandria Hughes

32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team

When the Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 951st Engineer Company participated in a patching ceremony Sept. 28 at both the Tomahawk and Rhinelander Army National Guard armories to receive the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's distinctive Red Arrow unit patch, it marked the beginning of a transformation in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

The unit, formerly part of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's 724th Engineer Battalion, received the Red Arrow patch as a part of the ongoing Army-directed [reorganization](#) of units in the Wisconsin National Guard.

Other units in the Wisconsin Army National Guard affected by the reorganization are beginning their transitions as well, but one of the most noticeable changes will manifest in the formation of the 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, which will now fall under the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The 173rd will replace the 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and what was once the 951st Engineer Company will now be known as Company A of the 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion.

Col. Mike Rand, commander of the 32nd, and Command Sgt. Major Rafael Conde, the brigade's command sergeant major, presented the Red Arrow patches to the Soldiers of the 951st as a part of the Sept. 28 ceremony. Lt. Col. John Reiter, commander of the 32 Brigade Special Troops Battalion and soon-to-be 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, and Command Sgt. Major John Dietzler joined Rand and Conde in welcoming the Soldiers to the 32nd Brigade.

1st Lt. Steve Layden handles the logistics of the transition for the Soldiers



Col. Mike Rand, commander of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and brigade Command Sgt. Major Rafael Conde, exchange the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade unit patch on Soldiers of the 951st Engineer

Company with the 32nd Brigade 'Red Arrow' patch during a patching ceremony Sept. 28 at the Tomahawk National Guard Armory. 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team photo by Sgt. Alexandria Hughes

as the human resources officer for the 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

"Unit transitions are difficult," Layden said. "A lot of positions are being affected. We have a lot to coordinate, but we need to make sure that the Soldiers have a home when the transition is complete."

"The 724th has a long, rich history," Layden continued. "These Soldiers are proud of it — they've deployed with the 724th. This is more significant than a simple switch of a patch. We need to be sensitive. The 32nd also has a long history. This ceremony welcomes the Soldiers of the 951st. It both acknowledges their accomplishments, honoring the 724th and their history, and embraces the change," he said.

Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Raith, a platoon sergeant with the 951st out of Rhinelander, talked about the transition.

"It'll be a change, but not a bad one," he said. "Some of the newer Soldiers might not notice as much, but we will be working less with vehicles and more on foot. We will work more closely with the infantry and move into a more traditional combat engineer role."


"This ceremony is important because we get to see the faces of the new command sergeant major and the commander," Raith said about the patching ceremony. "It cements the fact that the transition is real. It started in the rumor mill, and especially over the last six months it's really evolved and plans

have been implemented. This ceremony cements that this is really happening."

Rand talked about the transition and the Soldiers of the Rhinelander and Tomahawk area.

"This ceremony today reflects this force restructuring, while recognizing the heritage of this unit in the community. I am looking forward to working with these fine Soldiers and continuing the proud history of this company," Rand said.

"I've enjoyed my time with the 724th," Raith said, "but I'm looking forward to working with the 32nd Brigade."

Other units around the state affected by the reorganization will continue their transitions next year. 

[Story online](#)

The next generation of leaders

Vaughn R. Larson
Department of Military Affairs

FORT MCCOY — While the new class of second lieutenants and warrant officers formed a relatively short line as they filed in for their commissioning ceremony Oct. 11, the Wisconsin National Guard's senior officer extended that line back to Lexington and Concord nearly 230 years ago, and the shot heard 'round the world.

"You are part of the great heritage, the great legacy," Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, said to the 21 officer candidates and warrant officer candidates in attendance. "The good news is, you've finished, and you've earned this commission. The better news is, you're just getting started.

"The best news is that each and every one of you has earned a commission in this organization — the Wisconsin Army National Guard, the United States Army," he continued.

Officer candidates traditionally spend 15 months, one weekend per month at the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute, in a rigorous and demanding program that forges leadership and develops strategic thinking one critical decision at a time. Three of the 13 officer candidates took advantage of an eight-week accelerated version of the course.

Warrant officer candidates typically have several years of enlisted experience when they undertake more than eight months of training designed to transform them into subject matter experts in their field as well as trusted advisors. This year's 13 candidates mark the largest graduating class since the 426th RTI began its Warrant Officer Candidate School.

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Brig. Gen. Kenneth Koon, assistant adjutant general for readiness and training, administers the oath of office to 21 men and women of the Wisconsin Army National Guard during an Oct. 11 ceremony at Fort McCoy. The new second lieutenants and warrant officers completed several months of candidate training through the 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson



Wisconsin Army National Guard commissions new officers

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Three officer and two warrant officer candidates were not at the commissioning ceremony — many were attending additional military schools.


“You have earned your commission – we didn’t give it to you,” Dunbar reiterated. “It’s a high standard. If you hadn’t met the standard, you wouldn’t be here today.”

Dunbar told the candidates that they share the same core values — and leadership expectations — as officers several grades above them. Soldier caring, Soldier development, a commitment to ethics and excellence, and readiness are among those values. Those who lead are recognized and promoted to greater responsibility.

“You are a leader today,” Dunbar said. “I ask that you always remember that you lead starting today. It doesn’t come sometime in the future when you’re a major hoping to make rank. There’s no secret handshake. We start leading right now.”

The adjutant general is a fan of Bruce Springsteen’s music, and cited lyrics from the song “This is Your Sword” to reinforce the message that the candidates waiting to receive their commission were fully prepared for what the future held:

*Brothers and sisters, listen to me
These are the few things that I leave to thee
The sword of our fathers, with lessons hard
taught
The shield, strong and sturdy from battles well
fought
The times, they are dark — darkness covers the
earth
But this world’s filled with the beauty of God’s
work
Hold tight to your brawn, stay righteous, stay
strong*

When the days of miracles will come along
“The world is a dangerous place and the United States has a unique position in this world,” Dunbar said. “We rely on men and women like you to back up the things that flag stands for. It is a noble calling that you have undertaken.” 

[Story online](#)

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, addresses officer and warrant officer candidates during a commissioning ceremony Oct. 11 at Fort McCoy. Twenty-one men and women of the Wisconsin Army National Guard received the oath of office and became

second lieutenants and warrant officers. The new officers completed several months of candidate training through the 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson [Click on this photo to see additional images](#)

One fight, one team

Consolidated training builds cohesion for state's most diverse battalion



Lt. Col. Scott Southworth speaks to members of the 641st Troop Command battalion during a consolidated training event Oct. 18. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Pfc. Christopher Enderle

Pfc. Christopher Enderle
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Seven companies from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's most diverse battalion came together at Volk Field in Camp Douglas for a rare weekend of combined training Oct. 17-19.

On the surface, the 641st Troop Command Battalion is made up of individual units with seemingly little connection. The battalion includes units like the 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, the 135th Medical Company, the 273rd Engineer Company, the 132nd Army Band, the 457th Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Company, the 1967th Contingency

Contracting Team and its battalion headquarters company.

Each unit within the battalion performs a vastly different mission with Soldiers that hold different jobs. As a result, each company has historically focused on its own specialized training, while the larger battalion has rarely gotten together as a full group.

Lt. Col. Scott Southworth, the 641st's battalion commander, wanted to dispel the notion that the battalion's units have nothing in common, and his goal to foster unit cohesion and esprit de corps among its diverse assets began with the combined training weekend at Volk Field.

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Soldiers from the 641st Troop Command Battalion work together to overcome an obstacle at a leadership development course at Volk Field Oct 19. The course was designed to bring Soldiers of different units together to build teamwork and leadership skills. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Pfc. Christopher Enderle

Training event emphasizes connections between disparate units

Continued from Page 30

The battalion completed its annual Soldier readiness processing requirements, which ensures each Soldier is fit for duty, while also completing many of the annual mandatory training requirements that often consume large amounts of time training time throughout the year. But more than that, the battalion used the opportunity to build cohesiveness between all of the units.

Besides the readiness program, the Soldiers of the 641st also enjoyed a pig roast, a bonfire, a battalion run and completed a leader's reaction course. The battalion also presented the Legion of Merit to its previous command sergeant major – recently retired Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Burgette.

Each unit presented skits that described what they do for the 641st. The skits included a mock news conference, a country band performance, reaction under fire, Wisconsin National Guard history, an explanation of Army contracting and a chemical decontamination demonstration.

Sgt. Robert Bell with the 132nd Army

Band expressed how much fun it was for him and his unit to not only show off their skills with their country music performance, but it was also interesting meeting new people and finding out about what other units were a part of the 641st, he said.

Sgt. Mindy Singh, of the 457th Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Company, enjoyed meeting fellow Soldiers from her battalion and traversing the leader's reaction course with Soldiers from different units.

"I thought it was very good for morale," she said. "I loved this drill."

Southworth wanted to focus on what unifies the diverse battalion, while celebrating the unique skill sets each company within it brings to the table for the Wisconsin National Guard and ultimately the U.S. military.

"This training event defined the 641st as a unified team of Soldiers with God-given talent and specialized skills, who proved that they stand ready to accomplish any mission, any place, at any time," Southworth said.

[Story online](#)

Airman 1st Class Richard Wengler, a crew chief with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, plays a board game with his two sons while waiting for his wife to return home from work Sept. 9. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson



Serving on TWO HOME FRONTS

Staff Sgt. Jeremy M. Wilson
128th Air Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — Before the sun crests the treetops that flank that backside of Airman 1st Class Richard Wengler's house, the 36-year-old father of two young boys gives them a kiss goodbye. He prepares to leave one career and report for duty at the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Maintenance Squadron, for his other career. This sounds

familiar to most who serve in the military, leaving their family to report for service. Unlike most people who have a 40-hour work week to earn an income working in an office, working for a municipality, or working for the local cable provider, Wengler's full-time job does not garner him a paycheck. It offers him something many parents would love to say is their full-time career. Wengler is a stay-at-home dad.

After earning a bachelor of science degree in

psychology, Wengler didn't just decide on being a stay-at-home dad. He and his wife Laura decided, before their children were even born, they wanted to have a closer relationship and be able to spend more time with their children. After weighing all of the advantages and disadvantages of which parent could and should take on the role, they decided Richard would assume the mantle.

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Stay-at-home dad also serves state, nation with 128th Air Refueling Wing

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But stay-at-home does not equate with stuck at home. For nearly two years, Wengler has served as an aerospace maintenance technician, commonly referred to as crew chief, with the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing. His primary duty is to ensure the mission-ready status of the KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft used by the wing.

Wengler always knew that he wanted to be part of a larger team and serve in the military. It was not until the age of 35 that he took his first steps on that journey. There aren't many branches that would allow him to enlist at his age, still be close to his family, and have the career options he wanted, until he came across the Air National Guard.

The most important goal that Wengler wanted to fulfill by enlisting in the armed forces is also a core element within all the branches — a sense of tradition. Wengler learned his sense of tradition from two family members who served.

His uncle spent 30 years on active duty in the Air Force, also as a crew chief. His grandfather was a World War II veteran and a retired engineer who helped construct the World Trade Centers. After the events of 9/11, Wengler had an even stronger desire to serve.

Wengler hopes to pass down those same traditions, teachings, and sense of responsibility to his children, five-year-old A.J. and four-year-old Isaac.

Wengler has noticed a series of paradigm shifts with his family and military careers merging together. At home he was the "trainer" in the sense that it is his and his wife's job to teach A.J. and Isaac the proper way to do things. Upon joining the military, the roles were flipped around and he became the trainee again. He relies on others to teach him the right ways from the wrong ways when doing his aerospace maintenance job. After a drill weekend, he is back to being a

Airman 1st Class Richard Wengler, a crew chief with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, secures a fastener and aligns an external viewing window beneath the boom pod of a KC-

mentor, father and friend to his boys and still a seasoned trainee ready to continue learning and honing his craft at the 128th Air Refueling Wing.

Wengler has already done two temporary duty assignments since joining the unit in 2013. Over the winter, he took part in a 10-day aeromedical evacuation mission that spanned multiple cross-country flights. His primary role was to help keep the aircraft ready and able to transport the wounded service members. That mission was the first flight


for Wengler since joining the 128th Air Refueling Wing. A few months later, Wengler took part in an overseas mission to Hawaii.

"He has a genuine willingness to work as a team and complete whatever task assigned," Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Wagner, the maintenance production supervisor, said of Wengler.

Looking towards the future, Wengler wants to hone his craft, advance in rank, assume greater responsibility, and continue to be a part of something larger.

135R Stratotanker after completing preflight safety checks, Sept. 7. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Wilson [Click on this photo to see a related video](#)

He knows that his job of finding any discrepancies that may keep an aircraft from flying is only the first step.

Wengler's long-term desire is to finish his educational and professional journey to become a physician's assistant. Although he thinks it may take a few years, he wants to turn the mantle of stay-at-home parent to his wife, so she can experience the same enjoyments he has watching his children grow during his time as a stay-at-home dad. 

[Story online](#)



Twenty-seven Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers took part in a 13.1-mile ruck march at the Discover Whitewater Half-Marathon in Whitewater Sept. 21 to remember the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Capt. Joe Trovato

MARCHING *in* MEMORY

Capt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

A group of 27 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers put on their packs to honor the nation's fallen during a half-marathon in Whitewater Sept. 21.

The group of Soldiers carried a half-

pound for each of the more than 2,200 service members killed in Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001, and ruck marched the entire 13.1 miles of the course as it weaved its way through Whitewater.

Runners led the way for the second annual Discover Whitewater Half-Marathon, but the group of Wisconsin

Army National Guard Soldiers representing units from around the state brought up the rear as they marched the course in combat boots, Army Combat Uniforms and ruck sacks carrying more than 1,100 pounds collectively.

Sgt. 1st Class Charles Hensen, a member of the Wisconsin Army National

Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion and the Soldier who organized the Guard's participation, noted the special meaning the Guard's involvement had for him.

Hensen volunteered for a deployment

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Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers pass through the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater campus in the midst of a 13.1-mile ruck march during the Discover Whitewater Half-Marathon in Whitewater Sept. 21. Twenty-seven Soldiers carried

a combined 1,100 pounds on their backs to honor the more than 2,200 service members killed in Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin Guard Soldiers go the distance to honor Sept. 11 fallen

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to Afghanistan with a New York National Guard unit from Manhattan — 2nd Battalion, 101st Cavalry. Hensen said the unit, which is based just miles from the World Trade Center, sacrificed dearly in Afghanistan in addition to serving on active duty in New York City in the days following the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

"This is a big deal," Hensen said of the 13.1-mile ruck march. "I mean my unit alone lost four guys. And it's pretty important that we don't forget. I think all too often people forget."

Hensen and others also pointed out the significance of completing a 13.1-mile course almost 13.1 years after the Sept. 11 attacks and only 10 days after Sept. 11.

"It just kind of reminds me why we

do what we do as service members," said Master Sgt. Bryan Douglas, a 23-year veteran of military service.

Douglas had served nine years before the Sept. 11 attacks but was in the midst of a three-year break in service. After the events of that fateful day, the call of duty was too much, and he re-enlisted and went on to serve overseas in a military police company.

He said it was important to pause, reflect and remember the sacrifices so many young Americans have made in defense of our nation in the last 13 years. Completing the ruck march in Whitewater, he said, was just a small way to commemorate those sacrifices.

"It strikes a chord a little closer to your heart if you actually deployed overseas," he said.

Soldiers from the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, the 257th Brigade Support Battalion, 32nd Military Police Company, 135th Medical Company, 1st Battalion 105th Cavalry, and other units joined officer candidates on the remembrance march.

"You can't really put it into words, but to do something like this to at least honor them and give them that respect that they deserve is great," said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Chavez, of the Headquarters Company of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade in Milwaukee.

Even some of the Army National Guard's newest recruits wanted to be a part of the day.

"It means a lot," Spc. Bradley Shellhorn said. "I've always had a great respect for all of our Soldiers. That's why I

decided to join them. To do something to commemorate those who have fallen is a great honor and a privilege to be a part of."

Shellhorn is a member of the Recruit Sustainment Program in Madison, and will leave for basic training in October. He was in fifth grade on Sept. 11, 2001.


Officer Candidate Elisa Hereid jumped on the opportunity as soon as she became aware of it.

"When I read the e-mail about carrying a half-pound for each fallen Soldier in Afghanistan, it was a really inspiring thing for me, because I knew every step of the way I'd be doing it for my brothers and sisters."

The 27 Soldiers crossed the finish line together after completing the entire course. 📷

[Story online](#)

30 years of North Pole rendezvous



Olivia Wagner, 3, high-fives Maj. Jeremy Keyes as she helps pilot the KC-135 Stratotanker to the North Pole Dec. 13. The annual Flight to the North Pole is hosted by the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing, Milwaukee. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Master Sgt. Thomas J. Sobczyk

Tech. Sgt. Jenna Lenski
128th Air Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — Elves lined the hallway as families arrived Dec. 13 to pick up their Santa Liner boarding passes. Christmas music played in the background and tinsel and lights draped the ceilings. As the children rounded the corner to the small air terminal, smiles

beamed across their faces — Mrs. Claus was waiting for them. These children were about to take a ride of their lives to the North Pole.

The 128th Air Refueling Wing hosted the 30th annual Flight to the North Pole, an event for children battling life-threatening illnesses to take a special ride to the North Pole.

Twenty-one families of children who are patients at the

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, came to the 128th Air Refueling Wing to take their child on a magical ride aboard a KC-135R Stratotanker. Pilots with the 128th taxied them around the General Mitchell airfield to a hangar that was specially decorated as the North Pole.

Military and civilian volunteers from several

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128th Air Refueling Wing, area public servants team up for Flight to the North Pole

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organizations throughout the local community joined the 128th Air Refueling Wing to support the holiday flight of fancy: the U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Great Lakes; Cudahy Police Department; and the city of Milwaukee Fire Department. Close to 90 independent civilian volunteers helped coordinate and work at the event.

"The Milwaukee Fire Department is traditionally about taking care of the people in our community, and this is just another way for us to demonstrate that we really do care about the people in our community," said Lt. Edward Schott, a fire lieutenant paramedic with the Milwaukee Fire Department.

Schott attended with his full engine crew on Fire Engine 26. The Milwaukee Fire Department has participated in the Flight to the North Pole for five years. The fire engines from the 128th Air Refueling Wing and Fire Engine 26 escorted the bus full of children to the aircraft that took them to the North Pole. The firefighters offered tours and rides in the fire engines to children who attended the event.

"It's not my duty — it's my pleasure to be here," Schott said. "And to be honest, if this doesn't put you in the Christmas spirit, nothing will."

Once the children arrived at the "North Pole" hangar they played games, watched a magic show and enjoyed a meal with their families. Local businesses made the day special by contributing food, beverages, and gifts.

Finally it was time for Santa and Mrs. Claus to visit with the children and ask what they wanted for Christmas. All of the children at the event, to include siblings of the patients, received a gift from Santa.


The organizers of Flight to the North Pole try to make the event special for everyone in the family. It is a time to take the focus off of the children's illnesses and to let them enjoy an early Christmas with their loved ones.

"The social work department and the

oncology department of Children's work very closely together to bring families out here for the past 30 years," said Paula Thompson, a medical social worker at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

Thompson has helped organize this event from nearly the beginning.

"My personal opinion is that we are very indebted to the 128th and to the other organizers," she said.

The 128th Air Refueling Wing, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and all of the volunteers plan to continue this event next year and for many years to come. 

[Story online](#)



Military decorations

■ *Tribute tree stands for service members who won't be home for holidays*

Vaughn R. Larson
Department of Military Affairs

In military parlance, decorations typically refer to military medals and awards worn on the uniform, representing honorable achievement.

In much the same way, the hand-made decorations that adorn the Tribute to Our

Troops tree at the [Executive Residence](#) honor the service of deployed Wisconsin service members, as well as the memory of Wisconsin service members who have died.

The Tribute to Our Troops tree dates back at least a decade as a means to remember Wisconsin residents who could not spend the holidays at home due to military service. Wisconsin National Guard members — first through the Family Assistance Program, and then through the [Service Member Support](#)

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Senior Airman Amanda Lyga, above, of the 115th Fighter Wing, helps decorate the “Tribute to Our Troops” Tree Nov. 18 at the Executive Residence in Maple Bluff. The tree features donated ornaments honoring Wisconsin’s deployed and fallen service members. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Wisconsin Guard members decorate Tribute to Our Troops tree

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[Division](#) — decorated the tree in time for holiday tours at the Executive Residence.

“This is great,” said Master Sgt. Kim Hahn, a member of the 115th Fighter Wing’s Force Support Squadron, who was decorating the Tribute to Our Troops tree Nov. 18 for the first time. “I love that the military tree is the first tree that you see when you walk in” the Executive Residence.

For Senior Airman Amanda Lyga, a human resources specialist with the 115th Fighter Wing, decorating the tree is a way to honor veterans of the past, present and future.

“I figured it’s my duty to do it,” she explained. “Both of my parents are veterans, so this is honoring them.”

For Linda Hughes of Cambria, decorating the Tribute to Our Troops tree is more than a one-day effort. She has made more than 2,000 ornaments for the tree, dating back to 2005. Her nephew, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Scott of Sun Prairie, was killed May 27 of that year in Buhriz, Iraq, when the Kiowa helicopter he was piloting came under small-arms fire and crashed.

“Gov. [Jim] Doyle came to the funeral, and there were lots of funerals that year,” Hughes recalled. “Mrs. [Jessica] Doyle saw the agony that families were going through, so she suggested to her husband that they should do something special.”

Hughes had long corresponded with deployed service members — Bob Evans, a member of the Service Member Support Division on hand to decorate, was one of those service members to whom she wrote years ago — so it was natural for her to make ornaments to remember the troops that could not be home for the holidays. She made 50 ornaments in 2005, and has made 366 ornaments this year. Of those, 176 are for deployed service members and veterans, and 174 are to remember fallen service members dating back to 1901. The ornaments for the fallen have a “dog tag”


attached identifying the service member it is intended for.

“There are so many fallen Soldiers in Wisconsin,” Lyga remarked. “It shocked me.”

Once the decorations are removed from the tree, Hughes said she sends the fallen service member ornaments to family members along with a letter indicating the ornament was displayed on the Tribute to Our Troops tree, and includes a photo of the governor and first lady by the tree.

“Over the last five years we’ve made all the ornaments for the fallen Soldiers to be alike so they are all honored in the same way,” Hughes said. “That seems to make the families happier than an array of different ornaments.”

Staff Sgt. Brenda Hahn, also a member of the 115th Fighter Wing’s Force Support Squadron, was asked during a drill weekend to volunteer to decorate the tree. She thought it would be fun and worthwhile, and said the experience was above and beyond her expectations.

“This was so wonderful today — just the privilege of hanging these ornaments of our past veterans and the deceased. It’s such a great memorial,” she said. “I’m so glad I volunteered.” 

[Story online](#)

Linda Hughes, whose hand-made ornaments for Wisconsin’s deployed and fallen service members have graced the “Tribute to Our Troops” tree for several years, sorts ornaments with Master Sgt. Deborah Severson of the Wisconsin National Guard’s Service Member Support Division Nov. 18 at the Executive Residence in Maple Bluff. Bob Evans and Col. Michael George, also with the Service Member Support Division, were on hand to help decorate. The tree includes donated ornaments honoring deployed and fallen Wisconsin service members.

Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs
photo by Vaughn R. Larson

[Click on this image to see additional photos](#)

Love from Lambeau Field

LAMBEAU FIELD

Vaughn R. Larson

Department of Military Affairs

GREEN BAY — For 10 family members of deployed Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers, it may have been the next best thing to being there.

Standing on Lambeau Field, home of the National Football League's Green Bay Packers, the family members saw their loved ones on the stadium jumbotron screens, sending a live videoconference from Afghanistan as part of the Packers' "Salute to Service" game Nov. 9.

"Hey, Packers fans," said Spc. Alex Wotachek of [Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery](#). "We cheeseheads are here cheering on the Packers tonight from half a world away."

Battery A, a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) unit, is only the second National Guard field artillery unit to perform a field artillery support mission in Afghanistan.

"In the military, we have a tradition where the leader of a unit sounds off with a motto or phrase and the unit responds," said Pfc. Joshua Oakley, also of Battery A. "Tonight we want you to join us in that proud tradition."

The members of Battery A shouted, "Lambeau!" and more than 80,000 fans at Lambeau Field responded with, "Go Pack Go!" The call and response was repeated three more times, with quite satisfactory results.

Work on this short but emotional exchange began more than a month ago, when the Green Bay Packers reached out to the Army seeking to set up a live videoconference with a deployed Wisconsin National Guard unit as part of its Nov. 9 "Salute to Service" game. The Packers donated 10 game tickets, and Battery A's Family Readiness Group

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Spc. Alex Wotachek and Pfc. Joshua Oakley of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, share a message from the unit to family members and Green Bay Packers fans during a live video call from Afghanistan, carried on the Jumbotron monitors at Lambeau Field. Screen capture from the Green Bay Packers website [Click on this photo to see their video message](#)

Family members score fields-eye view of deployed Guard members

Continued from Page 40

selected five family members by raffle. The lucky family members were allowed to bring one guest on-field.

Katie Haberman was one of the lucky family members.

"It was a once in a lifetime experience," she said. "The feed from the guys was a little blurry, but just to see them happy and jumping around was a wonderful feeling."

Mary Sippel, mother of Sgt. Jason Kollmorgan, said she would always cherish the experience.

"Even though we did not see our son, we were still moved by the smiles and cheers of the Soldiers in Jason's unit as they appeared on the jumbotron," Sippel said. "However, the experience didn't stop there — it was intensified as the fans started chanting 'U-S-A, U-S-A.' We felt the appreciation and support of those gathered to watch the game — they let us know that the sacrifice our Soldiers are making is truly worth it."

Kandi Goltz, game and fan development manager for the Green Bay Packers, said the videoconference offered the team and fans a chance to thank

service members.

"It's important to the Packers and our fans to be able to express our gratitude for their service — not only on Veterans Day, but all year long," she said. "It was phenomenal to see our fans respond to the military members on the screen and share some of the gameday excitement with them."

Also as part of the "Salute to Service" game, fans could sign holiday cards that the American Red Cross will send to service members at home and abroad. Fans also were part of an in-stadium card stunt that turned the stadium into a patriotic billboard, with the messages "Thank you military," "Thank you veterans," and "Land of the free, home of the brave." A U.S. Marine surprised his wife on-field before the game, and the connection between the USS Green Bay and Lambeau Field was featured on NBC's "Sunday Night Football."

"Thank you for your love and support, Packers fans," Wotachek said. "We'll be home soon. Go Pack!" 🇺🇸

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

Red Arrow partners with active duty brigade for training

Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin National Guard

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team will partner with an active duty brigade combat team to share knowledge, tactics and best practices as part of an Army initiative to build collaboration between the National Guard and its active duty counterparts.

Called the Total Force Partnership Program, each active duty brigade combat team will be paired with a sister National Guard brigade combat team. Wisconsin's Red Arrow will be paired with the Army's Third Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

Leadership from both brigades met at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, over the summer and agreed to start small and begin working toward larger objectives and collaborations, according to Col. Mike Rand, the commander of the 32nd.

Rand believes that both units stand to learn a great deal from one another and share lessons learned from deployments, in training and in day-to-day operations.

He envisions staff officer exchanges where the two brigades send their leaders to each unit's respective large-scale exercises to be both observers and participants in an effort to share best practices. They can also compare standard operating procedures or serve as opposing forces or evaluators in exercises.

"It's not that they are better," Rand said. "But just to learn different methods and ways of accomplishing the same mission."

That cross-pollination of ideas and standard operating procedures between active duty and the National Guard will only strengthen the knowledge base in both components, he said.

The brigades can collaborate in other ways as well, Rand said. Next summer, for example, the 32nd plans to conduct testing for Soldiers who hope to earn the Expert Infantry Badge. Rand and leadership from the Third BCT discussed the possibility of the unit sending personnel to act as



external evaluators for the testing.

While Rand and other Red Arrow leaders know their Soldiers stand to benefit from joint training opportunities like master gunner courses and potentially even air assault training, he also knows that the 32nd has a lot to offer its sister unit as well. The 32nd already shared with the Third BCT some of the strategies it used to achieve high weapons qualification scores.

"The active duty was amazed that we are evaluated on the same standards, and we do it on a part-time basis with an M-day force," he said. "They were amazed at the time we put into being a National Guard Soldier along with our civilian employment and that we are able to maintain the same Army Physical Fitness Test and height and weight standards. We sat down and discussed that we all have much of the same issues."

The new partnership is not the first time the Army has paired active duty and National Guard units together. Previous relationships have proven useful and provided a vehicle to get external feedback. The Guard and active duty have also forged strong bonds while serving together over the course of the past 13 years of war.

The Army hopes the partnerships increase training opportunities for both components, boost leadership development and lead to increased knowledge-sharing. 🇺🇸

[Story online](#)



Hockey players with the Badger Militia, a team representing the 115th Fighter Wing and Wisconsin Joint Force Headquarters, maneuver the puck toward the Brew City Tankers, a team representing the 128th Air Refueling Wing, at the

2014 Armed Services Hockey Tournament at the Sobe Ice Arena in Las Vegas Nov. 8. Both teams took part in the annual Armed Services Hockey Association tournament. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Lenski

AIR HOCKEY: Sister Wisconsin Air National Guard units have icy relationship in the rink

Staff Sgt. Jenna Lenski
128th Air Refueling Wing

The Milwaukee-based 128th Air Refueling Wing and the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing essentially comprise two-thirds of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. The two units often train together — the 128th's KC-135 refuelers frequently refuel the 115th's F-16 fighter jets, but they also team up on other state projects and missions.

But that cooperation cools off inside a hockey rink.

Both the 128th Air Refueling Wing and the 115th Fighter Wing fielded teams in the Armed Services Hockey Association, an organization of volunteer teams made up of military, police and fire fighters from the U.S. and Canada. Members pay their own team fees, as well as travel and equipment costs. Since 2003 the Armed Services Hockey Association has held annual tournaments in Las Vegas, with proceeds benefitting the United Services Organization (USO), Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) program, and Defending the Blue Line.

This year's tournament, featuring 30 teams in five divisions, was held Nov. 6-10.

"People came together from all over the state between the two teams," said Master Sgt. Kellen Kroening, a base training technician with the 128th. "We definitely had a strong presence there."

The 128th Air Refueling Wing's team, the Brew City Tankers, sport a stratotanker filling a German stein on their hockey uniform. The 115th Fighter Wing's team, the

Continued on Page 43

Brew City Tankers enjoy decent run at annual charity hockey tournament

Continued from Page 44

Badger Militia — also including members of the Wisconsin National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters — features a snarling badger on their jerseys. Each team is allowed up to three civilian members, and many team members play in local hockey leagues.

Such is the case for Kroening, whose local team plays at the Petit National Ice Center in Milwaukee. He jumped at the chance to play for the Brew City Tankers this year.

"Everyone did well and Madison definitely put up a fight," Kroening said. "Wisconsin represented itself pretty well in this tournament."

The Badger Militia scored an early goal, but by the end of the first period the Brew City Tankers were leading, 3-1. As talented as both teams were, the Brew City Tankers won that game, 8-2.

Master Sgt. Todd Hessler, a material control specialist with the 115th Fighter Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron, captained the Badger Militia team for the second straight year.

"We were a little short in players this year, but the team in all had a great time," Hessler said. "Most of the teams are great to play against, win or lose."

Hessler noted that the Badger Militia was the only team to include women, and next year they expect to have a father and daughter on the team.

The Brew City Tankers defeated three teams in their eight-team division, advancing to the semi-finals where they beat a team from Hill Air Force Base, Utah. They fell to a team called the Misfits — a team comprised of independent service members in the tournament — in the divisional championship game.

This is the second year the Brew City Tankers have participated in the tournament. Master Sgt. Rick Russell, an aircraft flight equipment superintendent with the 128th, served as team captain.



Airman 1st Class Matthew Gaffney, a hockey player with the Brew City Tankers, a team representing the 128th Air Refueling Wing, shoots the puck into the goal of the Badger Militia, a hockey team representing the 115th Fighter Wing

and Wisconsin Joint Force Headquarters, at the 2014 Armed Services Hockey Tournament at the Sobe Ice Arena in Las Vegas Nov. 8. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Lenski

"Throughout the whole tournament there was a lot of effort," Russell said. "This was the first year for a few of our players, and they contributed a lot of skill to our team."


The Brew City Tankers also anticipate playing in the 2015 Armed Services Hockey Tournament.

"The participation and sportsmanship at the tournament was outstanding this year," Russell added. "Hopefully we

continue to grow our team and support for this tournament."

The Brew City Tankers included Senior Airman Ryan Berg, Maj. Michael Dimberger, Tech. Sgt. Braden Duszynski, Airman 1st Class Matthew Gaffney, Master Sgt. Tony Karwacki, Capt. Luke Steffel, Tech. Sgt. Bryan Storbeck, Kroening and Russell. Additional players included Cam Hartman, a Utah policeman, and Greg Brankey, a local civilian who filled one of

three authorized civilian positions on the team.

The Badger Militia included retired Lt. Col. Sherry Holly, Master Sgt. Gilbert Holcomb, Staff Sgt. Andrew Ausel, Hessler, military veteran James Armstrong, Department of Natural Resources warden Gary Eddy, fireman Chad Durkee, and civilians Anna Celaya, Andy Koenig and Corey Robinson. 

[Story online](#)

Milwaukee Brewers provide major-league salute to troops

Vaughn R. Larson

Department of Military Affairs

Not everybody in uniform taking the field this season at Miller Park — home of Major League Baseball's Milwaukee Brewers — was a professional baseball player.

For seven games this season, select members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard were chosen for pre-game recognition or to throw out the ceremonial first pitch, as part of a collaborative effort between the Milwaukee Brewers and the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

According to 1st Lt. Brian Schwalbach, Recruiting and Retention Battalion resource manager, the premise of the partnership with the Brewers was retention and recognition.

"We wanted to bring Soldiers on the field and thank them for extending — recognize them in a public forum, recognize them for their service to our country and our state," Schwalbach said. "It's really been a hit with our Soldiers."

Soldiers representing the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 64th Troop Command and 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade were part of four pre-game recognition events. Soldiers with significant military and civilian achievements were nominated to throw out the ceremonial first pitch for three other games.

Sgt. Nick Sosa, of the 54th Civil Support Team, was nominated to throw out the first pitch at the May 30 game not only for his work as an operations non-commissioned officer, but for his volunteer work with Special Olympics Wisconsin dating back to 2003. He has served as a Special Olympics chairman for the past 11 years, and is the site coordinator for Polar Plunge Wisconsin, one of the organization's largest fundraisers in the

state.

"I had a first sergeant who was looking for volunteers to assist with the event," Sosa said. "It seemed like a great program, and I started to meet some of the athletes and the board members. And it's for a great cause. It just kind of captured my heart. It's been a great opportunity."

Other Soldiers were recognized for what they do as Soldiers in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. For example, Company F of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion sent Soldiers instrumental in improving the company's overall physical fitness test score to the highest in the 32nd Brigade.

"It's kind of a rush," Sgt. Aaron Cobosco, a member of Company F, said

of standing on-field before thousands of cheering Milwaukee Brewers fans at the Aug. 23 game. "You get the standing ovation and it's almost like you can't hear, because it's loud. Your heart pumps."

Spc. Kiam Cook, of the 108th Forward Support Company, could relate.


"It was a great experience," Cook said. "There was a lot of energy in the room. I've never been down on the field — for the first time, that was a great experience."

Cook was selected for being named the 108th's Soldier of the Year.

"It's a great feeling to be honored," added Staff Sgt. David Hess, of the 257th Brigade Support Battalion's Headquarters Company, "to be out there on the field and have so many fans recognize what we do."

Cook and Hess were among the 10 Soldiers recognized at the Sept. 5 game.

Tyler Barnes, the Milwaukee Brewers vice president of communications, said the team greatly appreciates the men and women of the U.S. military and the job they do for the nation.

"Taking the time to recognize local service members, particularly members of the Wisconsin National Guard, is a small token of that appreciation," Barnes said. "And it's not just the Brewers organization — our fans also show their support for the men and women in uniform, and I think it means as much to the fans as it does to the folks on the field." 

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

Employers honored for Guard member support

Staff Sgt. Ryan Roth
115th Fighter Wing

Approximately 70 employers and employees from the Madison area attended an Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) event here Sept. 5, recognizing employers who went above and beyond in their support of Guard and Reserve service members.

"Executing the mission of the 115th Fighter Wing would not be possible without the strong support of our Airmen's employers," said Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th Fighter Wing commander. "With deployments lasting months at a time, there is tremendous value in the Airmen not having to worry about losing their civilian job while they are deployed."


In 1972 ESGR was established to promote cooperation and understanding between Guard members and their civilian employers, and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

"Our job is to make sure there is understanding, cooperation, communication and mutual support between Guard and Reserve members and their employer," said Mike Williams, ESGR state chair.

ESGR fosters a culture in which all employers support and value the employment and military service of members of the National Guard and Reserve in the United States.

Military skills — including risk management, Airman leadership and the core values — are directly transferable to civilian jobs, said Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, assistant adjutant general for Air.

"We borrow your employees, but we give back Airmen to make your business stronger," Ebben said.

The event included breakfast, speakers and a tour of base, giving employers an opportunity to see what their employees do in the National Guard. 

[Story online](#)




Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th Fighter Wing commander, addressed approximately 70 employers and employees from the Madison area who attended an Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve event Sept. 5 at the 115th Fighter Wing, Madison. Wiegand recognized employers who went above and beyond in their support of the Guard and Reserve service members. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Roth

Retiree Activities Offices

Questions regarding your military retirement benefits? The Retiree Activities Offices (RAOs) are staffed with Wisconsin retirees who can get you answers.

The RAO at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin, is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:30-11:30 a.m., except holidays. The office can be reached at 608-242-3115 (DSN 724-3115) or 800-335-5147 (press 2, then 3115). The office fax is 608-242-3111. The e-mail address is: widma.retiree@wisconsin.gov, and the traditional mailing address is: Retiree Activities Office, Joint Force Headquarters Room 160, 2400 Wright Street, Madison, WI 53708-8111

The RAO in Milwaukee located in Building 512 at the 128th Air Refueling Wing is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., except holidays. The office can be reached at 414-944-8212 (DSN 580-8212). The office fax is 414-944-8412. The e-mail address is: rao.128arw@wimilw.amg.af.mil, and the traditional mailing address is: 128th ARW Retiree Activities Office, 1835 E. Grange Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207-6132 

Youth emergency planning program kicks off

Tod Pritchard

Wisconsin Emergency Management

GREEN BAY — During a visit to Pioneer Elementary School in the Ashwaubenon School District, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, and Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch announced the return of the Student Tools for Emergency Planning (STEP) program to Wisconsin classrooms.

"When disaster strikes, it's important that Wisconsin communities know how to respond and act quickly," Dunbar said. "The STEP program not only teaches students how to prepare for emergencies, but it also encourages them to share that information with their families. I encourage interested schools in the Green Bay area and throughout the state to sign up for this program and help prepare their students for emergencies."

Wisconsin Emergency Management Administrator Brian Satula and AT&T Wisconsin President Scott VanderSanden also attended the kickoff event.

STEP is a turn-key classroom curriculum for teachers to prepare 5th-graders for various emergencies and disasters, including tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan with their families.

"We know how critical it is to be ready and prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency," VanderSanden said. "Not only are we proud that our network operations are state of the art when it comes to performing during and after a disaster, but we are also proud to help prepare Wisconsin families to respond to emergencies through our support of the STEP program."

Pioneer Elementary is planning to



Brian Satula, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, and Scott VanderSanden, president of AT&T Wisconsin, with fifth-grade students at Pioneer Elementary in Green Bay, for the Student Tools for Emergency Planning (STEP) program kickoff Sept. 29.

teach the STEP program for the second year in a row.

"Emergencies and disasters can happen at any time to anyone, and that's why we think it's important to prepare our students," said Pioneer Elementary Principal Pete Marto. "We're excited to teach the STEP curriculum again this year. We've seen how this program gives our students the confidence and potentially life-saving tools they need to respond in an emergency situation."

Teachers are provided with all materials at no cost to the schools, including instructor guides, DVDs and copies of student handouts. All students participating in the program will also receive an emergency kit to take home,


which includes a flashlight, first aid kit and emergency blanket. The basic lesson is only one hour of instruction, but teachers can expand the lessons to cover eight hours of materials.

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program during the 2010-2011 school year. Nearly 2,400 students from Wisconsin schools participated in the program during that first year. The number grew to 8,000 students by the 2013-14 school year, and the goal for this year is to reach another 8,000 for a total of more than 28,000 students in five years.

The program is funded in part through a \$13,000 Innovation and Investment Award from AT&T Wisconsin. AT&T

STEP is a turn-key classroom curriculum for teachers to prepare 5th-graders for various emergencies and disasters, including tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan with their families. Wisconsin Emergency Management photo by Tod Pritchard

has a long-standing commitment to disaster preparedness and business continuity, and is the first company in the nation to earn U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) certification for disaster preparedness. AT&T also received an Honorable Mention Award for Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness as part of the 2013 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards.

For more information on the STEP program, visit <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP/default.asp> to view a STEP video and download a brochure, or contact Tod Pritchard at tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov or 608-242-3324. 

Story online

State's second female Sapper near top of her class

Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin National Guard

A Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier joined elite company when she graduated as the runner-up honor graduate at the Army's Sapper leader course. She became just the second female in the state to complete the grueling course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and the 66th nationwide.

2nd Lt. Kayla Krueger, currently assigned to the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 229th Engineer Company, was the lone female in her class that began with 40 Soldiers. She graduated second in her class in August with just 13 others when the course concluded 28 days later.

The Army's Sapper Leader Course is one of the Army's most demanding courses, and it's the pinnacle of achievement for an Army combat engineer. It tests Soldiers on small-unit tactics, leadership, demolitions, mountaineering and weaponry, but perhaps more importantly, it tests Soldiers' mental and physical abilities to the limits.

The training involves a 12-day field exercise with a 65-90 pound pack, knots, rappelling and demolitions, where Krueger learned how to construct a claymore mine using a soap box. There was also the infamous boat physical training for which Sapper school is known, where trainees carry a boat that weighs hundreds of pounds for three miles as the instructors force the Soldiers to do flutter kick exercises and other calisthenics using the boat.

"That's when they try to get you to quit, because they want to try to get the weak ones out," Krueger said.

Each Soldier gets evaluated in various platoon-level leadership positions throughout the course. By the end, Krueger found herself near the top of her class.

"I was just always making sure I was carrying my own weight, always making sure I was helping out, and I think by the



2nd Lt. Kayla Krueger during training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, during her engineer basic officer leader course. Krueger became the state's second female Sapper after graduating near the top of her class. Submitted photo

end I had a lot of respect," she said.

While there were times where she questioned her ability to complete a task or overcome an obstacle, Krueger persevered and focused on doing her part. The result — she can now wear the coveted Sapper tab that only a handful of Soldiers, male or female, have earned in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

But gender was never part of the

equation to Krueger or to many of her classmates.

"A couple of them mentioned that anyone who is here who is doing the same thing as me has the same respect as anyone else," she said.

That's the kind of attitude that the Wisconsin Army National Guard's first female Sapper would prefer to see.

Maj. Josephine Daniels, now the

administrative officer for the 64th Troop Command, completed the Sapper Leader Course in 2006, shortly before taking command of Company B, 724th Engineer Battalion — at the time an all-male unit. She said she never thought too much about being Wisconsin's first female Sapper.

She hopes that when Soldiers see the Sapper tab on 2nd Lt. Krueger's shoulder or on her own, or on Maj. Brian Barth who was a Sapper honor graduate when he earned the tab and is currently serving in the Middle East with the [32nd Military Engagement Team](#), that they just see "Sapper," not a male or a female.


The Soldiers' gender should be inconsequential, Daniels said. What should matter is that the Soldier completed one of the Army's toughest schools and demonstrated a competence and a confidence that can only be forged in training that tests a Soldier's limits.

"You have to be a strong communicator," Daniels said. "You have to be a strong team player, and as long as you're pulling your weight, it's about are you a team member? Are you a team player? If you're not a team member, you're not going to make it — male or female."

To her, what mattered most was demonstrating to her Soldiers that she was a competent, confident leader.

"It was all about those Soldiers having confidence in me as a capable leader," Daniels said.

"We're Soldiers first," she added. "I don't know the total number of Soldiers who have earned the Sapper tab, but I'm just one of those Soldiers."

For Krueger too, completing Sapper school was about building confidence in herself and her own abilities and assuring her Soldiers, most of whom have deployment experience, that she is capable of leading them, building a team and accomplishing missions. 

[Story online](#)

Wisconsin National Guard members in female veteran exhibit

Vaughn R. Larson

Department of Military Affairs

Three of the 90 women featured in the exhibit “In a Heartbeat” at Arlington National Cemetery’s Women in Military Service for America Memorial have Wisconsin National Guard connections.

Col. Joane Mathews, chief of staff for the Wisconsin Army National Guard, Staff Sgt. Sonia Buchanan with the Wisconsin Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, and Carolyn Morgan, a former Wisconsin Air National Guard technical sergeant and former Service Member Support Division member, each have black-and-white photos and a short personal message on display at the exhibit, which runs through September 2015.

Morgan came across photojournalist Therese Hughes online when she worked as a women veteran outreach coordinator with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. After an initial conversation, Morgan invited Hughes to visit Wisconsin.

“Women veterans’ stories, historically, haven’t been told,” Morgan said. “I thought it was time that we as Wisconsin women veterans — over 38,000 of us — needed to start getting our stories out there. When I met Therese I thought it was perfect. We have some remarkable women that live here in Wisconsin.”

Hughes first came to Wisconsin in 2011, conducting interviews at Vet Centers in Madison, Milwaukee and Green Bay. On her return visit in 2012, Hughes interviewed women veterans at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison — including Mathews and Buchanan.

“I feel very honored and humbled,” Mathews said. “Hughes interviewed and took photos of 800 women and she chose me.”

Hughes, who spoke at the Nov. 7 exhibit opening, said her interaction with female veterans over the course of her career left her convinced that something needed to be done to honor them.

“It strengthened my belief that women’s stories should be told,” Hughes said. “My effort is to thank you for your service.”

Hughes said women veterans shared the same concerns — difficulty obtaining proper health care for service-related issues, and confronting disbelief regarding their service. She decided to take a leap of faith to start her project.

“I didn’t know if I could make a difference,” she admitted, “but what if I could?”

Hughes began interviewing women veterans as a way to understand what led her mother, Marcelle Swanson, a Milwaukee native, to join the Navy.

“She died when I was in my 20s — that wasn’t a question I had thought to ask,” Hughes said.

“I think it’s important to get the

word out on the many accomplishments military women have done over the years,” Mathews said. “[Hughes] not only chose two other women veterans from Wisconsin, but also several other Guard females from around the country.”

Hughes said, despite having military parents, she knew little about the military. She was surprised to learn about the National Guard.

“You guys serve, and you go back to the community,” she said.

Hughes interviewed Buchanan after her return from a deployment to Afghanistan as a member of a Cultural Support Team.

“It is a true honor to be included in this project,” Buchanan said. “The caliber of women this project includes is amazing. I am surrounded by strong, intelligent, accomplished female veterans.”

Morgan was one of the first African-American women to join the 128th Tactical Fighter Wing in 1980 — today known as the 115th Fighter Wing. She transferred to the active duty Air Force in 1985, and served in Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990-91. She became a recruiter and returned to Wisconsin as a member of the 128th Air Control Squadron at Volk Field.

Mathews, a helicopter pilot who flew numerous sorties over northern Iraq’s no-fly zone during Operation Provide Comfort, met two World War II female veterans at the exhibit opening.

“Being able to speak with them and listen to their stories was so amazing,” she said. “They were both so alert, happy to talk with others, and proud of what they have accomplished.”

That was a large part of the rationale behind the exhibit, Hughes explained.

“I wanted to show young women that there is opportunity in doing something bigger than themselves,” Hughes said. “I did this so people can learn that you’re the woman next door or the small business owner.”

Mathews encouraged all service women to sign up in the [Memorial Register](#), an interactive database with stories and pictures.

“It’s extremely important we as women veterans keep our stories alive,” Mathews said.

Buchanan agreed.

“This effort is important because it highlights the past accomplishments of female veterans who have helped pave the way so present and future females in the military can have opportunities that didn’t exist previously,” she said. “When these stories are read by other females, it can do nothing but motivate and encourage them to pursue their dreams, and remind them that nothing is impossible.” 📖

Kara Mason of Scripps Howard Foundation provided information for this report.

[Story online](#)

National Guard Museum showcases work of Milwaukee Soldier

Maj. Paul Rickert
Wisconsin National Guard

When communications sections chief Staff Sgt. Sean Houlihan was deployed to Afghanistan, he had no idea that his additional duty as the unit historian would land him a gallery showing of his photography work at the National Guard Museum in Washington, D.C.

"It's an honor — I can't believe it," Houlihan said. "It's like a dream come true, not only to have my work displayed but to represent Bravo 121, especially in the nations' capital."

Deployed with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery to Afghanistan in 2013 for 10 months, Houlihan took more than 10,000 pictures.

He selected 17 of those photos to be displayed at the museum.

The opportunity came from a Google alert set up by Anne Armstrong, deputy director of the National Guard Educational Foundation. Houlihan had just updated his photography website and the alert keyed in on descriptions from his website. Armstrong was immediately taken by the photos and e-mailed Houlihan using his contact information.

"The goal of the National Guard Educational Foundation is to reach out to the citizenry of the United States as well as the National Guard, and educate people about the National Guard and what we do," Armstrong said. "What drew me to Sean's photography is that the role of the National Guard in this country changed on Sept 11. We went from a strategic force to an operational force, and what Sean has done is to take the concept of the Citizen Soldier — taking his citizen job as a photographer and his Soldier job in the National Guard — and combined them.

"He's gone overseas, [and] used his photography to bring his overseas mission



Anne Armstrong, deputy director of the National Guard Educational Foundation, welcomes Wisconsin Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Sean Houlihan and his family during the opening of an exhibit of Houlihan's photographs at the National Guard Memorial Museum Sept. 18. Richard Arnold photo

back to the United States and to the citizens of this country," she continued, "so they can see what their National Guardsmen, and what their neighbors, are doing in these multiple deployments since Sept. 11."

Even taking thousands of photos, Houlihan was not able to shoot everything — much of their mission was classified.

"The whole 'no cameras allowed' rule, you know," Houlihan explained.

Still, many of the images he did capture are breathtaking — sprawling landscapes made profound by the intensity of color, High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers belching fire and rockets with remarkable clarity.



"Sgt. Houlihan's photos are part art, part photojournalism," said John Goheen, the National Guard Association of the United States Communications Director. "They are an excellent addition to the telling of the Guard story in Afghanistan. We're proud of him and grateful to have the chance to share his work with visitors to the National Guard Memorial."

Houlihan — a resident of Shorewood, Wisconsin — devoted much of his free time on the deployment studying the business side of photography, learning new techniques and refining his photo processing skills. An electrical transformer inspector by trade, he now runs his own

photography business. He usually has a camera on him at all times.

"People think that photography is just clicking a button, but for me that's only the beginning," he explained. "Shooting in raw format" — an unprocessed digital image that usually has a broader dynamic range or color range than a jpeg file — "requires a great deal of post-processing to get a lot of the outcome I desire. It feels great when you're looking at the screen and the editing is done, and you know that you're delivering an absolutely awesome photo."

And now the general public has a chance to see what he's talking about. 📷

[Story online](#)

Meritorious Service

Wisconsin National Guard Soldier recognized for life-saving actions in New Mexico

Capt. Joy Staab

Wisconsin National Guard

Sgt. Michael C. Black, a combat medic in the Wisconsin Army National Guard from Brookfield, was awarded the Soldier's Medal Dec. 7 for providing lifesaving medical care to a young mother involved in a serious auto accident. He is one of three currently serving Wisconsin National Guard members to be awarded this medal.

The Soldier's Medal is approved by the President of the United States and is awarded to members of the Armed Forces of the United States or of a friendly foreign nation who distinguish themselves by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy.

On Jan. 5, 2013, Black and two other Soldiers from the Plymouth-based Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery were conducting pre-deployment training near White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico when they came across the scene of a single-vehicle accident.

"The passenger was in rough shape when we arrived," Black explained. "The entire passenger side of the vehicle had been torn away."

Black grabbed his medical aid bag from his vehicle and rendered medical assistance to the female passenger who had sustained two broken legs, four cracked ribs, and a cracked sternum. He applied a tourniquet to a severed femoral artery caused by a compound open fracture of her right femur and treated the victim for shock until paramedics arrived.

Black, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, received the Soldier's Medal during a formal ceremony held at the Appleton armory, which his comrades, family, community members and Wisconsin Army National Guard leadership attended.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, the Wisconsin Army National Guard's top

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, looks on as Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, deputy adjutant general for Army, presents Sgt. Michael Black of Brookfield with the Soldier's Medal Dec. 7 for his actions on Jan. 5, 2013 that saved a woman's life near White Sands Missile Range, N.M. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joy Staab [Click on this image to see additional photos](#)

officer, had the honor of presenting the medal.

"I couldn't be prouder of Sgt. Black for his actions," Anderson said. "He represents the caliber and quality of the types of Soldiers we have within our formations. His willingness to put himself in a potentially life-threatening situation to render aid to someone he didn't know at all demonstrated his high level of training and character."

When asked for his thoughts regarding being awarded the Soldier's Medal for his actions, Black humbly responded, "It's not something that I expected, but it's a definite honor to be recognized in this way."

Black credited his combat medic training with being prepared to respond to an unexpected emergency.

"We train to address combat and traumatic injuries, so an event like this obviously presented traumatic injuries, which fortunately I was able to address in the proper manner," he said.

After the incident, Black didn't even mention his heroic actions to his mother, Linda.

"I didn't even know that this event had occurred until long after it happened and one of his friends told me," Linda said.

"I am extremely proud of Mike and I'm honored that he was honored," she continued. "Especially on the day that commemorates Pearl Harbor. I think it's a wonderful time to make the presentation. It's great that in today's society people are still joining the military and feel such allegiance to their country. I am so proud."

[Story online](#)

Wisconsin Army National Guard a finalist for Army Communities of Excellence

Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin National Guard

Excellence doesn't just happen. It requires continuous improvement, self-assessment and a commitment to being the best.

That mentality has resulted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard being named a finalist in the annual Army Communities of Excellence competition.

Wisconsin is one of four finalists to receive a site visit from a team of evaluators sent by the National Guard Bureau from around the country. The team will evaluate the Wisconsin Army National Guard's leadership, strategic planning, operations and customer focus among other criteria when it visits the state Nov. 2-7.

The annual awards competition assesses how Army organizations stack up to the Malcolm Baldrige criteria for organizational excellence. The nationally recognized Malcolm Baldrige standards are used to evaluate businesses, educational institutions and other non-profit organizations based on seven distinct criteria including: leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, analysis, workforce focus, operations and results.

Lt. Col. Brian Wolhaupter, the strategic planner for the Wisconsin Army National Guard, led the effort to create Wisconsin's 55-page Army Communities of Excellence submission packet, which demonstrated how the organization lived by the criteria set forth in the competition.

Customer focus, for example, examines the quality of services the Wisconsin Army National Guard provides to its

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Wisconsin Army National Guard an ACOE finalist again

Continued from Page 50

customers – Wisconsin's communities, the governor, Wisconsin Emergency Management and ultimately the citizens of the United States, Wolhaupter said.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard serves a domestic and federal need, and "they expect us to be able to respond and provide a service," he said.

"It can be different every time," Wolhaupter said of what the Army National Guard's stakeholders expect of them when they are called to serve. "But they expect us to be able to be different every time to whatever those needs are."

The Wisconsin Army National Guard has fared well in [previous years](#) in the Army Communities of Excellence Award competition, which will evaluate the organization for the period of July 2013 through July 2014. Wisconsin was last up for the award in 2011, when it earned the top ranking among all competitors. Contest rules stipulate that an award winner must wait two years before being eligible to receive the award again.

The state submitted packets each of the past two evaluation periods, but could only receive feedback on the organization, not rankings. If Wisconsin were to win the overall award, it would join the West Virginia Army National Guard as the only state to have earned the top spot in back-to-back periods of eligibility.

The evaluation teams will complete their site visits before announcing the final rankings in May, but being named a finalist serves as validation for Wolhaupter, who believes the award and recognition is less important than the overall organizational quality they represent. The primary objective, he said, is "to be the best that we can."

"It's not about the winning though," he said. "This is just all part of what we do. The packet submission describes the organization's efforts. What it's about is the organization improving. It's about everything that we do – looking at our strategic planning and providing feedback

and better performance for our customers and our workforce next year than we have this year."

Wolhaupter's comments were echoed by Staff Sgt. Bradley Everhart, who works in the health systems services department of the Wisconsin Army National Guard but also acts as one of the National Guard Bureau's evaluators conducting site visits in other states. More important than winning awards, he said, is the opportunity to showcase Wisconsin's values and hard work while also getting external feedback that might improve the organization.

That eye toward continuous organizational improvement is a large part of why Wisconsin is consistently near the top in the Army Communities of Excellence competition, Wolhaupter said. And the organization's leadership, commitment to consistent refinement and focus on strategic objectives have been a key factor in setting the state up for success.

"The contest provides a vehicle for us to write a submission and analyze what we're doing, but we would do the same effort to improve the organization on a day-to-day basis whether there was a contest or not," he said. "It's just simply a vehicle for us to focus some of our efforts to be the best we can."

While Wolhaupter acknowledged that awards and recognition can be motivational and humbling, the biggest reward for winning would be if other states or the Army National Guard as a whole ultimately adopted a practice employed by Wisconsin that made the whole force even stronger. Each year, the Army Communities of Excellence sends the winning packet to every state as an example from which other states can pull ideas.

"That would be great – if something that we did – was able to improve the entire Army National Guard," Wolhaupter said. "What better thing could you hope for?" 📧

[Story online](#)



115th Fighter Wing recognized for outstanding safety

Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti
115th Fighter Wing

The 115th Fighter Wing was presented the 2013 William W. Spruance Award, the National Guard Association of the United States' unit safety award, during the 136th General Conference and Exhibition at the McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois, Aug. 25.

The 115th Fighter Wing was among 88 Air National Guard units vying for the award, and was selected because of its significant contribution to accident prevention in 2013. This is the fourth time the 115th has won the Spruance award.

According to Lt. Col. Brian Parker, 115th Fighter Wing chief of safety, the Wing's participation in the Occupational Safety and Health Association's Voluntary Protection Program significantly advanced its safety and health program in 2013.

"The VPP initiative has strengthened the working relationship between leadership, union membership and unit members," Parker said. "Every member has a vested interest in improving our safety and health programs."

According to Parker, having an excellent safety program starts with

Members of the 115th Fighter Wing safety team with the 2013 William W. Spruance Award during Wingman Day in Madison on Sept. 7. The award was originally presented during the 136th National Guard Association of the United States General Conference and Exhibition. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti

senior leadership supporting members' participation in safety at all levels — it is critical to the 115th Fighter Wing's safety culture and program success.

"The backbone of the safety program is the organization's unit safety representatives," Parker said. "Being assigned as a USR is an additional duty — they represent the commander's safety program. Only the best personnel the organization has to offer are selected."

[Brig. Gen. William W. Spruance](#), the Airman after whom the safety award was named, was one of the best when it came to implementing and following through with safety initiatives. The Airmen at the 115th Fighter Wing are following in his footsteps.

"Not only are we leaning forward to improve and increase our mission readiness, but we're doing it in a very safe environment," said Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th Fighter Wing commander. "I want to personally thank the fighter wing safety team for setting the foundation for the wing, and I'd like to thank all the members for making sure that we not only execute our mission, but we do it in a very safe manner." 📧

[Story online](#)

115th Fighter Wing earns Outstanding Unit award

Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode
115th Fighter Wing

The 115th Fighter Wing received the 2013 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award — its eighth such award.

“Your dedication and commitment enable the Air National Guard to fulfill its commitment to our national and state missions,” said Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th Fighter Wing commander. “Thank you for the enthusiasm and professionalism you bring to the 115th Fighter Wing and the Wisconsin Air National Guard every day.”

One of the Airmen who contributed to this year's award has been a member of the unit since 1987. He remembers the first time the unit won the award.

“I was a young Airman at the time that first unit award was announced,” said Chief Master Sgt. Alan Dickrell, 115th Fighter Wing force support squadron superintendent. “I didn't comprehend how great of an achievement it was. I was fresh out of active duty and didn't even know how many Air National Guard wings there were in the country.”

According to the Air Force Personnel Center, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award is awarded to a number of units that have distinguished themselves through exceptionally meritorious service or outstanding achievement that clearly sets the unit above and apart from similar units. All 89 Air National Guard units have an opportunity to submit a package for the award.

“Throughout the years we kept winning awards and I began to understand more and more about the Air National Guard, and about what a great organization I was a part of,” Dickrell said.

This year's unit award was especially important to Dickrell, as he won the General Lew Allen Award, an award given annually to honor a base level officer and senior non-commissioned officer working in aircraft munitions or missile maintenance. That award is only given to two people in the entire Air National Guard and strongly influenced the unit



Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th Fighter Wing commander, shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar after accepting the 2013 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award certificate Sept. 7. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode

award submission.

“Receiving the Lew Allen was a critical contributor to the outstanding unit award because it is really a reflection of all the positive things we accomplish at the 115th Fighter Wing as a team,” Dickrell said. “Not any one individual can take credit.”

As a fifth-year chief, Dickrell felt this award was more meaningful to him.

“This one is different because I really understand the big picture and what it takes to win awards like this,” Dickrell said. “Everyone has to maintain a high standard of excellence every day to be recognized. I'm proud to say the culture of excellence is deeply ingrained in everyone who is a part of our Wing, and I'm very proud that our leadership strives to pass that on generation to generation.”

The hard work the Airmen of the Wing put forth each and every day isn't over yet.

“Even though we won the award, no one is stopping and basking in the glory,” Dickrell said. “Everyone took a moment to reflect and be proud, but they are now pressing forward to plan and complete our next mission. I am proud to be a part of the 115th Fighter Wing and everything it is about.”

[Story online](#)



Brig. Gen. Kenneth Koon, assistant adjutant general for training and readiness, presents the Philip A. Connelly Awards Program First Runner-Up plaque to Sgt. 1st Class Michael Meyer, senior food service operations sergeant with the food service section for Headquarters Company of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 257th Brigade Support Battalion, during an Oct. 18 ceremony at Fort McCoy. Also pictured are Sgt. Kyle Edwards, Wisconsin Army National Guard food service manager, and Col. Galen White, Wisconsin Army National Guard deputy chief of staff for logistics. Wisconsin National Guard photo

Wisconsin Army Guard nets silver platter achievements

Vaughn R. Larson

Department of Military Affairs

The proof was in the pudding, so to speak, regarding the culinary skills of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Headquarters Company, 257th Brigade Support Battalion food service section. But now the best mess section in the Army National Guard — and second best in the reserve component — has the hardware to show for it.

Unit representatives were on hand to receive a plaque, engraved with their achievement in the 2013 Department of the Army Philip A. Connelly Awards Program, during an Oct. 18 ceremony in Daley Hall in the Wisconsin Military Academy, Fort McCoy.

The Oak Creek-based unit won the [Region 3 competition](#) at Fort McCoy in August 2013 and served up their [best effort](#) outside the Oak Creek armory in March. In both events, the food service section had to prepare a complete meal for about 100 Soldiers in a tactical environment. They were evaluated in 10 categories — supervision and training,

headcount operations, request and storage of rations, field food safety, command support, staff appearance and attitude, kitchen site selection and layout, how the food was served, equipment use and maintenance, and food preparation and quality.

Representatives from the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion's Headquarters Company were also on hand to receive an engraved silver tray for winning Region 3 [earlier this year](#). They will compete for the chance to be named the best reserve component food service section early next year.

“I want to stress how rare this is that a state submits two separate units to compete at the national level two years in a row,” said Sgt. Kyle Edwards, the state food program manager for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. “This is a great achievement.”

Both units' names were added to a Wisconsin Army National Guard Food Service Excellence plaque, which is displayed at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison.

[Story online](#)



Chief Master Sgt. Connie Bacik, the command chief master sergeant of the 128th Air Refueling Wing, presents an award to Chief Master Sgt. Patti Winter-Schmidt during her retirement ceremony Dec. 7. Winter-Schmidt served a 38-year career in the military and was the first female to be promoted to Chief Master Sgt. at the 128th Air Refueling Wing. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Master Sgt. Thomas J. Sobczyk

128th Air Refueling Wing's first female chief retires

Airman Morgan Lipinski
128th Air Refueling Wing

A retirement ceremony was held in honor of Chief Master Sgt. Patti Winter-Schmidt here at the 128th Air Refueling Wing Dec. 7.

Winter-Schmidt served in the United States military for 38 years with the majority of those years served at the 128th Air Refueling Wing. During those years, Winter-Schmidt worked in several areas of the Maintenance Group including the Aircraft Maintenance section and the Aero Space Ground Equipment section.

Since 2010, Winter-Schmidt has held the position of the 128th Maintenance Group's Component Maintenance Flight Superintendent where she was responsible

for sustaining the availability of personnel and aircraft to conduct conventional and emergency war order tasks.

During her time in service, Winter-Schmidt received several awards and achievements including the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal and the Richard I. Bong Award. She was also the first female to be promoted to Chief Master Sgt. here at the 128th Air Refueling Wing and was recognized as the American Legion Auxiliary's Woman Veteran of the Year in 2005. Winter-Schmidt now plans to share her time with different veteran-aid volunteer organizations.

"I wish the best for all the Airmen here and I hope to see everyone again in the civilian world," Winter-Schmidt said. 📷

[Story online](#)

Refueling Wing members awarded for outstanding conduct

Staff Sgt. Jenna Lenski
128th Air Refueling Wing

Four Airmen with the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing received Air Force Association awards Sept. 18 at the 2014 Air and Space Conference and Technology Exposition in Washington, D.C.

Maj. Jason Park and Capt. Rory Cattelan, both pilots with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, and Staff Sgt. Tyson Krug, a boom operator with the 128th, were awarded the AFA Earl T. Ricks Award, given to Air National Guard members who have demonstrated outstanding airmanship.

Specifically, that aircrew safely and successfully handled an in-flight emergency aboard a KC-135R Stratotanker while deployed in support of the 379th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron in the Central Command theater of operations.

On Aug. 28, 2013, the KC-135 aircrew struck a flock of ducks during an aerial refueling flight in southern Afghanistan. After discontinuing refueling, the aircrew of the receiver aircraft helped to identify the severity of the bird strike.

The KC-135 aircrew coordinated with ground support to safely recover the aircraft. In the best interest of the

aircrew, the aircraft and the mission, they returned to the Combined Air and Space Operations Center rather than divert to a base in Afghanistan. By doing so, they saved the Air Force money in manpower and equipment, and expedited the repair of the aircraft.

Park, Cattelan, and Krug attended the 2014 Air and Space Conference and Technology Exposition, along with Col. Jeffrey Cashman, the acting vice wing commander of the 128th Air Refueling Wing, to be recognized and receive their award.

Senior Master Sgt. Mike Schmaling, a first sergeant with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, also received an AFA award. He and his employer, Faith Technologies, Inc., were jointly awarded the AFA George W. Bush Award. That award recognizes civilian employers of Air National Guard members for their outstanding contributions to the total force mission.

Schmaling has been employed with Faith Technologies, Inc. — an electrical contracting company based in Menasha — for nearly 15 years.

"I would not have the success and achievements of my military career if it were not for the support of my family and civilian employer," Schmaling said. 📷

[Story online](#)

Wisconsin Military Academy inducts Voght into Hall of Fame

Vaughn R. Larson
Department of Military Affairs

FORT MCCOY — Retired Master Sgt. David Voght spent the final seven years of his 30-year military career at the Wisconsin Military Academy as an instructor and staff noncommissioned officer. The positive impact he made during that time was recognized Oct. 11 when he was inducted into the Wisconsin Military Academy Hall of Fame.

"Our tradition of excellence continues, and to meet our continuing requirements we ask for an enormous amount of

dedication and commitment from our staff," explained Col. Gregory Hirsch, commander of the 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute, which is located in the Wisconsin Military Academy. "The staff must be the very best of the best, as they always have been. That is why the single most important criteria to be inducted into the Wisconsin Military Academy Hall of Fame is the contribution the individual has made to the training environment."

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Richard

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'Model of leadership' inducted into WMA Hall of Fame

Continued from Page 7

Strathmann, himself a Hall of Fame inductee in 2009, was Voght's first sergeant and command sergeant major when they both were part of the now-defunct 1st Battalion, 632nd Armor Regiment, and also at the Wisconsin Military Academy.

"True professional," Strathmann said of Voght. "He lived the Army values every day of his life from the day he transferred to headquarters company of the armor regiment until the day he retired. His mentorship to the [Officer Candidate School] candidates was just phenomenal. I have never seen another Soldier do that in all the days of my career."

Col. Daniel Sailer, the officer who nominated Voght for induction, spoke highly of his time working with Voght at the Wisconsin Military Academy. Voght was the noncommissioned officer in charge of the general studies battalion — 2nd Battalion — which included the Officer Candidate School (OCS).

"One thing we teach in OCS to the new lieutenants is to make sure you make that relationship with the NCO, and that will carry you forward your entire career," Sailer said. "As the company commander, you and the first sergeant are the leadership team. Dave

Brig. Gen. Kenneth Koon, assistant adjutant general for readiness and training, and David Voght, a retired master sergeant, instructor and staff noncommissioned officer at the Wisconsin National Guard's 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute, during the Wisconsin Military Academy Hall of Fame induction ceremony Oct. 11 at Fort McCoy. Voght is the 53rd person inducted into the WMA Hall of Fame, and the lone inductee for 2014.

Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

was that companion for me. He was one half of our leadership team for a long time."

Retired Lt. Col. Lyonel Wisniewski fondly recalled Voght's time serving in the support platoon of the armor battalion's headquarters company.

"I didn't ever have to worry that the support platoon was going to come up short on their mission," Wisniewski said. "[He] has one speed — mach two with his hair on fire."

"I don't consider myself as much having been his boss as having been a fellow Soldier who had the opportunity to see such excellence and to see him motivate his subordinates," Wisniewski continued. "He always had a positive attitude. If he had an issue, he came to you with a solution. Just the kind of NCO you want in your unit. And I know he left some of that here at the academy, in the programs he helped set up."

"He is a model of leadership, dedication and the Soldier caring ethic," Hirsch said of Voght.

Voght said he was humbled and honored to be the 53rd Hall of Fame inductee. He thanked his wife Sharon for her support and understanding during his 30-year military career, and spoke fondly and at length of his colleagues who mentored and influenced him during his time in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

"I never saw myself really in this light," Voght said. "I looked at myself as doing my job. It was a pleasure and an honor to come here every month."

"I never took it lightly that I was here at the academy," Voght continued. "The Wisconsin Military Academy, the 426th, really is the cream of the crop. The people that come here to drill, they ought to be honored, because I certainly was. We're making a difference here. All the people that come through those doors at this academy, they walk out better Soldiers." 📷

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional photos](#)

More than 900,000 of Wisconsin's finest men and women have gone to war the state's storied history of military service.

As the new Wisconsin, I'm especially proud of the role of the National Guard defending America.

When our men and women are called to serve, they leave their families, tradesmen and shipbuilders - dropped their plows and tools and picked up the torch of freedom upon which this nation was founded.

Today, I stand with our veterans and National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. Like our forefathers, they too live civilian lives until called upon them to serve. Whether they hold jobs as farmers, soldiers and Airmen are always ready to answer the call.

Our veterans are one percent of our nation's population. That one percent carries the load for an entire nation of freedom-loving people. At a heavy burden, the American combat veteran secures for us peace, prosperity, security, life liberty and the pursuit of happiness for future generations of Americans.



THE WISCONSIN NATIONAL GUARD IN WORDS AND PICTURES





"This is one of the most purposeful missions that we can support on many levels. We are doing our part to help bring someone one step closer to home and their family." — **Master Sgt. Amanda Look, on the 128th Air Refueling Wing participating in an Aeromedical Evacuation Flight mission for eight days in January**

"You never really wrap your head around the contracting side of things until you're right in the middle of it, the levels of bureaucracy in getting roads plowed on a Saturday when the KBR people aren't there, the military contracting officer isn't there, but we're there." —

Capt. Scott Johnson, a member of the 924th Engineer Facilities Detachment, on the team's role in helping get the MK Passenger Transit Center in Romania operational in January



"Without annual trainings like this one, it's more difficult to be mission-ready. Putting Soldiers in an environment away from home, with all the different cultural and language barriers, really sets us up to be successful in the future." — **Spc. Marena Erickson, broadcast specialist with the 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, on the unit's role preparing troops deploying to Kosovo in January**



"We were excited to get a mission and execute. Stuff like this makes us better at what we do." — **Staff Sgt. Ray Heilman**, winter force package noncommissioned officer in charge at Spooner, on the Wisconsin National Guard winter storm response Feb. 20-21



"Every single shop has done their part. This unit has come together as a team and has given extra effort to overcome the challenges we have faced." — **1st Lt. Brian Wyman**, 115th Maintenance Squadron officer in charge, regarding the 115th Fighter Wing's Key West training Feb. 1-14



"We know that America plays an important role in maintaining peace and stability around the world, and you are essential to that role." — **U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin** to members of the 32nd Military Engagement Team and Base Defense Operations Center at their Feb. 22 sendoff ceremony



"These Airmen have executed the mission very well. We are ready to support our community, our state and our country because of our citizen Airmen."
 — Col. Jeffrey Wiegand, 115th Fighter Wing commander, on the return of 26 security forces Airmen from the United Arab Emirates March 2

"One of the best things about the event is it highlights that there's really such strong traditions across the force. There is a unity, a brotherhood, a strength to the Wisconsin Army National Guard no matter what branch you're in, no matter what field you're in." — Lt. Col. Brian Wolhaupter, referring to the inaugural All Saints Celebration Feb. 22



"On base we're just going through the motions. You have to be healthy to be in the military, so we seldom see problems. Down here you're working with people who aren't healthy."
 — Maj. Rachel Neisner, 173rd Medical Group, on Cajun Care 2014 in Abbeville, La., Feb. 25-March 6



"It's been an amazing journey. We called this press conference to announce our 500th hire — in my eyes, I look at it as 500 lives changed."
— **Capt. Joseph Ledger, Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection (WERC) manager, at the March 19 event**



"You've probably noticed we're not the youngest group Wisconsin has sent. I'm not going to call them old — we're well seasoned. Between the six of us we have over 50,000 flying hours. That's a lot of aviation experience. But that's just the start — these guys are true professionals." — **Chief Warrant Officer 4 Arthur Hebblewhite, Detachment 52 commander, during the unit's March 6 sendoff ceremony. The seven-man unit deployed to Afghanistan**



"You guys were a really good team — we do notice those things. It was really impressive — it was actually quite joyful to watch you guys." — **Chief Warrant Officer 5 Pamela Null, a Department of the Army evaluator from the U.S. Army Reserve Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., to the food service section of the 257th Brigade Support Battalion Headquarters Company, during a March 1 evaluation. The food section was named best in the Army National Guard in the 2014 Philip A. Connolly Awards Program.**

“I am fully impressed and humbled at the dedication, motivation and fierce loyalty displayed each and every day by every one of our Soldiers. First Sergeant and I are very pleased, and Sir, I wholeheartedly report today that my intent has been accomplished and we are ready to mobilize.” — **Capt. Kyle Gruber, 829th Engineer Company commander, to Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar during the unit’s March 28 sendoff ceremony**



“I have no doubt that these gentlemen are ready for the next leg of the journey, and we’ll raise the standards by which others will be measured. We will continue the long tradition of excellence the state of Wisconsin has built.” — **Capt. Aaron Ammerman, commander of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, at the unit’s April 2 sendoff. Battery A is only the second National Guard unit to conduct a field artillery mission in Afghanistan**



"Did Michelle's service make a difference, not just from a foreign policy perspective, but to real people? Did we accomplish our mission of changing the hearts and minds and lives of people here in the United States and in Iraq? And the answer is yes." — **Lt. Col. Scott Southworth, Spc. Michelle Witmer's commander at the time of her death in combat in 2004, at a street renaming ceremony in Milwaukee April 6**



"The competition not only is a great way to see what you can do as a Soldier, but it also makes you a better Soldier for your unit." — **Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Zabinski, the state's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, on the 2014 Wisconsin Best Warrior Competition**



"It's a bittersweet feeling. We did so well over the first two days in so many events. To come up short on one event is tough. But it's still a good result, and good for the National Guard." — **1st Lt. Nicholas Plocar, on finishing second in the 2014 Best Ranger Competition April 13-15**



"To the best of our knowledge, this is the largest CERFP exercise linking with local civilian agencies that has ever been conducted in the United States." — **Lt. Col. Scott Southworth**, 641st Troop Command Battalion commander, on the May 2-3 emergency preparedness exercise in Portage. The Wisconsin National Guard CERFP unit trained alongside civilian first responder agencies



"You could call this a spot-check." — **Lt. Col. Bruce Alzner**, a U.S. Army North Civil Support Readiness Group evaluator, on an unannounced training exercise May 20 for the 54th Civil Support Team



"It is my hope that all future Soldiers assigned to this armory — who travel down this road or go down this path — will do so in a manner that reflects Adams' way." — **1st Sgt. Gregory Fulton**, during the May 17 ceremony dedicating the street leading to the Rhinelander armory after Sgt. Ryan Adams



"It falls right into our state mission of providing trained individuals, the right resources and the right amount of people to complete that mission." — **Lt. Col. Scott Bush** on Wisconsin National Guard Black Hawk helicopter participation in the 2014 Patriot Exercise at Volk Field

"My favorite thing about camp is doing the obstacles and eating MRE's. I want to come back."
— **10-year-old Chase Johnson**, on the Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp, held July 11-13 at Volk Field



"It's amazing to see how much they grow when they're here, but it's up to them how far they go. They need to find it within themselves to change." — **Keith Krueger**, Challenge Academy deputy director, during a June 12 graduation ceremony in Mauston



"It's a great opportunity for the pilots to get a chance to fly in a different environment, drop live munitions and fly against multiple aircraft." — **Maj. Tom Nunamaker, 115th Fighter Wing deployed maintenance commander, on the unit's participation in Red Flag Alaska Aug. 7-22**



"It was a tremendous opportunity for us to showcase what we can do. We offer more than just what we can do for the National Guard in Wisconsin." — **Col. Gregory Hirsch, 426th Regiment Regional Training Institute commander, regarding an Aug. 15 visit by a delegation of elected officials**



"I got on that conference call and immediately indicated that Volk is willing and ready to support in any way we can. They immediately said to open our airspace and then they asked if we could take up to 15,000 feet." — **Chief Master Sgt. Wayne Reynolds on Volk Field helping alleviate commercial air traffic disruptions Sept. 26-Oct. 13**



"You're not going to find a better company of route clearance anywhere in this nation." — Capt. Andrew Redd, during the Oct. 15 sendoff for the 950th Engineer Company, which deployed to Afghanistan



"We are confident they would be ready to respond if needed." — Karen McKeown, state health officer, regarding the Wisconsin National Guard's two Joint Healthcare Assistance Teams training Oct. 31 to respond in the event of an Ebola virus disease outbreak in Wisconsin.



"Mrs. [Jessica] Doyle saw the agony that families were going through, so she suggested to her husband that they should do something special." — Linda Hughes, whose hand-made ornaments decorate the Tribute to Our Troops Tree each year at the Executive Residence



"After working with her for a short time, I realized how much of a caring, charismatic person she was, and how her personality made people around her feel at ease."
— **Capt. Jonathan Meyer**, speaking about **Capt. Karin Deimer**, whose memorial was dedicated Dec. 6 during an open house at the Wisconsin Army National Guard armory in Portage.



"Our job was actually to make things smaller and to get people out. It was a lot of work — we had to make up a lot of things as we went. It's not necessarily something the Army does every day." — **Capt. Kyle Gruber**, commander of the 829th Engineer Company, on the unit's return to Wisconsin Dec. 8.



"This is his job. He wants to do this, and he's good at it." — **Katie Wheelan**, wife of Staff Sgt. **Matthew Wheelan**, who returned with part of **Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery Dec. 13** from a combat deployment to Afghanistan

Parting shot



Four Wisconsin Army National Guard members— Warrant Officer Candidate Patrick Bright of the 257th Brigade Support Battalion headquarters detachment; Warrant Officer Candidate Cynthia Betts of Joint Force Headquarters; Staff Sgt. Bradley Nelson of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade headquarters company; and Staff Sgt. Charles Oleson of the 1st Battalion, 105th Cavalry headquarters troop — with University of Wisconsin Athletic Director Barry Alvarez, before the Sept. 20 UW Badgers football game against Bowling Green at Camp Randall in Madison. The four Soldiers were recognized for their military service. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Sgt. Oscar Gollaz