

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

From Nebraska to Guard Bureau

■ Domeier selected as top National Guard warrant officer

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa Domeier, the Nebraska Army National Guard's command chief warrant officer since November 2013, was selected by Lt. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, director of the Army National Guard in Washington, D.C., to become the next command chief warrant officer of the Army National Guard Governor Pete Ricketts announced May 10.

Domeier, who was appointed into the position during a June 30 ceremony at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Arlington, Virginia, is the first



Domeier

female National Guard command chief warrant officer and the eighth overall to hold the position.

"Congratulations to Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa Domeier on her selection to this extremely important national post," Ricketts said. "As the commander-in-chief of the Nebraska National Guard, it is wonderful to see a lifelong Nebraskan and long-serving Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier stepping into a role that will shape the future of the Army National Guard."

"We are absolutely thrilled that Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa

See DOMEIER on 5.

Hurricane Florence Relief



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

Helping Hands: Spc. Connor Deines (left), Company G, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion, hands supplies to waiting Soldiers at the Fairmont Hurricane Relief Center in North Carolina.

Aviation crews support relief operations in North Carolina

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley
Staff Photojournalist

As Hurricane Florence churned through the western Atlantic Ocean on its way to making landfall along the North and South Carolina coasts, 13 Nebraska Soldiers were on their way, determined to help in whatever way they possibly could.

The Soldiers were members of the Lincoln-based Company G, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion. Activated on Sept. 13, along with two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, they were sent eastward toward the path of the storm as part of a major mobilization of National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from across the nation who moved into action as the storm placed the east coast in its crosshairs.

For some of the Nebraska Guardsmen, the mission was much more than just another domestic emergency response effort. For them, this was personal.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steven Hel-

See HURRICANE on 8.

Nebraska to pilot new transportation program for Guard, Reserves

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Military transportation specialists have long had major impacts on the American military's ability to accomplish its wide-ranging missions. In fact, it is not far-fetched to state that the U.S. Military's amazing capabilities rest on the ability of the Department of Defense to deliver personnel and cargo around the world, when and where needed, often in

incredibly short timeframes and under extreme conditions.

Nebraska National Guard transportation Soldiers will now have the ability to translate their skills and capabilities to another national challenge – helping the U.S. meet its critical growing need for qualified truck drivers – through a U.S. Department of Transportation pilot program announced July 3 in Omaha, Nebraska. The program will permit 18-20 year-olds who possess the U.S. military's equivalent of a commercial

driver's license to operate large trucks in interstate commerce.

According to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chou, the pilot program is designed to test the idea that 18-20 year-olds, who already are able to operate large trucks within their home states, should be able to operate those vehicles nationally.

"The trucking industry is really important to our national economy as well as the economy here in Nebraska," said Chou during a media conference hosted by the

Omaha Chamber of Commerce. Chou was joined by a number of civilian and military leaders including U.S. Senator Deb Fischer, U.S. Representative Don Bacon and Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general.

Chou said the U.S. economy, which is expected to continue to grow, is dependent upon the American trucking industry. However, a shortage of skilled and qualified drivers is having significant negative impacts.

See PILOT on 4.

Trifecta!

Medical battalion earns top honors in three national competitions

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Editor

It was a complete triple play for the Nebraska Army National Guard's 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion when the Lincoln-based battalion won three national level awards this year.

The battalion came together to work hard to compete nationally first for the U.S. Army Supply Excellence Award in February, then the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence in March, and finally the Philip A. Connelly Awards Competition for Excellence in Army Food Service. With each competition behind them, they waited patiently for the results to be announced, hoping their dedica-



Courtesy Photo

Culinary Kings And Queens: Nebraska National Guard 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion Soldiers pose with the Philip A. Connelly Awards Competition for Excellence in Army Food Service award for top National Guard team.

tion was enough.

The first award to roll in for the 110th MMB was the Philip A. Connelly Award for the top U.S. Army National Guard Field Kitchen. The announcement came in May, and the team was recognized on stage

in Chicago during the 50th annual award ceremony for the competition.

This was the second time in just two years the battalion earned this award, and only the third time a Nebraska National Guard unit has

See TRIFECTA on 4.

Nebraskans help celebrate Czech centennial milestone

■ Czech Embassy commemorates State Partnership Program's 25th anniversary

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Editor

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, and Brig. Gen. Pat Hamilton of the Texas National Guard joined Ambassador Hynek Kmoniek and Brig. Gen. Jan Bures for an Armed Forces Day celebration, June 29, at the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the 100th Anniversary

of the formation of the Czech-Slovak Army.

"The people of the Czech Republic are grateful to all the soldiers who risk their lives to introduce significant changes for Europe, a way to build the Czech Republic as a sovereign democratic state, as well as Soldiers who fight in order to support democracy and freedom in different parts of our world these days," Bures said to the crowd gathered at the embassy.

Along with the founding of the Czech-Slovak Army, which occurred on June 30, 1918, the event also recognized the 25th anniversary of an ongoing partnership between the Czech Armed Forces and the Nebraska and Texas National Guard.

See 100 YEARS on 6.



Inside

43rd Army Band celebrates 70 years of sound service

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Guardsmen save Airman's life after heart attack

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NEWS DIGEST

■Army Combat Fitness Test set to become test of record

FORT EUSTIS, Va. (DOD News) — Army leaders have approved a new strenuous fitness test designed to better prepare Soldiers for combat tasks, reduce injuries and lead to cost savings across the service.

The six-event readiness assessment, called the Army Combat Fitness Test, is intended to replace the current three-event Army Physical Fitness Test, which has been around since 1980.

Beginning in October 2020, all Soldiers will be required to take the new gender- and age-neutral test. Before that, field testing set to begin this October will allow the Army to refine the test, with initial plans for up to 40,000 active-duty, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers to see it.

“The Army Combat Fitness Test will ignite a generational, cultural change in Army fitness and become a cornerstone of individual soldier combat readiness,” said Army Maj. Gen. Malcolm Frost, commander of the Army’s Center of Initial Military Training. “It will reduce attrition and it will reduce musculoskeletal injuries and actually save, in the long run, the Army a heck of a lot of money.”

Army officials said at least six years of significant research went into the test’s development as researchers looked at what Soldiers must do to be fit for combat.

“Throughout that research and testing, the goal was to provide our leaders with a tough, realistic, field-expedient assessment of the physical component of their Soldiers’ individual readiness,” said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey. “The ACFT is scientifically validated and will help better prepare our Soldiers to deploy, fight and win on any future battlefield.”

Army officials said roughly 2,000 Soldiers have already taken the test, previously called the Army Combat Readiness Test. They provided feedback as part of the Army Training and Doctrine Command and Forces Command pilot programs that began last year at several installations.

“The current PT test is only a 40 percent predictor of success for performing in combat and executing warrior tasks and battle drills,” Frost said. “This test is approximately an 80 percent predictor of performing based on our ability to test the physical components of combat fitness.”

While the ACFT still keeps the 2-mile run as its final event, it introduces five others to provide a broad measurement of a soldier’s physical fitness. The events are completed in order and can take anywhere from 45 to 55 minutes for a soldier to finish.

■Strength deadlift: With a proposed weight range of 120 to 420 pounds, the deadlift event is similar to the one found in the Occupational Physical Assessment Test, or OPAT, which is given to new recruits to assess lower-body strength before they are placed into a best-fit career field. The ACFT will require Soldiers to perform a three-repetition maximum deadlift – only one in OPAT – and the weights will be increased. Army officials said the event replicates picking up ammunition boxes, a

wounded battle buddy, supplies or other heavy equipment.

■Standing power throw: Soldiers toss a 10-pound ball backward as far as possible to test muscular explosive power that may be needed to lift themselves or a fellow soldier up over an obstacle or to move rapidly across uneven terrain.

■Hand-release pushups: In this event, Soldiers start in the prone position and do a traditional pushup, but when at the down position they release their hands and arms from contact with the ground and then reset to do another pushup. This allows for additional upper body muscles to be exercised.

■Sprint/drag/carry: As they dash 25 meters five times up and down a lane, Soldiers will perform sprints, drag a sled weighing 90 pounds, and then hand-carry two 40-pound kettlebell weights. Army officials said this can simulate pulling a battle buddy out of harm’s way, moving quickly to take cover, or carrying ammunition to a fighting position or vehicle.

■Leg tuck: Similar to a pull-up, Soldiers lift their legs up and down to touch their knees/thighs to their elbows as many times as they can. Army officials said this exercise strengthens the core muscles since it doubles the amount of force required compared to a traditional situp.

■2-mile run: Same event as on the current test. Army officials said they expect run times to be a bit slower due to all of the other strenuous activity.

The ACFT gauges Soldiers on the 10 components of physical fitness: muscular strength and endurance, power, speed, agility, aerobic endurance, balance, flexibility, coordination and reaction time. The current test only measures two: muscular and aerobic endurance.

Army officials said the vast majority of policies with the APFT will likely be carried over to the new test.

Scoring could be similar with 100 points for each event, for a maximum of 600 points, officials said. Minimum required scores, however, may change depending on a soldier’s occupational specialty, the officials noted. Soldiers in more physically demanding jobs may see tougher minimums, similar to how OPAT evaluates new recruits.

“The more physically challenging your [occupation], the more you’ll be required to do at the minimum levels,” said Michael McGurk, director of research and analysis at CIMT.

Another difference is that there are no alternate events planned for this test, he said.

Soldiers will still get adequate time to rehabilitate from an injury. But under a new “deploy-or-be-removed” policy, Defense Secretary James N. Mattis said in February that troops who are non-deployable for more than 12 months will be processed for administrative separation or referred to the disability evaluation system.

“Generally speaking, somebody who has a long-term permanent profile that precludes taking a fitness test may not be retainable for duty in the Army,” McGurk said.

Ashland students view eagles

By Lt. Col Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Camp Ashland gained three more residents in May. Their names? Destiny, Dagger and Galaxy.

Those were the names that an Ashland-Greenwood Public School third grade class gave to three new bald eaglets, May 16, during their field trip to a strip of woods located on the banks of the Platte River of northern Camp Ashland.

The visit was part of what the Nebraska National Guard’s Environmental Office has tabbed “Operation Bald Eagle,” which marked its fourth year in 2018.

According to Amy Dirks, Nebraska National Guard environmental assistance coordinator, Operation Bald Eagle is designed to help build closer ties between the Nebraska National Guard and the nearby Ashland community through an educational outreach program with Ashland-Greenwood Elementary School centered on Camp Ashland’s population of nesting eagles.

Dirks said the program begins with a visit to the school, where Guard environmental specialists talk with the students in the three third grade classes about the eagles and the importance of protecting their habitats. The students are then tasked with researching and then writing essays on the eagles, which are then scored by Nebraska National Guard volunteers.

The winning essay then earns their class the right to name that year’s batch of new eagles. This year’s winning essay came from Jan Gutierrez’ class. She said the program has had a significant impact.

“The students are able to look up information and facts about the eagles, learn what’s true and what’s false about them, and then actually put what they learned into words,” she said. “It’s really a great program. It’s also a great connection to what’s going on out here at the camp, which very few of these



Photo by Sgt. Samuel Crane

Taking A Look: Ashland-Greenwood Elementary School third graders take a look at an eagle’s nest during a May 16 visit to Camp Ashland, part of Operation Bald Eagle, an annual environmental outreach program.

students ever get to experience.”

The main event of the program occurs during the annual field trip to Camp Ashland, where the students have the opportunity to view an eagle’s nest through both a spotting scope and binoculars, with the chance of actually seeing one of the adult eagles if they choose to make an appearance. The students also have the opportunity to learn which class gets the honors of naming the newest eaglets.

This year Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, had the honor of naming the winner. Before he did, though, he quizzed the students on what they had learned. Not surprisingly the students were quick to answer his questions, like who had originally advocated for the turkey to be named the national symbol instead of the bald eagle (Benjamin Franklin), or how fast eagles can fly (75-99 miles-per-hour).

“It’s great to see you all here today,” Bohac told the combined classes as they waited for the announcement, before adding to the cheers of the elementary students: “It’s definitely better than being in a classroom this morning, huh?”

“Hopefully you will get to see an eagle today,” he said. “You’re definitely going to see a nest today, and that’s a pretty cool thing.”

■Army Guard Soldiers see tuition assistance program changes

ARLINGTON, Va. (DOD News) — Changes to the Army National Guard’s Tuition Assistance Program went into effect Aug. 5, allowing Army Guard members immediate access to benefits after they complete basic and advanced individual training.

“Previously, until this policy change, Soldiers had to complete AIT and then, when they came back to their units, they had to wait a year before they could use the education benefits,” said Ken Hardy, chief of the Army Guard’s education services branch. “Soldiers will now come home (from AIT) and they can immediately use their benefits.”

Also eliminated is the requirement to complete 10 years of service to use Tuition Assistance to pursue a master’s degree, Hardy said, adding that those benefits will now be tied to completion of professional military education requirements.

“Now it’s tied to professional development and a particular level of school that enlisted, officers and warrant officers have to complete,” he said.

For enlisted Soldiers, the Advanced Leaders Course must be completed, while officers

need to complete the Captains Career Course. Warrant officers must complete the Warrant Officers Advanced Course to be eligible.

However, Hardy noted, the military education requirements come into play only if the Army Guard member used Tuition Assistance to complete his or her bachelor’s degree. “If a Soldier never used TA, the (professional development) requirements don’t apply,” he said.

The military education requirement holds true if Tuition Assistance was used for even a part of earning an undergraduate degree, Hardy explained.

“So, if you used it just one time and then, say, you got a scholarship from somewhere else, you’re locked in to having to complete one of those military education courses to use it for a master’s degree,” he said, stressing that only one of those military course requirements must be met.

“If I was enlisted previously and completed ALC and then, for example, took a direct commission, but I haven’t yet completed the Captains Career Course, I’m still good,” he said. “Those benefits can still be used. Only one of those courses needs to be completed.”

Memorial Day Mission



Honoring America's Heroes:

The crew of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker conduct an aerial salute over the new Omaha National Cemetery, May 28, before the start of the Memorial Day ceremony at the cemetery. This marked the first time that the Nebraska Air National Guard has conducted a flying salute to the state’s past military service members in more than a half decade.

Prairie Soldier

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U.S. Army photo by Patrick A. Albright

A Helping Hand: Nebraska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Luke Katz, (right), assists his partner, Pennsylvania Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Troy Conrad, as they exit Victory Pond at Fort Benning, Georgia, during the swim event of the 2018 Best Ranger Competition, April 13. The David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition is an annual event in its 35th iteration to determine the top-performing two-person Ranger team from units across the Army as well as sister services.

RANGERS LEAD THE WAY

Nebraska Guard Soldiers compete for third consecutive year in grueling Best Ranger Competition

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Rigorous. Grueling. When one attempts to describe the U.S. Army’s prestigious David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition, those two words invariably come up. And for good reason, too.

Over the course of three days of competition, teams of the U.S. Army’s Rangers put their minds and bodies to the test while attempting to successfully negotiate 17 separate tasks designed to determine the year’s best pair of Rangers.

For the third straight year, Sgt. 1st Class Luke Katz from the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Company E, 134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance), was among the 102 Soldiers chosen to compete in the April 13-15 competition held at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was joined by Staff Sgt. Joe Torres from the Guard’s LRS unit, who was competing for the second straight year.

According to Katz, after finishing in 17th place in 2016 and 10th last year, he felt like he still had something to prove.

“You always want to do better... to strive to do better,” said Katz, who now serves as the unit readiness sergeant for Beatrice’s Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry. “In my case, I wanted to go back again and compete knowing that this would probably be the last chance for me to get some answers.”

Like last year, Katz was matched with 1st Sgt. Troy Conrad of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. Together, they successfully negotiated a variety of challenges including a body armor run, a swim across “Victory” pond, marksmanship competitions, a night orienteering course and an urban assault course.

Katz said he enjoyed being matched with



Muscling Through: Staff Sgt. Joe Torres and his Army National Guard teammate pull a mannequin through an obstacle course during the Best Ranger Competition.

Conrad again, saying that after two years of training together, they both knew each other’s strengths and weaknesses.

“I wouldn’t trade him for anyone,” Katz said.

After making two cuts, which whittled the 51 competing teams down to a final 15, Katz and Conrad completed the final steps of the event’s “Buddy Run” on April 15, finishing ninth overall.

While better than last year’s finish, it still left Katz wanting to return again someday.

“I need to let my body repair and my new job with the unit makes it impossible to take three months away to go train, but I would like to go back again someday in the future,” he said. “I feel like I’ve still got something left to prove.”



Balancing Act: Staff Sgt. Luke Katz attempts to gain his balance atop a Ranger pedestal during the April 13-15 Best Ranger competition held at Fort Benning, Ga.



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Steve Brewer

Hanging On: Staff Sgt. Luke Katz and his Pennsylvania Army National Guard teammate, 1st Sgt. Troy Conrad, test their upper-body stamina during one of the 17 separate tasks that Soldiers were expected to complete during the Best Ranger Competition.



Final Salute: Staff Sgt. Luke Katz and 1st Sgt. Troy Conrad celebrate the final steps of the April 13-15 David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition held at Fort Benning, Ga. This marked the second straight year that the two Army National Guard Soldiers were matched together in the rigorous three-day contest.

Recipe for Success

Nebraska cooks win 50th Annual Philip A. Connelly Competition

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

For the second time in three years, a team of culinary specialists from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Lincoln-based 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion headquarters are national champions.

The championship comes in the form of the U.S. Army's 50th annual prestigious Philip A. Connelly Awards Competition for Excellence in Army Food Service. This marks the second time in three years the unit has won the Army National Guard division of the competition.

"Congratulations to this amazingly talented team of Soldiers on this great achievement," said Gov. Pete Ricketts. "To win two national championships in three years is something that our entire state can be proud of and I join all Nebraskans in commending them for a job extremely well done."

The Connelly Competition – named after a Massachusetts native who spent his life promoting professionalism in food service in both the civilian industry and military services – is designed to recognize excellence in the preparation and serving of food in Army dining facilities and field kitchen operations. The competition is aligned with the National Restaurant Association (NRA) and the Department of the Army (DA), Deputy Chief of Staff, G4. The NRA participates in the evaluation of finalists, the presentation of awards and offers culinary training opportunities as recognition that supports the program's objectives.

The 110th MMB culinary team, which competed in the Army National Guard's Field Kitchen category, earned the award after garnering top scores during inspections at the state, regional and finally national level.

During the national competition, which took place on a soggy St. Patrick's Day weekend at the Mead Training Site, the team of Soldiers prepared a multicourse meal in their mobile kitchen trailer under the ever watchful eyes of a team of national inspectors. Competing for the 110th MMD were Chief Warrant Officer 3 KC Sohl (Lincoln), Sgt. 1st Class Katherine Struck (Lincoln), Staff Sgt. David Cook (Greenwood), Sgt. Erica Sanchez (Sioux City), Sgt. Thomas Deall (Omaha), Spc. Jason Cole (Omaha), Spc. Kevin Boyle (Plattsmouth) and Pvt. Austin Janakoski (Morrill).

"This is a phenomenal accomplishment," said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general who was able to eat the meal prepared during the national inspection. "Everyone who had the opportunity to watch this team prepare that meal and then taste the quality of their work knew that they were going to be extremely hard to beat."

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won in the competition's history.

"It was fun how we essentially received the results of each competition in the reverse order from when we entered them," said Staff Sgt. Bryan Campbell, battalion supply sergeant. "And with each win, we really looked forward to the next results."

And the results continued to be positive as the battalion learned it earned the U.S. Army Supply Excellence Award in July. The battalion was one of four Nebraska National Guard units recognized for supply excellence, one of the best years on record for the whole state. Other Nebraska units winning the U.S. Army Supply Excellence Award included Lincoln-based Joint Force Headquarters Property Book Office and 72nd Civil Support Team in Lincoln, and the 192nd Military Police Detachment in Nebraska City.

Completing the trifecta was the released results for the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence, where the 110th MMB once again took top honors for an Army National Guard category.

"We were so successful because of the team we have developed," said Campbell, who worked on all three competitions. "We have about 15 people who take pride and ownership in the unit and what we do. This team is not just great for these logistical excellence awards, but also have developed products and (standard operating procedures) that allow our unit to run extremely smoothly at annual training and on (field training exercises)."



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Soups On: Spc. Jason Cole, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, ladles soup into a bowl, March 17, as part of a meal prepared for the final evaluation during the U.S. Army's 50th annual Philip A. Connelly Awards Competition for Excellence in Army Food Service. This year marks the second time in three years the unit has won the Army National Guard division of the competition.

"I am extremely proud of this exceptional team of extremely talented Soldiers for coming together with an ultimate goal in mind and then seeing it through to completion," Bohac said. "They definitely knocked it out of the park."

Representatives of the 110th MMB team were recognized in June during the 2018 Armed Forces Food Service Awards banquet in Chicago. "It was an amazing experience to be recognized in Chicago," said Struck. "It's nice to be recognized for all of the hard work we put into the Connelly."

According to Struck, winning a national championship is an incredible accomplishment for the team. Winning it twice? Well, all the better.

"The team we had was perfect," she said. "We competed with all of our hearts in it. It really is an amazing thing to be part of."

Struck had particular praise for Sohl and the role that he played in preparing the team for the competition.

"(Chief Warrant Officer 3) Sohl is one of the greatest leaders we have and I know we wouldn't have gotten where we got today without his mentorship and guidance," Struck said.

"Also, it was very rare to have so much support from a unit when it comes to a team or section competing in anything. The 110th MMB gave us the support we needed to be successful."



Photo by St. Jessica Villwok

Proudly Displayed: The banner the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion received for earning top honors in the Philip A. Connelly competition now hangs proudly above the kitchen window in the Penterman Armory in Lincoln, Nebraska.



Winning Team: Spc. Paul Ferguson, Sgt. David Foley, Sgt. Zach Rief, Sgt. Dustin Stoner, Sgt. Kallen Nissen, Spc. Korey Lamb, Sgt. Austin Stenger, Pfc. Brenden Kouma, Cpl. Sean Licari and Sgt. Taylor Quinn.

Communication Soldiers win unique Army competition

By Sgt. Jessica Villwok
Staff Photojournalist

An elite group of communication specialists with the Nebraska Army National Guard took home the top honor in a rather unknown Army-wide competition. A team of 11 radio operator Soldiers with Company E, 134 Infantry Regiment (Long Range Surveillance), set up a radio communication shop, March 25, at the Titan and Atlas armories in Mead, Nebraska, and began to broadcast across the country.

The low-power, high-frequency communications exercise and competition (QRPX) competitors included U.S. and Canadian Army, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers making up about 120 teams.

"(QRPX) is meant to test their knowledge base of antenna theory, and antenna utilization," said Spc. Korey Lamb. "To maximize their effective distance, rather than just pushing more power out through the antenna."

Teams earned points for establishing a single channel connection with other competitors to exchange call signs and codes. Bonus points were given if a connection was made via an automatic link establishment, which allows teams to exchange data, messages, voice and text messages over radio waves.

The teams furthest established communication was approximately 3,826 miles away to Hawaii.

"It's really not anything glamorous," Lamb said. "It's usually just a guy sitting on the radio every five minutes broadcasting out." Although the competition itself might seem boring to onlookers, Co. E scored the most points to win. This year marks the second time Nebraska has taken home the top honor in the past five years.

The team not only excels at what they do, they also take the opportunity to teach others who are not as skilled at using the high-frequency equipment.

"Winning is always cool," Lamb said. "But in my opinion the coolest part of the competition is being able to help other people who may be less efficient in high-frequency."

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"We know that a growing economy increases the demand for skilled truck drivers. And this comes at a time when industry sources estimate that our country faces a tremendous shortage of truck drivers," she said, estimating that this shortage will grow to approximately 147,000 by 2020.

Under the unveiled pilot program, a limited number of individuals between the ages of 18 and 20 will be granted the ability to operate large trucks in interstate commerce if they possess the military equivalent of a CDL and are sponsored by a participating trucking company. During the three-year program, the safety records of those participating drivers will be compared to the records of a control group.

Currently, while 18-20 year-old drivers are able to drive commercial vehicles within their particular states, federal regulations do not allow them to cross state borders. The pilot program, Chou said, will test whether this regulation needs to be changed to meet the needs of the nation's interstate commerce.

"The goal is to test whether it is safe for 18, 19 and 20-year-old drivers with military experience and training to operate commercial motor vehicles in interstate com-

merce," Chou said.

The program was first conceived by Fischer's staff. Fischer, who serves on the U.S. Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, said the idea came from discussions on how to tackle the nation's current needs in regards to trucking and how to attract new generations of drivers into the profession.

Fischer said the current law allows 18-20 year-old drivers to drive within their state boundaries, "but not be able to cross the bridge into Iowa, that's kind of ridiculous."

However, when Fischer discussed this problem with her fellow senators, many of them responded by saying, "it's not safe to be on the road with a 19-year-old in a truck right next to you." A lot of times I would just stand and smile and say, 'but you already are. If you drive from Omaha to Scottsbluff, you already are.'"

"So, why are we putting limitations on great drivers, on great job opportunities because of the idea that for whatever reason, there's a perception that it's not safe," she added.

The pilot program should help by providing data on that particular question, Chou and Fischer both

said.

Along with providing an opportunity to bring new drivers into the transportation field, the program could also have a significant impact on National Guard and U.S. Reserve transportation specialists and drivers, all of whom have received significant training in driving large vehicles in a wide variety of environments. That's particularly true for the Nebraska Army National Guard, said Bohac, which currently operates a truck driver school at Camp Ashland where Army National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve and active Army truck drivers are receiving truck driving training.

"We produced 168 Soldiers out of that course last year, fully trained and ready to go," Bohac said, adding that the Nebraska Army National Guard currently has 500 Soldiers that hold truck driving military occupational specialties.

Bohac said bringing this program to Nebraska, National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve drivers will now be able to compete for important well-paying jobs within the trucking industry. Those Soldiers, he added, also bring significant benefits to civilian employers.

"They are relatively healthy, they're disciplined, have leader-

ship skills, they're drug tested and they have access to health insurance through TRICARE Reserve Select," Bohac said. "We bring a great deal to employers, both large and small, all across the state."

Bohac added that's why the Nebraska National Guard is excited to participate in the pilot program.

"What a great opportunity," he said.

Bacon, himself a U.S. Air Force veteran, agreed.

"It's important for service men and women, young veterans and those still in the Guard and Army Reserve, and those who are transitioning out of active duty to have this opportunity," he said. "It makes them more marketable."

"It's a great opportunity for our men and women in uniform," Bacon added. "I also think it's a huge thing for our transportation industry in our country. (Truck driving) is one of the most stressed professions that we have. So, we need to find ways that we can remove these artificial limitations so that we can perform better."

"And with this pilot program, we will see if we can do it."

Navrkal retires after career spanning four decades

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

The stars were definitely out in Lincoln the afternoon of Sept. 10 as generals and flag officers representing several National Guard organizations and the U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base traveled to the Joint Force Headquarters to honor and congratulate retiring Maj. Gen. Michael Navrkal on the conclusion of his 39-year military career.

“Mike, job well done good and faithful servant,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, who served as the presiding officer for the ceremony that attracted several hundred family members, friends, and current and retired military service members. “Thank you for all you’ve given and congratulations on a stellar career.”

During the course of his career Navrkal, a native of Nebraska City, served in many leadership roles, including every level of command from platoon leader to commander of the multistate 35th Infantry Division. Navrkal culminated his career by serving as the mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of USSTRATCOM.

According to Gen. John E. Hyten, commander of USSTRATCOM, Navrkal represented the core values of the National Guard and U.S. Army throughout his career, balancing his various and often competing family, civilian and military responsibilities with remarkable skills.

“From the smallest unit level to the largest strategic level of our nation, Mike Navrkal has been there... and he has been there in the tradition of the Minuteman. He has been there as a Citizen Soldier, ready and willing to serve our nation,” said Hyten, shortly before presenting Navrkal with the Defense Service Medal in recognition of his work at USSTRATCOM. “And that is worth recognizing.”

Following his commission as a second lieutenant in June 1981 after graduating from Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, Navrkal returned

to Nebraska where he served as an infantry platoon leader and company commander of Nebraska City’s Company A, 2-134th Infantry (Mechanized). Following several leadership assignments within the 2-134th Infantry and 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized), he transferred to the Wisconsin Army National Guard in December 1991 to serve in similar leadership roles within the 32nd Separate Infantry Brigade in Madison, Wisconsin.

Navrkal returned to Nebraska in November 1996, serving in Nebraska’s 167th Cavalry Squadron and the Scottsbluff-based 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion.

Following a short stint in the inactive ready reserve, he served as the assistant director of logistics in the Nebraska Army National Guard’s State Area Command headquarters and as the logistics mobilization readiness action officer for National Guard Bureau.

Navrkal assumed command of Scottsbluff’s 168th QM Petroleum Supply Battalion in January 2004 and later commanded the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 867th Corps Support Battalion during its year-long deployment to Taji, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After the deployment, he commanded the Nebraska Army Guard’s 92nd Troop Command from August 2009 until April 2011 before becoming the Nebraska Army National Guard assistant adjutant general while also serving as the deputy commanding general for the 1st U.S. Army’s Training Support Division (West).

In September 2013 Navrkal became the commander of the 35th Infantry Division at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, serving until March 2016 when he returned to Nebraska to serve as a special assistant to the Nebraska adjutant general and later for the deputy director of the Army National Guard in Arlington, Virginia.

His final assignment was as the mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of USSTRATCOM from April 2017 until this month.

In retiring, Navrkal, who also received the U.S. Army Distinguished



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Honoring Decades Of Military Service: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, presents retiring Maj. Gen. Michael Navrkal with the U.S. Army Distinguished Service Medal during Navrkal’s Sept. 10 retirement ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln. Navrkal, whose final military assignment was as the mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of U.S. Strategic Command, was also presented with the Defense Service Medal from Gen. John E. Hyten, commander of USSTRATCOM.

Service Medal from Bohac, said he was proud of all those Soldiers and military service members he was able to serve with during his career.

“I never imagined I could experience so much in my military career, but it’s the people I’ve served with while being part of an organization – our Armed Forces – with a purpose greater than any one of us that molded me into the person I am today,” he said. “I have to say 39 years goes pretty quickly. I would not be here without God placing so many incredible people in my life who have made me the person I am today and the person I will be tomorrow and beyond.”

In particular, Navrkal thanked those he served with during the course of his career for their mentorship and support.

“Those that have provided me

sage advice and chewed me out when I needed to hear it,” he said. “All of the Soldiers who’ve placed their faith and trust in me while I’ve had the privilege and honor to lead you... we don’t have enough time for me to recognize each and every one of you individually, but I want you to know that it’s with a grateful heart that I stand before you and simply say thank you.”

“As I said earlier, 39 years does go by quickly, but the memories of my time serving in uniform will be with me until I depart this earth,” he added. “I’ve been fortunate to serve with and lead some of the greatest Americans this country has ever produced.”

Navrkal had even more praise for the support he received from his friends and his family, particularly his wife, Jeanie.

“Jeanie always gives me a kiss, a hug and says goodbye when I leave to go serve others,” he said. “I can honestly say she has never held me back from doing something I was asked to do.”

“God blessed me so greatly when he put us together as a couple. The love you have for me sustains me during the toughest of times,” he added.

Navrkal closed his comments by saying that while he is leaving the military, the military will never leave him.

“It’s meant everything to me to serve my state and nation, standing shoulder to shoulder with my fellow service members and having supportive and loving family and friends beside and behind me,” Navrkal said. “I am a Soldier for life.”

DOMEI ER continued from page 1.

Domeier has been selected to become the next command chief warrant officer of the Army National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general. “Teresa is going to be joining a long line of distinguished Nebraska National Guard men and women who have served at the highest levels of our National Guard nationally. She will be playing an important role in charting the future course of our National Guard Warrant Officer cohort across the country and making sure that our warrant officers continue to be the best trained and most capable they’ve ever been.”

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with Ms. Domeier in a number of capacities, most notably since I selected her to become the Nebraska Army National Guard’s fifth command chief warrant officer in November 2013,” Bohac added. “She has made a significant impact in our state’s warrant officer recruitment and has been a tireless advocate for Nebraska warrant officers. There is no doubt in my mind she is the right person at the right time to take on this new role in Washington.”

Domeier, a lifelong Nebraskan, began her military career in 1983 when she enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) headquarters in Lincoln. A year later, she transferred to the assistant food service advisor position and began her more than 20-year career in military food service.

“I am absolutely honored to be selected by Lieutenant General Kadavy for this position and to be able to make a difference at the National Guard Bureau level for the 54 states and territories,” Domeier said. “There are a lot of awesome command chief warrant officers at the states. I look forward to working with this amazing team to make our warrant officer field even better.”

“At the same time, it is hard to leave the



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Thank You For Your Leadership: Outgoing Nebraska Army National Guard command chief warrant officer, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa Domeier, is thanked for her military leadership by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, during a July 22 change of responsibility ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln. Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kenneth Henderson replaces her as the sixth state command chief warrant officer for the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Nebraska Army National Guard, which I consider to be my second family,” she added. “But I believe our Warrant Officer cohort is stronger today and the team – both the aviation and the technical warrant officers – have a stronger bond than they ever have had here in Nebraska.”

Domeier was appointed a warrant officer on June 6, 1995, and soon became the Nebraska Army National Guard’s state food program manager. While in this position, she supervised, managed and administered the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Food

Service Program, ensuring that the program’s resources were managed appropriately and upheld the highest levels of accountability. She was the state Philip A. Connelly food service competition evaluator and served as a regional evaluator for 16 years before becoming a national-level Department of the Army Connelly evaluator for three years.

During her tenure, Domeier also served as the national representative on the Executive Advisory Group for Logistics Excellence (EAGLE) from 2008-13 and was the voice for the food service community for all 54 states

and territories.

Domeier is also a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving as the base food service officer at Al Asad Base, Iraq, from September 2005 to September 2006. She also served as the senior/primary training, advising and counseling (TAC) officer, commander and deputy commandant for the Camp Ashland-based Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officer Candidate School from 2007-2018.

Domeier was appointed as the Nebraska Army National Guard command chief warrant officer by Bohac on Nov. 17, 2013. As the command chief, Domeier served as the senior warrant officer advisor to the Nebraska National Guard adjutant general and was responsible for addressing the development and strength management of the Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officer Corps, to include issues relating to recruiting, morale, welfare, schooling, promotion and retention.

She said she looks forward to putting her experiences to use in helping the entire nation’s Army National Guard’s warrant officers meet their current and future challenges.

“My one overriding goal is to put us into position where we’re better able to take care of our M-Day (traditional, part-time) personnel,” she said, adding that this will involve helping the states and territories tackle their recruiting and training challenges. It will also involve helping ensure that the nation’s newest warrant officers receive the mentoring they need to become effective in their chosen career paths.

“That should be everybody’s goal: preparing and mentoring the next generation, and making sure that they are equipped and ready for whatever mission they may face,” she said. “In fact, if there’s anything that I hope to take away from Nebraska is this idea of fostering a family environment and one where we take care of each other.”

Community Concert: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brian Anderson, 43rd Army Band commander, leads the band in their 70th Anniversary Concert, June 16, at the Antelope Park Band Shell in Lincoln.



70 Years Strong

Guard's 43rd Army Band marks unit's milestone anniversary with free community concert

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard's 43rd Army Band celebrated the unit's 70th anniversary with a concert, June 16, at Antelope Park in Lincoln, Nebraska. More than 100 community members, veterans and band alumni braved the June heat to attend the hour-and-a-half performance led by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brian Anderson, 43rd Army Band commander.

"Seventy years of providing service to the Soldiers and citizens of the state of Nebraska – and also to some national and international Army installations," said Anderson, who has commanded the 43rd Army Band for more than a decade. "It's something that we're very proud of, so when we have something like this, we like to bring our alumni back."

Alumni members of the Nebraska Army National Guard band were invited to participate in the second half of the concert, which included the return of two former commanders of the 43rd Army Band to the conductor's podium – Retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Splichal and Retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jeff Klintberg.

The concert had a little something for everyone, including traditional marches, classic selections from West Side Story, jazz and ragtime music, a ballad with an oboe solo by alumnus Bob Jenkins and more. And at the conclusion of the concert, the band played a service medley as a salute to every veteran in attendance.

"It's absolutely exciting; what a thrill," said Klintberg, who retired from the Nebraska Army National Guard in 2007 after commanding the band for more than 25 years. "One of the greatest things that the Army has is the largest band program in the world."

Klintberg said when it comes to morale –

both within the military and the community alike – it's a product to be sold. While the Army has downsized its musical footprint over the years, Klintberg said he really objects to the idea that the Army doesn't need bands.

"We have an awesome responsibility," he said. "When things get tough, who goes out and puts a positive image in front of the taxpayers, the voters and the parents?"

"That's our mission, the musical aspect of it," he added. "To sell a positive image of the Army, its Soldiers and the men and women who serve this country. To provide music in harm's way when we have to. This is a little slice of heaven. And we're out there selling a product that we're all proud of and there's no band out there that does it better than this one."

Band alumna Laura Peter, a flute and piccolo player, traveled from her home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, for the 70th anniversary concert after being "heartbroken" when she missed the 50th anniversary in 1998.

"It was great seeing all the people I served with in the band, and it was a wonderful opportunity to play again," she said. Peter, who left the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1989 after 10 years of service to take a commission as a Navy physician, said she hasn't had much involvement with music since she left the Guard.

"I just want to thank the current band members for letting me play," she said.

Current band member and tuba player, Sgt. Jason Lenz, said the concert gave him the opportunity to meet new alumnae members like Peter, and to reconnect with old friends.

"Just hearing different stories, their connections with the 43rd Army Band family and then seeing the commanders from the '40s and '70s was really cool," Lenz said. "It's just eye-opening to see all of the different possibilities that are with the Guard and the



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Honored Anniversary: Retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Splichal salutes from the audience during the playing of the National Anthem by the Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Army Band for their 70th Anniversary Concert, June 16, at the Antelope Park Band Shell in Lincoln.

different stories they have to share of their experiences."

Lenz joined the Nebraska National Guard during his senior year at Lincoln High School. After graduating in 2007, he went on to study music in college and currently studies conducting while earning a master's degree in music in Greeley, Colorado. Lenz said he joined the Guard for the educational benefits, but continues to drill with the Nebraska Army National Guard because of the "family aspect."

"Over the last 11 years you've built these relationships within the unit that it's hard to leave because they're family," he said. "I actually just moved out of state last year and so now this is my opportunity every month to come back, see my family in the Guard and family and friends outside of the Guard."

Lenz said the Guard is a great opportunity for those who want a little bit of everything.

"It gives you the freedom to still serve your country and your state, but you still have a civilian side where you can still go make music in other venues," he said. "You can have other jobs, and just work around the Guard. And the benefits are totally worth it. You can't beat it."

Anderson echoed those sentiments. "Most of our people in the band, just like any other Soldier in the Nebraska National Guard, they all have civilian jobs," he said. "They come from all walks of life. We have people in law enforcement, health care, retail sales.

We have a number of educators. And they all come together to serve the state of Nebraska and the citizens of Nebraska and the Soldiers of Nebraska through their musical talents."

Anderson said band members must still do the same Army warrior tasks as any other Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier, but then they get to train on their primary mission – music – year round.

"A lot of people think it's easy to pick up a horn and play, but it isn't," he said. "It takes a lot of hard work. It's a perishable skill that had to constantly be nurtured to be able to play at the level we do, and it speaks well of our Soldiers that we've won nine Howard Awards as the outstanding military musical organization in the world."

Anderson said bands are an important part of the Army's heritage, dating back to the Revolutionary War.

"The band is important to morale and adds something to any military ceremony," he said. "We're a great public relations tool in addition to being necessary for ceremonies and patriotic events."

Anderson said the turnout to the anniversary concert was another testament to the importance of the band and the Nebraska National Guard.

"They love the military and the patriotic feel they get when they're here," he added. "I don't think we would get the crowds that we get if people didn't love the military as a whole in Nebraska."

100 YEARS continued from page 1.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Solid Partners: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, speaks at the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C., June 29, during the 100th anniversary celebration of the Czech-Slovak Army as Brig. Gen. Jan Bures, Czech defense attaché, watches.

That relationship, founded in July 1993, was one of the first formed through the National Guard-sponsored State Partnership Program. "We are very proud to be partners with the Czech Armed Forces," Bohac said. "What an amazing journey we've been on the past 25 years, and we look forward to continuing to see that grow."

The Czech Republic is the only country in the National Guard's State Partnership Program to be paired with two states, Nebraska and Texas. The states were chosen due in large part to the rich Czech heritage which resides in both states, with Texas having the largest number of persons who claim Czech heritage in the United States, and Nebraska having the highest percentage per capita – nearly 5 percent.

"We share this deep cultural tie that transcends the military and that's something we are very proud of," Bohac said.

"This partnership has been so fruitful," Hamilton said. "Even today as we speak, we have teams of tankers working together, doing operations together in Europe."

This year also marks 100 years of United States and Czech relations, dating back to the founding of the Czechoslovakia state.

In May 1918, the United States hosted Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, along with other prominent Czechs and Slovaks, for the signing of the Pittsburgh Agreement – the first step towards Czech independence. After Germany and Austria proposed peace negotiations in October 1918, Masaryk issued a declaration of Czechoslovak independence

while in the United States.

Masaryk was then elected the first president of Czechoslovakia on Nov. 14, 1918, and used the U.S. constitution as a model for the first Czechoslovak Constitution.

Bohac traveled to Washington, D.C., for the event with State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker and Lt. Col. Shane Varejka, joint force development officer and Nebraska National Guard state partnership coordinator.

Together with Hamilton, Bohac presented both Kmoníek and Bures with a shadowbox displaying flags from Texas, Nebraska and the Czech Republic to commemorate 25 years of the shared State Partnership Program. A copy of that shadowbox is currently displayed at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Nebraska.

Guard warrant officers celebrate century mark

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**
Editor

Nebraska Army National Guard warrant officers came together July 9 for a full day of events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the July 9, 1918, founding of the Warrant Officer Cohort.

The day kicked off with an early morning fun run at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, where dozens of Nebraska warrant officers, family members and Nebraska National Guard leaders trekked around the base.

Later, at the Nebraska State Capitol building in Lincoln, more than two dozen Nebraska Army National Guard warrant officers witnessed the signing of a proclamation by Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts honoring the anniversary and marking July as the Month of the Warrant Officer in Nebraska.

“It’s really kind of a cool thing we can celebrate the centennial here today of the warrant officers in the Army, and the special role Nebraska has played in that history as well,” Ricketts said. Nebraska produced the first female warrant officer in the U.S. Army, Olive Hoskins, in 1926, and more recently saw Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa Domeier become the first female command chief warrant officer for the National Guard.

Before the proclamation, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, had the opportunity to introduce the Nebraska National Guard’s newest state command chief warrant officer, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kenneth Henderson, and share the Nebraska National Guard Warrant Officer Cohort story with the governor.

“Warrant officers bring continuity and technical expertise to the

formations,” Bohac said. “They deliver readiness in spades, to make sure that when we go forward we’re ready to go and deliver where needed.”

Bohac said while the group in attendance may look a little older, it’s because most of them start off as enlisted Soldiers and are later identified for warrant officer commissioning for the expertise and talent they bring to the formations in which they serve.

Warrant officers are highly specialized technicians spanning 17 different Army branches and 44 warrant officer specialties. Currently, more than 26,000 warrant officers – roughly 2.5 percent of the U.S. Army – are distributed throughout the Total Force, with about 8,600 serving in the National Guard.

The Nebraska National Guard steadily meets or exceeds 100 percent strength levels with approximately 140 warrant officers, and proudly runs a warrant officer school at the Regional Training Institute at Camp Ashland.

The final event saw Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officers coming together at Haymarket Park in Lincoln for the official 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Warrant Officer Cohort. This event included a static display complete with a Humvee, a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter and other U.S. Army National Guard vehicles and equipment.

Shelle Powell, the wife of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Tom Powell, a maintenance test pilot with Com-



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Governor Proclaimed: Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts poses with Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kenneth Henderson, state command chief warrant officer, after announcing July as the Month of the Warrant Officer in Nebraska.

pany G, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion, brought their two children, Braden and Kennedy, out to Haymarket Park to participate in the celebration.

“I think it’s awesome,” Shelle said. “It’s great the kids get to be part of it and they get a better understanding of Tom’s job and the sacrifices we all make.”

“I am honored to be part of an amazing organization that has been around for a century, and to be part of that continuing history,” Tom said.

Brittany Bigham, whose son Ryder is obsessed with helicopters, said she was excited to bring her family out to Haymarket Park. Bigham marked the occasion by taking a photo of three generations of family members sitting together in the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter: her son, husband Drew and father-in-law Mark Bigham, who retired from the Nebraska National Guard in 2009 after nearly 40 years of military service.

The warrant officers and their



Pitch Perfect: Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Amen throws the first ceremonial pitch during a Lincoln Saltdogs baseball game, July 9, as part of the Warrant Officer Cohorts 100th Anniversary celebration.



Celebration Fun Run: Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officers and members of the Command Team complete an early morning run in matching anniversary T-shirts at the air base in Lincoln, July 9, in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Warrant Officer Cohort.

families were invited to enjoy a Lincoln Saltdogs baseball game where the players wore patriotic jerseys and played on behalf of the Nebraska National Guard against the Kansas City T-Bones. Many of the Nebraska warrant officers and family members had an opportunity to participate in the game, including Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Amen, who threw the first ceremonial pitch.

“It was a neat experience and a lot of fun,” Amen said. “I missed the strike zone by a hair, but it was a good throw and I was proud to have the opportunity to do it, to represent the Cohort.”

Amen said overall it was a well-planned event, adding he was impressed by how the Saltdogs incorporated the Soldiers and their

families into every part of the game, including letting his son, Parker, run around with the team.

Warrant Officer Timothy Beckman’s son, Jayden, was selected as the junior manager for the game. In his role, he helped the two teams exchange rosters and also announced “Play Ball” at the start of the game.

Before the fourth inning, the stadium announcers wished a happy 100th Anniversary to the Warrant Officer Cohort, complete with a traditional cake cutting broadcast on the big screen.

After the cake cutting - as the sun began to set - many baseball fans came out of the stands to watch the Nebraska Army National Guard’s UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter take off back to the National Guard air base located across town.

Nebraska Army Guard officer ranks increase by seven

By **Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes**
State Public Affairs Officer

Nebraska’s newest class of Army National Guard commissioned officers took their oaths of office in the State Capitol rotunda, April 7, surrounded by families, friends and more than a few senior Nebraska National Guard officers.

In taking their commissions, the seven new second lieutenants made history of a sort. The newly-graduated Soldiers became the first Officer Candidate School class to graduate from the Nebraska Army National Guard’s new condensed OCS program that was shortened by roughly eight months.

According to Lt. Col. Vernon Chandler, commander of the Camp Ashland-based 2nd Battalion, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), the reason for the change was a long-standing problem that often put Nebraska National Guard OCS graduates behind their peers within the state.

“Typically our officer candidates, when they commissioned and went through the branching process, we ended up having some challenges picking up schools and getting them back to their units on time,” Chandler said. This was chiefly due to the fact that the Guard’s 18-month commissioned program typically graduated its new second lieutenants in the late summer months while the state’s other commissioning sources – primarily college and university Reserve Officer Training Corps programs – graduated their new lieutenants in the spring.

The result, Chandler said, was a problem in getting the Guard commissioned officers into their initial branch schools in a timely manner because many of those schools seats were already assigned.

Thus, the effort to restructure the state OCS program.

“By adding a half-day to the front of each drill weekend starting on Fridays at noon... we were able to condense our Phase II from twelve to eight months,” Chandler said, adding that this meant that the entire program shrunk from an 18-month program to a new 14-month effort that would allow the graduates better opportunities to attend their follow-on train-



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

I, Do Solemnly Swear...: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard’s newest class of second lieutenants take their commissioning oath from Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac during the April 7 graduation ceremony at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

ing schools in a much more timely manner.

“In the bigger picture, this increases the overall readiness of our entire organization because we can now provide a trained and qualified officer to a unit commander about a year earlier than we could in the past,” he said, adding that the candidates seemed to prefer the new program over the past one. “It is a little busier and the hours are a little longer, but I would say that it’s 100 percent thumbs up from the candidates because they prefer moving on to their commissioned careers instead of attending OCS for an additional four months.”

According to Col. Shane Martin, commander of the 209th RTI, the first class to graduate from the revamped program deserves praise for tackling the rigorous commissioning school.

“You have met the challenge and rigors of OCS and you did it under a very condensed time frame under a new program,” Martin said. “I am very proud of your efforts. Outstanding work.”

Graduating and receiving their commissions on April 7 were: Collin E. Baldwin, Omaha; Jason A. Collins, Omaha; Kenneth C. Mumy, Eklhorn; Bernard J. Nicola, North Bend; Kevin J. Peatrowsky, Papillion; Aaron

J. Svoboda, Omaha; and Cogan W. Thompson, Gibbon.

This year’s award winners were Nicola, who earned the class leadership excellence award; Svoboda, who earned the academic award; Thompson, who earned the physical fitness award; and Baldwin, who was named the class’ distinguished honor graduate.

According to Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, who served as the keynote speaker during the graduation ceremony, graduating from OCS is a significant achievement brought about by a long series of choices made “long before you decided to join the military; long before you decided to be an officer.”

“It started with choices about what kind of person you were going to be,” he said. “Choices that made it possible for you to be here this morning and to be in a place where you can take your commission in the Nebraska Army National Guard. Choices that meant that you had at least completed your high school education and, in your case a college education, were healthy and had at most only minor indiscretions in your past.”

“These choices, I suspect, were informed by your values; values that were instilled in you by others such as your parents, families, teachers, friends,” said Bohac, who added that he had read the essays that each candidate had written at the beginning of OCS. “Certainly that was reflected in every one of your essays that you wrote.”

However, while being rightfully proud of having reached graduation day, Bohac urged the Soldiers to reflect upon the words that they would say as they made their new oaths as commissioned officers, particularly the statements that they would each protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Nebraska against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

“I encourage each of you to reflect upon what it means to personally take the oath,”

he said. “It is this oath that binds us together in a common purpose. It is much more than words on a paper. It defines who we are and what we are about.”

“And in today’s world, it matters deeply,” Bohac added.

According to newly-minted 2nd Lt. Cogan Thompson, a native of Kenesaw, Nebraska, who now serves as the superintendent for Windmill State Recreational Area near Gibbon, graduating from OCS and being able to serve in the Nebraska Army National Guard is something that he has long looked forward to.

“I just wanted an opportunity to lead,” said Thompson, a former member of Grand Island’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-376th Aviation, who is now set to join the 128th Engineer Battalion in Columbus. “I just wanted more... an opportunity to lead and to give back.”

Seconding those thoughts was 2nd Lt. Collin Baldwin. A native of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who spent several years in the active Army before taking a job in Omaha where he serves as the corporate security and safety officer for First National Bank of Omaha, Baldwin said he was also looking for an opportunity to take on more leadership within the Nebraska Army National Guard. Attending and graduating from OCS allowed him to do that.

“This was a goal of mine almost ten years ago when I enlisted into the active duty Army,” Baldwin said, adding that he was both excited to graduate as well as reflective of the sacrifices his family made to get him to this particular point in his military career. “The itch was there for me to want to continue to serve as an officer and as a leader in the Nebraska Army National Guard.”

“So,” he added, “here I am.”

Baldwin said he felt confident that OCS had given him the tools he needs to start his new career path on the right foot.

“OCS gave me) confidence and an understanding of the Soldiers and the Soldiers’ situations,” he said. “I think I’ve gained the empathy I need, which will help me transition into this new role and earn the trust and respect of the Soldiers I will be with.”



Life-Saving Escort: Spc. Connor Deines (center) and Sgt. First Class Christopher Morehouse (right) help guide a patient onto the gurney at the Monroe Medical Center, in Monroe, North Carolina, as Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steven Helmandollar (left) looks on. The patient, Lisa Johnson Soles of Leland, North Carolina, had to be evacuated from the town of Columbus, North Carolina, by air, as roads out of the town were closed due to flooding. Johnson’s family reached out to the Nebraska National Guard Facebook page to thank the Company G, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion, members for their help. “Without you all we would have lost her,” one message read.

HURRICANE continued from page 1.

mandollar, a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot who has spent the past five years flying with the Nebraska Army National Guard, grew up in North Carolina and served in the Army Guard there for 20 years. For him, this mission was about helping his former neighbors during their time of need.

“I wanted to go back and help. It’s always good to do your job when you can go back and help somebody,” Helmandollar said. “My wife and I chose Nebraska since she is from here, but me I’m a North Carolinian.”

Spc. Matthew Reidy, a UH-60 helicopter crew chief, shared that same eagerness to help in the wake of the hurricane.

“I have friends and family down here,” said Reidy, who was not part of last year’s efforts when dozens of Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen responded to similar missions after a series of hurricanes devastated eastern Texas, southern Florida and the U.S. Territory islands of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. “But also, when you get the chance to do a rescue missions, usually the crew chiefs will jump at it.”

Due to the weather forecasts, which predicted that the storm would momentarily stall in the Carolinas before moving into eastern Tennessee, the decision was made to move out on Sept. 13 so the crews would arrive at their staging base at McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base near Knoxville, Tennessee, before the weather turned bad.

After staging in Tennessee overnight, the crews moved on to Raleigh, North Carolina, where they planned to wait out the approaching bad weather.

Helmandollar said he knew how critical it was to make it into North Carolina before the storms returned.

“The track of Florence at the time

was that it would come in on the coast, go into South Carolina, and then turn back onto the mountains,” Helmandollar said. “The expectation was if you get stuck on the west side of the mountains, you may be stuck there for a while.”

“Being in the North Carolina Guard for 20 years and flying around the mountains of North Carolina, I knew it was important to get on the east side of the mountains before it made that turn,” he added. “We want to get here to help.”

Landing in the rain at the North Carolina National Guard’s Army Aviation Support Facility across from the Raleigh Durham International Airport in Raleigh, North Carolina, the Nebraskans quickly began preparing their aircraft and themselves for search and rescue operations. The crews inspected their equipment and hoists again, while also studying the areas most impacted by Hurricane Florence.

The next day, Saturday, Sept. 15, the Nebraska crews began running missions to assist with the relief efforts along the coast. During the four days the Nebraska Soldiers were in Raleigh, they conducted more than a dozen missions and covered the state from New Bern in the center along the coast, to Wilmington by the southern tip, to 60 miles inland around Fayetteville and Elizabethtown.

According to Maj. Thomas Traylor, officer-in-charge for the Nebraska aviation team, the helicopter crews were tasked with many different missions during the hurricane relief effort.

“We were able to do passenger transport, medevac, search and rescue and also a hoist mission,” Traylor said. “We got a little bit of everything.”

Helmandollar said emergency response missions often follow an almost predictable course.

“The first one or two days is all



Inter-agency Cooperation: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Galen Kreifels (center) discusses a flight path with Bradley Kinlaw (left) the Emergency Manager of Bladen County and members of the 20th Group Special Forces (Airborne) from Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, Sept. 19, to survey damage and the flooding in the county.

about life saving and trying to make sure life is preserved,” he said. “After that it’s all about rebuilding and trying to get people through the next week or two until those waters go down.” “If they are isolated or need food, usually it’s resupply missions,” Helmandollar added. “It’s usually chaotic at the beginning, but it smooths out after a day.”

Still, even though somewhat predictable, the missions had their share of unexpected events. For example, during a mission to deliver water and food to a fire station in Burgaw, North Carolina, that was serving as a hurricane relief center, a crew of a Nebraska helicopter was suddenly contacted by a pair

of people in need.

Flying above a flooded region, the crew suddenly saw a flare that had been fired at them. Looking down, the crew realized the flare had come from a house on which a tree had collapsed, causing the roof to cave in.

According to Reidy, crew chief for the mission, because the helicopter was loaded down and unable to operate the hoist, the crew recorded the position on the aircraft’s GPS, delivered the supplies and then flew back to the location they had marked earlier.

“We came back and surveyed the area to see if we could land,” Reidy said, adding while there

wasn’t much water, the ground was extremely soggy.

“We prepped the cabin for hoist and sent the swimmer from the Oklahoma Task Force One (Helicopter Search and Rescue Team) down and he hooked (the first person) up and put her in a rescue basket,” said Reidy.

Once the woman was hoisted up, Reidy said he and Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Humphrey helped get her into the aircraft and secured. They then sent the basket down again for the rescue swimmer and a second person who needed to be removed from the damaged home.

“We got them in and took them to

See HURRICANE on 9.



Between Mission Maintenance: Sgt. Ryan Smith (top) inspects the rotor of the crew’s UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter while Sgt. Ryan Polich (bottom) cleans the windshield after a nighttime resupply mission in North Carolina, Sept. 18.



Focused Support: Flight Medic Sgt. First Class Shawn Humphrey looks out the side of the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter as it flies over North Carolina, Sept. 18, to a hurricane relief center that has been cut off due to the rising flood waters.



Florence Flooding: Nebraska Army National Guard Spc. Matthew Reidy surveys the flooding from the air on Sept. 19 in Bladen County, North Carolina.

HURRICANE continued from page 8.

a shelter in Wilmington,” he added. Reidy said the experience was extremely memorable. “Our state doesn’t actually have baskets, so that was my first time using a basket ever,” he said. “That was also my first time doing a real hoist mission.” Despite the lack of experience in the real-world setting, Reidy took the mission as an opportunity to learn more about an important part of his job. “We do live lift and practice stuff, but that was my first time with a real patient on the end of the hoist, so that was kind of nerve wracking,” Reidy said. “I’ve never done it before. I’ve done hoists before, but I had never done a real hoist before.” The unit also moved rescue workers and medical volunteers out of isolated areas to other areas needing more assistance and moved critical patients out of isolated hospitals to hospitals in the region. They supported the Bladen County Emergency Response Team by carrying the county’s emergency manager, planning director and county sheriff on an aerial survey of the damaged and heavily flooded county. The damage was particularly noteworthy along the Cape Fear River where the local North Carolinians said the flooding was worse than the previous hurricane, Hurricane Matthew, in late September 2016.

On Thursday, Sept. 21, the Nebraska contingent was released back to their state command and began the trip home. By Friday afternoon, the 13 Soldiers and two UH-60 Blackhawks were back in Lincoln. According to Traylor, the Nebraskans returned from the mission knowing they’d helped make a difference. “I think the mission went very, very well,” said Traylor minutes after arriving in Nebraska. “The team accomplished every mission that was thrown at them, whether that was medevac, search and rescue, (passenger) transport as well as logistical resupply.” The fact the team did this, said Traylor, says a lot about the readiness of Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter crews to take on unexpected missions with little notice. It’s something that has been proven multiple times during state emergencies in Nebraska, fighting fires in Colorado or Kansas, or supporting hurricane relief along the eastern or Gulf coasts. “I think that Nebraska aviation over the past years has done an excellent job of overcoming anything that’s thrown at them,” Traylor said. “I am definitely proud to be a part of that.” “There is no place in the world that I wouldn’t go with any of these units from Nebraska.”



Fuel For Florence Relief: Spc. Connor Deines (left) and Ryan Stephens (right) of the Oklahoma Task Force One - Helicopter Search and Rescue Team from Tulsa grab a quick dinner, Sept. 18, before delivering supplies to a hurricane relief center in Fairmont, North Carolina.



Supply Stop: Spc. Connor Deines (right) hands off supplies to waiting Soldiers at the Fairmont hurricane relief center in North Carolina. The center had been cut off due to the rising flood waters, so resupply came by air.

Final Words: Col. Eric Teegerstrom, outgoing 92nd Troop Command commander, addresses the formation before him with parting words, Sept. 9, after relinquishing command over to Col. Gary Ropers.



Photo by Spc. Daniel Balkovic

92nd Troop Command welcomes new leader

By **Sgt. Jessica Villwok**
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 92nd Troop Command Soldiers witnessed a new leader take charge during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 9, at the Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln, when Col. Eric J. Teegerstrom relinquished command to Col. Gary A. Ropers.

According to Teegerstrom, who had served as commander of the organization that has units located in 12 Nebraska communities, he leaves the assignment with pride.

"Troop Command presents a special challenge in leadership," Teegerstrom said. "As the commander at Troop Command you must quickly become a master of messaging and communication. My message was simple – readiness, retention, winning spirit and tough training. Throughout these many months

the leaders within Troop Command units have taken this message and executed with gusto."

Teegerstrom took command of the organization in April 2016, and now serves (full-time) as the Nebraska Army National Guard G3 (Operations) officer at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

Teegerstrom is a 1984 high school graduate from his native Stromsburg, Nebraska. He later graduated from Concordia University in 1988 before attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a graduate student while earning his commission through the Reserve Officer's Training Corps in 1992.

Teegerstrom's 27-year Army career began when he entered the active Army in April 1992 and attended the Armor Officer Basic Course at Fort Knox, Kentucky. While on active duty, his leadership assignments included platoon leader, scout platoon leader, executive offi-



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Between Leaders: Col. Gary Ropers (center) hands the colors of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 92nd Troop Command to Command Sgt. Maj. Robert West (right) during the change of command ceremony, Sept. 9, at the Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln.

cer, and cavalry troop commander. Teegerstrom joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in 2000 with subsequent assignments as a plans officer, operations officer, executive officer, domestic operations officer, mobilization and readiness officer, and both battalion and brigade-level commander.

Teegerstrom's career has taken him all over the world including peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Korea, combat deployments to Iraq (to which he refers to as "The Long War") in 2006-07 and Afghanistan in 2010-11.

Ropers, a native of Sargent, Nebraska, began his Army career in 1981 enlisting as a tank turret mechanic before graduating from Sargent High School in 1982. In 1987, he graduated from Kearney

State College with a bachelor's degree in computer science.

Ropers received his commission in 1991 and has served in several command positions as a fire support officer, fire direction officer, executive officer, motor officer, TAC officer, OCS commander, assistant operations officer, aide-de-camp for retired Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, plans officer, S3 (Training) officer and battery commander.

After his many years of leadership, Ropers knows the importance of Soldiers sharing their experiences.

"My challenge to everyone is to become a storyteller," Ropers said. "Learn to tell stories of your experiences you have had as a member of the 92nd Troop Command and the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Make everything worth telling and convey it properly."

Ropers is currently employed by Agile Transformation in Omaha, where he resides with his wife Angie and their five youngest children. His two older children live in Holdrege, Nebraska.

"It is truly a great honor to stand before you as the successor to a great lineage of commanders who have led the 92nd Troop Command," Ropers said.

"The professionals of the 92nd Troop Command staff and units are simply outstanding. We share a common desire to serve the state of Nebraska and our nation. I know your dedication and focus will be instrumental in fulfilling our commitment to today's and tomorrow's operations."

402nd Military Police Battalion holds first command change in nearly five years

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**
Editor

After nearly five years at the helm of the 402nd Military Police Battalion, Nebraska Army National Guard Lt. Col. Eric Hunsberger relinquished command of the Omaha-based 402nd Military Police Battalion to Lt. Col. Steve Collins during a change of command ceremony, June 10, on the drill floor of the North Omaha Readiness Center.

Hunsberger took command of the battalion on Jan. 11, 2014. During his tenure he would lead approximately 50 members of the military police battalion headquarters through a nine-month deployment that ultimately took them to an island in the Caribbean in support of U.S. Southern Command's Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

Col. Craig Strong, 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander, praised Hunsberger's leadership, using just three simple words: "Job well done."

"Your command leadership has been exceptional and you have ensured the 402nd MP Battalion has rightfully earned the reputation for being one of the premier military police battalions in the United States Army," Strong said. "I know you will look back on your command with pride, but, I think your real sense of pride will not be based on what your Soldiers did during your command, but what they have become during your command."

Strong said the organization's Soldiers developed as leaders, professionals and warriors.

"They embodied and embraced the solid tenets of the military police corps: to assist, to protect and to defend," he said. Turning his attention to Collins as the incoming commander, Strong said he has his full faith and confidence to lead the 402nd MP Battalion.

"You are a proven leader," Strong said. "You have always demonstrated sincere care for the readiness and well-being for your troops. I am confident you are the right commander, at the right time for the 402nd MP Battalion."

Strong closed his speech welcoming Collins to his new command with just two parting words: "Take charge."

As a final farewell from his command, Hunsberger praised the Soldiers of the



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Final Pass: Lt. Col. Eric Hunsberger (right) accepts the 402nd Military Police Battalion colors from Command Sgt. Maj. Benjamin Radke (left) during the battalion's change of command ceremony, June 10. Hunsberger commanded the battalion for nearly five years before handing over the helm to Lt. Col. Steve Collins during the ceremony.

402nd for their service, presented tributes to command leadership and thanked his family for their unwavering support before wishing Collins the best with his command.

"Lieutenant Colonel Collins, you are going to have some fun," Hunsberger said. "Just remember this, man, everything you see up here within the formation that you find successful or that you really dig is really a reflection of the troops you see in front of you. And if there are some things that don't meet your expectations, just remember it is all my fault."

Collins closed the ceremony by addressing the Soldiers of the 402nd MP Battalion directly with his vision of the future.

"We are looking to reset and that's a rebuilding process," Collins said. "It's time to focus on the fundamentals, continue the reintegration process that's currently underway. It's time for us to focus on solidifying our base, truly taking care of each other and looking to the future of our unit, our Army National Guard and how we can meet the challenges of today and tomorrow."



Proud Position: Lt. Col. Steve Collins, incoming commander for the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion, stands at attention firmly gripping the battalion colors during the change of command ceremony, June 10, at the North Omaha Readiness Center.

Nebraska Army photojournalists win National Guard Bureau awards

By **Sgt. Jessica Villwok**
Staff Photojournalist

Public affairs specialists are used to being behind the camera telling the story of how other Soldiers and Airmen win awards, but in March two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers were awarded top journalism awards in the National Guard Bureau Media Contest.

The contest recognizes outstanding work in the public affairs field within Army and Air National Guard across all 54 states and territories. Entries covered different topics from send off and welcome home ceremonies and training exercises, to overseas deployments and hurricane relief, all telling the National Guard Story.

Sgt. Anna Pongo, public affairs specialist with the 1st Infantry Division, Main Command Post - Operational Detachment, earned 1st place for Operational Photo Series.

"One of the best parts of my job is being able to tell the citizens of Nebraska about what the Soldiers of their communities are doing," Pongo said. "Taking pictures during the hurricane relief in Texas was a highlight and one of the most rewarding things I have had the opportunity to do."

Spc. Lisa Crawford, a broadcast communications specialist with the 111th Public Affairs Detachment and a full-time public affairs technician, earned 2nd place for Commentary, 1st place for Picture Story and won the James P. Hunter Award for Outstanding New Writer.

The James P. Hunter Award is given to the top photojournalist still in their first two years of service, and is awarded in memory of Army Staff Sgt. James P. Hunter who was the first Army journalist to be killed in action since the start of the war in Afghanistan.

"It was truly an honor to be recognized for my work sharing the stories of Nebraska's Soldiers and Airmen," Crawford said. "I always say I have the best job in the Army, and I am proud to represent Nebraska in a national competition."

Last LRS leaves historic legacy behind

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley
Staff Photojournalist

Soldiers of Company E, 134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance), cased their colors during an Aug. 12 inactivation ceremony held at the Titan Readiness Center in Yutan, Nebraska. The unit, which was first activated in 1985 as part of the 1-167th Cavalry, became the last Army National Guard long range surveillance unit in existence prior to the inactivation order dated Sept. 30 this year.

“It’s sad and disappointing,” said Staff Sgt. Joshua Ames, who served with the LRS for 13 years including two deployments to Bosnia and Iraq. “I think it’s a valuable asset and the experience that these Soldiers have. I think it is disappointing that they’re not keeping that history and tradition alive.”

As a long range surveillance company, the Nebraska Soldiers’ mission was to provide intelligence from behind enemy lines. During the course of its 15-year history, the LRS deployed to Kuwait, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan in various peacekeeping and combat missions. The LRS has also taken part in relief and recovery missions in the wake of hurricanes, floods and tornados stateside.

Due to changing operational demands, the Army made the decision two years ago to end the LRS force structure and in 2017, the three active Army LRS units were deactivated along with the seven Army National Guard units spread across the United States.

Capt. Travis Wahlmeier, Nebraska LRS commander, has been with the unit for over eight years. He began his Officer Candidate School in Nebraska with the intent of joining the LRS after having served six years in the Kansas National Guard.

Wahlmeier said there were mixed emotions among his Soldiers as the



Packing Away A Memory: Capt. Travis Wahlmeier, commander, Company E, 134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance), packs up his parachute, Aug. 11, at the Husker Drop Zone near Mead, Nebraska, after completing the last jump of the unit before its upcoming inactivation.

unit’s colors were furled, ending decades of history. “We’re just disappointed the Army doesn’t see the need for it right now,” he said.

Wahlmeier said there was something special about being the last commander of a unit that went 100 percent to the end. The day before the unit casing ceremony, the unit hosted a family day to witness the unit’s last airborne jump. A month before that, the unit conducted annual training in the mountains of Montana.

“Knowing that I got to be a part of this particular unit and even looking back to the history of the LRS, back to the guys who started that force structure in Vietnam, it’s just a good feeling to be a part of that group,” Wahlmeier said.

During the inactivation ceremony, Col. Eric Teegerstrom, 92nd Troop commander, acknowledged the emotions that the unit’s inactivation brought.

“It’s a sad day for many of the



Final Checks, Final Jump: Spc. Jacob Mason, 195th Quartermaster Detachment (Rigger Support Team), inspects the quick release of Staff Sgt. Thomas Shirey’s reserve parachute, Aug. 11, in preparation for the final jump for Company E, 134th Infantry (Long-Range Surveillance), at the Husker Drop Zone near Mead, Nebraska.

folks here,” Teegerstrom said. “The LRS has been a very proud part of the Nebraska National Guard for many years.”

Teegerstrom added he gained significant appreciation for the unit’s capabilities and the skills of its Soldiers while serving as the cavalry squadron’s executive officer during the 2005-07 deployment to Iraq.

“Despite having been a Cav guy



Photos by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

Casing The Colors: Col. Eric Teegerstrom (left), 1st Sgt. Steven Brewer (center) and Capt. Travis Wahlmeier (right) begin to case the colors of Company E, 134th Infantry Regiment (Long Range Surveillance), during an inactivation ceremony, Aug. 12, at the Titan Readiness Center near Mead, Nebraska.

for pretty much my entire career, the spirit and professionalism that the LRS showed, always outshined that of any of the other units in the squadron,” he said. “That has been the hallmark of the LRS for as long as I can remember.”

He urged the unit Soldiers to take the skills and the attitudes they learned in the LRS and apply them to their next assignments.

“Even though the LRS is being inactivated), that fighting spirit, that professionalism that resides in each one of you, that’s what carries on.”

Wahlmeier said what made the LRS become such a highly recog-

nized and respected organization was not the mission, but rather the Soldiers who committed themselves to overcoming whatever challenges they faced.

“What has always made this unit the best was never really about the mission, but it has always been about the men and their mindset,” he told the assembled Soldiers. “The men in the company are judged by their performance and their dedication to the unit. These men have a great sense of pride, which comes from being a part of a special elite group. Be proud and remember that you are and always will be a member of the LRS.”

Nebraska paratroopers celebrate National Airborne Day in Seward

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

“It was like landing on pillows.” That’s how Staff Sgt. Robert “Blake” Thompson described his Aug. 16 parachute landing in a grassy field next to the Seward (Nebraska) Municipal Airport.

Thompson, a member of the Omaha-based 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), was one of eight Nebraska Army National Guard paratroopers who took to the air on the clear and calm mid-August morning during an exercise conducted in conjunction with the National Airborne Day anniversary.

“You couldn’t have asked for a better day to jump,” Thompson said following his jump from a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter onto a grassy field still wet from an earlier rain storm. “There wasn’t much wind and the ground was just perfect.”

National Airborne Day celebrates the Aug. 16, 1940, anniversary of the first official U.S. Army parachute jump at Fort Benning, Georgia, before the start of World War II. The jump validated airborne advocate’s theories about the value of dropping specially trained Army infantrymen behind enemy lines via the relatively revolutionary use of parachutes.

That first jump would begin the development of U.S. Army airborne forces – including the formation of the famed 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions – and the future stationing of airborne forces within the Nebraska Army National Guard.

The day became officially memorialized on Aug. 3, 2009, when the U.S. Senate officially recognized National Airborne Day. This recognition followed an earlier proclamation made by President George W. Bush on Aug. 14, 2002.

The Seward parachute exercise was one of two events held in Nebraska that day. The second event was held at the Nebraska National Guard Museum following the earlier parachute exercise – watched by roughly two-dozen Nebraska Soldiers and local Seward residents. During the later ceremony, current and former paratroopers gathered at the museum to exchange stories, look at several parachute exhibits and officially cut



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Heading Out Into The Morning Air: A group of paratroopers wave to their counterparts as they fly by aboard a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter before a jump, Aug. 16, in Seward, Nebraska. The jump exercise was part of a day-long observance held as part of National Airborne Day.

the commemoration cake.

One of those in attendance was retired Lt. Col. John Berry, a former Nebraska Army National Guard officer and former U.S. Army airborne Soldier. Berry’s law firm was the official sponsor for the museum activities.

Berry said that the annual Airborne Day celebration is a great way to relive old experiences while also reflecting upon the force’s earliest paratroopers who risked their lives to prove that the use of airborne forces was both feasible and strategically needed.

“I think back to those first brave Soldiers who were the first test dummies for the airborne,” Berry said. “I think as commanders, we’ve all been in that position where we’ve asked someone to do something, to take risks that may seem a little bit crazy. But in combat, that’s what happens.”

“But the innovation of those responsible for making this happen, it wasn’t just one guy with an idea, it was the dedication of the Department of the Army and several other organizations that made this happen,” he said.

Berry said that the development of airborne

didn’t just shape the future of the Army, it also dramatically shaped the perceived abilities of the Soldiers who volunteered to be part of it.

“The bravery and courage that it takes knowing that you could fail... (after successfully) jumping out of an airplane, you can do anything else,” he said. “Every day we’re challenged and we think today is a bad day, but you know what, if your parachute opens, it’s a good day. As long as the chute opens and you hit the ground and you get back up, it’s a success.”

It is an attitude of continuing to persevere in the face of adversity that exemplifies the United States Army’s “Warrior Ethos,” Berry said.

“We have fought battles where we didn’t start off winning,” he said, “but we came back. We were resilient. We fought and we overcame the fear.”

Berry was one of several speakers at the event. Also speaking was Col. Rick Gray, current Nebraska Army National Guard’s chief of staff who spent numerous years as a member of the Nebraska Army Guard’s first

airborne unit, the 134th Infantry Regiment’s Long Range Surveillance Detachment. That unit, which was formed in the mid-1980s, saw its lineage end the weekend before when the unit was officially inactivated.

Gray said despite that change, the airborne culture is still alive and well within the Nebraska Army National Guard, particularly in the 195th FSC and the 195th Quartermaster Detachment (Rigger Support Team), which were both stood up in the mid-2000s and were part of a significant growth of Nebraska airborne Soldiers.

“At one point in Nebraska about 13 percent of our force structure was airborne. About 400 Soldiers total,” said Gray, himself an experienced parachutist. “We had a great tradition and we’re going to keep that tradition.”

“(The 195th FSC and the Rigger team) are going to carry on that tradition of excellence, because that is what it is all about,” Gray said, agreeing with Berry that Soldiers undergo a remarkable transformation when they go through the Army’s three-week airborne school. “You can do just about anything else. There are a lot of other things that you can really meet head on once you go through airborne school.”

The senior parachutist in attendance echoed those comments. Retired Col. Tom Brewer was also an early member of Nebraska’s LRSD before going on to a decades-long career in the Nebraska Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserves.

Now a Nebraska state senator, Brewer attended the event to not only relive past experiences, but also to watch as his daughter and son-in-law – 2nd Lt. Kaylee and 1st Lt. Dalton Boden – and nephew 1st Sgt. Steve Brewer each jumped from the UH-72 and made picture perfect landings a few long seconds later.

Before those jumps, Brewer did have a few words of advice to his daughter: “Don’t forget not to forget anything,” he said, only slightly joking.

Following the jumps, the retired colonel said the event brought back vivid memories that he wished he had an opportunity to relive again.

“As you leave today,” he told the assembled paratroopers, “remember that later in life you will cherish those opportunities that you got to step into the breeze like you did today.”

67th Brigade practices worldwide response missions in Nebraska

By Sgt. Jessica Villwok
Staff Photojournalist

When the word deployment comes to mind many think of a foreign country. This year, Soldiers from Lincoln's 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade brought the feeling of a deployment home to Nebraska.

The brigade conducted its June 16-30 annual training at Nebraska National Guard training sites throughout the state, conducting training exercises to simulate a real world deployed environment without leaving the state.

The mission began when a small group of Soldiers traveled from the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings to Camp Ashland with communication equipment and the goal of setting up communications to establish a mobile headquarters.

"This allows us to simulate how the front is always changing," said Spc. Brent Hellbusch, a signal support specialist from Lincoln. "Whether or not we have to catch up with people or fall back; being able to move quickly and efficiently."

When headquarters communications were established at Camp Ashland, the brigade staff moved from Greenleaf to begin the next phase of the training mission, which included establishing radio retransmission sites, reacting to enemy contact, reacting to an improvised

explosive device, combat lifesaver skills and calling a 9-line MEDEVAC at the Mead Training Site in Yutan, Nebraska.

The goal, again, was to simulate the fast and ever-changing nature of a deployment that Soldiers could face.

"Soldiers, platoon leaders and platoon sergeants are doing real-life drills and reporting back to the (tactical operations center) like we are an actual headquarters communicating with Soldiers in the field," said 1st Lt. Mark Vaughan, brigade intelligence officer. "It's real time practice, just like when we have a mission."

Each working section of the brigade was responsible for tracking the mission in real time, which meant that the various brigade personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics and equipment, and communications staffs had to work together to keep the commander updated on the mission status.

A training mission of this size took months of preparation and coordination. Maj. Fletcher Shires, training lane officer-in-charge, appreciated the training his Soldiers were able to complete.

"The brigade commander's willingness to listen to feedback from his Soldiers and officers I think is a large part of it," Shires said. "He's listening to all the issues from the lowest ranking private to the field grades and in-between, so this was the guidance that led



Photos by Sgt. Jessica Villwok

Pulling Security: Soldiers from the 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade pull security for a helicopter landing during a 9-Line medical evacuation exercise, June 26, at the Mead Training Site, as part of an Army Warrior Task training lane.

to this plan to hit these basic Soldier skills."

Before the exercise shifted to Ashland for the second half of the two-week annual training, Soldiers spent the first week at Greenleaf Training Site to work on such basic Soldier skills as individual weapons qualification, land navigation, the Pike Challenge and military decision making process training.

Although the annual training was challenging, Soldiers learned which skills they were proficient in and where they needed to improve.

"Here we have to adapt on our own," Vaughan said. "We don't have instructors to depend on when we need help compared to past annual trainings. We have discovered we have a lot left to learn, a lot about what we know and what we don't know and what we can do to improve. It has been a positive experience."



Plotting Points: 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Soldiers practice land navigation skills, June 26, at Camp Ashland. Soldiers practiced plotting points before they began moving out into the field to set up retransmission sites for radios.

Geographically diverse transportation company trains together

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Opportunities to train on collective tasks are always precious for Nebraska Army National Guard units.

That's especially the case for the Guard's 1075th Transportation Company, which has the distinction of being the most geographically dispersed unit in the state, with portions of its unit spread out between North Platte, Sidney, McCook and Broken Bow. Because of this geographic separation, unit Soldiers are able to train as a consolidated company roughly two times a year.

So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that the opportunity to train as a consolidated company during this year's May 5-25 annual training at the Hastings-based Greenleaf Training Site was crucial for the continued development of the unit.

"It was extremely important," said Capt. James Small, company commander. "We needed to get these Soldiers together into one location and then give them the opportunity to see what they are capable of when

they all come together."

That's especially important, he added, considering that the 1075th Trans. Co. is relatively young, with numerous newly-promoted noncommissioned officers serving in new roles throughout the unit. "Getting together at one location was also important for unit cohesion," Small said.

For this particular annual training, the Soldiers focused on a variety of unit tasks, primarily at the squad, platoon and finally company level. This training included daily physical fitness sessions, various administrative processing, and a number of different mission essential tasks that the Soldiers would face in a deployed environment. These tasks included such missions as conducting hasty deployments, convoy operations and finally 24-hour operations.

In order to further challenge the unit, the detachments were mixed into two transportation platoons, as well as a maintenance and headquarters section.

"The training was difficult, challenging and long," Small said. He added after a few initial bumps,



Keeping Watch: A pair of Nebraska National Guard Soldiers from the 1075th Transportation Company keep an eye out for any trouble while manning an entry control point during annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

the Soldiers quickly grasped what needed to be done and accomplished, and essentially "ran" with it. "It was tough at first, but once they got into



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Guard Tower View: Nebraska National Guard 1075th Transportation Company Soldiers practice their skills while operating within a guard tower at the Nebraska National Guard's Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, during their unit's May 5-25 annual training.

it and saw the fruits of their labors, the Soldiers realized that they really were able to do much more than they ever thought they could."

Small said along with the training, the unit also conducted unique squad-level competition that combined scores and times recorded on the training site's obstacle course

and marksmanship ranges to determine a unit champion. The final champion, he said, was determined by one single second.

Overall, he said, the annual training was extremely successful.

"(The Soldiers) conducted valuable training," he said. "It was an awesome annual training."

Nebraska band backfills for 101st Airborne Division musical unit

By Sgt. Jessica Villwok
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Army Band took part in a unique annual training, July 6-19.

The 43rd Band stood in for the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Band in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion change of command ceremony July 11 in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The Nebraska Soldiers covered down for the 101st band while they were on leave.

"The commander and I were intrigued with the possibility of covering for the 101st Airborne Band out of Kentucky, given their historical lineage and high visibility on a national level," said 1st Sgt. Eric Fahrlander, 43rd Army Band first sergeant. "As one of the most recognized National Guard bands in the country, it was our honor to be selected to cover for them this summer during their block leave."

This is not the first time the 43rd has backfilled for an active duty band. Every four years the band tries to schedule training missions to cover down for an active duty band.

Over the past 30 years the 43rd has stood in for the 4th Division Band in Colorado, the 25th Division Band in Hawaii, the Fort Sam Houston Army Band in Texas twice, and



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Villwok

Ceremony Symphony: Soldiers with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Army Band play during the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division change of command ceremony, July 11, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The 43rd Army Band had the unique opportunity to cover down on duties for the 101st Airborne Band as part of the unit's annual training this summer.

the First Continental Band in Fort Monroe Virginia twice.

The band fulfills the responsibilities of the

regular band to include graduation ceremonies, change of command ceremonies, military funerals or local event support as needed.

The unit commander, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brian Anderson, was unable to attend annual training this year so Chief Warrant Officer 3 Stephen K. Rivero, 13th Army Band commander from Miramar, Florida, was the guest conductor.

Rivero was selected because of his past association with the 43rd Army Band and his expertise in preparing for these unique training missions.

Spc. Lauren Calkin, a 43rd Army Band snare drummer, said she was eager for her first annual training since enlisting in the Nebraska Army National Guard last year.

"So far it has been a great experience filling in, and doing the active duty band's responsibilities while we're here," Calkin said. "Also getting to know my own unit is spectacular. Learning new marches, the Screaming Eagles song has been great. I'm looking forward to the rest of the trip."

Although it was a hot, humid day for the change of command ceremony, the 43rd Army Band was proud to be standing in formation with the 101st Airborne Division Soldiers.

Sgt. Jay Quinn, a bass drummer, said the change of command ceremony was a unique opportunity for the Nebraska Soldiers.

"We've gotten to do a lot of cool ceremonies, but never with the 101st," Quinn said. "It's really cool to be a part of that big history of the 101st, even if only for an hour. It was fun."

Cavalry trains on mortars at Chaffee

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

While the rest of their squadron-mates conducted gunnery training and practiced their dismounted scouting skills during their two-week annual training on the rolling prairie hills of Fort Riley, Kansas, about two dozen members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry Squadron took on a slightly different challenge.

The Soldiers are members of the squadron's newly organized mortar sections and support staff. For these Soldiers, this year's annual training meant long hours lobbing hundreds of mortar rounds on the ranges at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, alongside their new teammates from the Arkansas Army National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

And the Nebraska mortarmen absolutely loved every minute of it.

"It's outstanding," said Sgt. Barry Erb, who enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1996 as a mortar specialist before transferring to the 623rd Engineer Company as an electrician when mortars went away as part of a reorganization of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron in the mid-2000s. He is one of several former mortarmen who are serving as a cadre of specialists within the squadron, which was reorganized several years ago and is now part of the 39th IBC. "The training environment we have had is second to none," Erb said during a break in firing during a hot and muggy morning on June 7, sweat already dripping from the brim of his cavalry Stetson hat.

According to Erb, one particular value of the Arkansas ranges was its relative flatness, which enabled the Nebraska mortarmen to do something many of them had rarely been able to do: watch the actual impacts of the their rounds and make corrections to the target based upon their visual observations. In mortar terms, this is called a 'direct lay,' something that the mortarmen learn about in their school courses, but rarely get to practice on a real range.

Instead, mortarmen must typically make corrections based upon a distantly located artillery spotter's observations and radioed instructions. The ability to actually practice direct lay procedures, Erb said, was particularly important in enabling both new and old mortar Soldiers to sharpen their skills and build important team cohesion.

"The ability to direct lay is something



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Fiery Training: Members of an Army National Guard mortar crew from the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team fire their weapon during range training at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. The training allowed members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry to receive important mortar training following a major squadron reorganization.

that even in my prior times as a tracked mortarman that we never got to do," he said. "So, getting the new crew together and doing (direct lay firing) is amazing."

That's exactly the types of experiences that senior Nebraska and Arkansas leaders hoped to create by moving the Nebraska squadron's mortar training to Fort Chaffee, which is located in western Arkansas near the city of Fort Smith. Although it once served as an active Army post, the 66,000 acre installation now serves as a training facility for the Arkansas National Guard.

According to Lt. Col. Robert Ford, commander of Nebraska's 1-134th Cavalry, by moving the training to Fort Chaffee, squadron leaders hoped to develop increased ties to the 39th IBC. "The training environment we have had is second to none," Erb said during a break in firing during a hot and muggy morning on June 7, sweat already dripping from the brim of his cavalry Stetson hat.

"They are training shoulder to shoulder with a brigade that will be our higher headquarters, so them getting used to working with us and us used to working with them was important," Ford said.

"From a mortar training perspective, it's been awhile since we had mortarmen, so we have varying levels of expertise," Ford added. "So, tying in with a sister battalion that has mortars and has been firing mortars for every A.T. since who knows how long meant that (the Nebraskaans) are getting some experienced oversight and that we are functioning the way we are supposed to."

"I think that both of those (goals) have been accomplished in just the week that we've been here," Ford said.

Maj. Kevin Burton, operations officer for the 39th IBC, agreed, saying that the value of having the Nebraska Soldiers travel to Arkansas and train with experienced mortarmen from Arkansas' 1-153rd Infantry Regiment, could not be overestimated.

"It builds on what the standard is that



Heavy Lifting: Sgt. Barry Erb, 1-134th Cavalry mortarman, lifts a crate of mortars out of the back of a Humvee trailer before the start of training, June 7, at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

we want across the brigade. It also builds the camaraderie among the teams. They get a chance to work together," Burton said. "That way we know how each other is going to operate once we get into that next austere or combat environment."

He said that in just the short amount of time the 1-134th Cavalry has been part of the 39th IBC, there is already evidence that the new team is taking shape.

"Oh absolutely," he said. "There has been a lot of cooperation and a lot of communication over the last year... Everyone is eager to train together. I find it exciting that even though you guys are in a different state that you want to come train. We want you to train with us. It's a great team concept."

"They fit well within the Bowie Team," Burton added, referring to the distinct Bowie Knife patch Soldiers assigned to the brigade wear.

For the Nebraska Soldiers training in Arkansas, the experience of firing dozens of

120 and 60 millimeter mortar rounds was extremely positive.

"The training has been going really well," said Sgt. Jacob Mikesell, a member of Troop B who serves as a Sarpy County deputy sheriff in civilian life. "We had a really good range last night and yesterday."

"We got to get some guys doing some stuff that they haven't done before," he added. "They shot a whole lot of rounds."

Fellow Troop B mortarman Spc. Doug Shaw seconded those thoughts, saying that actually getting to fire live rounds after months of training at their readiness center at the Mead Training Site was both a fun and important experience.

"Getting out on the range and hanging rounds is awesome," said Shaw, who works as a diesel mechanic in Omaha in civilian life. "It pumps you and you get going. It gets the blood flowing."

"It gives you a chance to really critique your skills and make yourself more deadly."

Cavalry Soldiers get rare repeat gunnery training opportunity

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

When the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry Squadron became part of the Arkansas Army National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, it meant the Soldiers assigned to the organization would receive new equipment and training designed to help meet its new – and former – traditional cavalry mission.

It also meant the organization would have the rare chance to repeat the gunnery and individual squad-level training it conducted during its 2017 annual training at Fort Riley, Kansas.

"When we became part of the 39th Infantry Brigade, we essentially reset our training schedule to mirror that of our higher brigade," said Lt. Col. Robert Ford, 1-134th Cavalry commander. "That essentially meant that we reset back to our Prep Year One to synchronize with the brigade, which in turn allowed us to conduct gunnery training for the second year in a row."

"I think that was a good thing because you really can never practice your basic level skills enough and this year we were able to do just that," Ford added.

That meant for the second straight year, the more than 260 Nebraska

Army National Guard Soldiers who attended the June 2-16 annual training at Fort Riley had the chance to get behind their weapon systems and work on their crew engagement skills while engaging dozens of targets. It also meant they had the opportunity to hone those individual and squad-level cavalry skills that are so important to the ultimate success of the squadron, Ford said.

"The Army likes to say that the basic Soldier skills are shoot, move and communicate," Ford said. "For a cavalry scout, however, the skills really are move, communicate and shoot, because in our type of mission if we find ourselves shooting at something for an extended period of time, something has probably gone wrong."

"So this year, we were able to get back to basics and really start working on those individual and squad-level skills that we need to be able to do to be successful cavalry scouts," he added. "We made sure that we focused as much of our time on the communicate and movement parts of cavalry skills as we did on



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Steady Aim: Spc. Preston Raymond keeps a close eye out for any possible dangers while guarding his position during annual training at Fort Riley, Kan. The Soldier was one of 260 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who conducted important range fire and reconnaissance training, June 2-16.

the shooting part of it."

That was music to the Soldiers' ears, too.

"It's going great," said Sgt. Josh Broman, a Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry scout, as he prepared to tackle a qualification range that required him and his crew to successfully identify a wide variety of stationary and moving targets under tight time limits with their Humvee-equipped .50 caliber machine gun. "I just wish that I could hit these targets a little better and a little faster."

The key to success, he said, was understanding how the weapon

system works and being able to hone the crew's collective skills.

"You have to learn how to shoot fast and on the fly," said Meyer, who works as an electrician in Lincoln in civilian life. He added, smiling, that he and his crew were enjoying the opportunity to work on their skills for the second straight year.

"It's always fun when you get to shoot a .50 caliber," he said.

Spc. Timofey Nevzorov, a Troop B scout from Seward, agreed. He said getting to shoot dozens of rounds was having a significant impact on his ability to shoot his weapon system, while also helping his Humvee crew develop the camaraderie it needs to be an effective team.

"It's hot. The sweat gets in your eyes and makes your vision blurry, so you have to rely on your own (truck commander)," Nevzorov said as he used black tape to write a 'pick-me-up' message on the turret's side before taking his turn on the qualification range. "It's a good time."

That attitude also extended over to a nearby heavily wooded valley where groups of cavalymen were practicing their scouting skills in a

tactical training lane.

"It's a little warm, but it's been really good getting to work on your specialty and learning how to talk on the radio," said Pfc. Seth Reighard, a radio operator with Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, as he lay in a "hide site" above a nearby valley, listening and recording the bits of information he received on his radio.

"Plus, we're getting to shoot," he added. "You've got to love it."

Fellow unit mate Spc. Raymond Preston seconded those thoughts, saying that despite the heat, humidity and sometimes dusty wind, the training was really enjoyable.

"It's been great getting out and working on everything from simple infantry tasks all the way up to the bigger picture items about our responsibilities in conducting screening operations for a battalion," he said.

Overall, Ford said he was extremely happy with how annual training played out, adding individual Soldiers' attitudes made all the difference.

"Despite the weather conditions, which caused the Soldiers to put in a lot of late nights and early mornings, we were really able to concentrate on and increase our individual squad-level cavalry skills during this year's annual training," he said. "That in turn, really helps us get pointed in the directions that we need to go."

Johnson first woman to lead Nebraska Air National Guard

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

A native of Elba, Nebraska, made Nebraska Air National Guard history again on Saturday, June 2, when she became the first woman to assume command of the Nebraska Air National Guard as the Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general - Air.

Brig. Gen. Wendy Johnson, former Nebraska National Guard director of the Joint Staff, assumed command of the Nebraska Air National Guard during a ceremony at the Guard's Joint Force Headquarters. Johnson also made history in April 2016 when she became the first female Nebraska Air National Guardsman to achieve the rank of general officer.

Johnson said the achievement, while significant, is really just another indicator of how far the organization has come during her time in the military. "It's really just another example of the evolution of the organization that's been going on for some time."

In assuming the Nebraska Air National Guard assistant adjutant general position, Johnson is now responsible for the organization, training, and equipage of the Nebraska Air National Guard, which includes the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln and the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. She succeeds Brig. Gen. James "Bob" Stevenson, who is moving on to the U.S. Strategic Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base where he will serve as the deputy director of operations for Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations and the mobilization assistant to the director of operations.

Stevenson had served as the Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general -Air since December 2017. Prior to that, he commanded the 155th Air Refueling Wing from August 2014 until August 2017, before serving as the Nebraska Air National Guard director of operations.

According to Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general who presided over the ceremony, Stevenson made a significant impact during his short tour within the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters. "In a very short amount of time, (General Stevenson) brought a level of analysis and thinking to the building that enabled us to continue to move forward," Bohac said. "Despite having a short tenure with us, (he) quickly made a difference."

"General Stevenson is always thinking about how to move the ball forward, how we can be better, what is our next goal going to be like?" Bohac added. "Thank you for being a great leader here in the building and for always thinking about how the Nebraska Air National Guard can be better than we are today."

In relinquishing his command, Stevenson said he leaves the Nebraska headquarters with a greater appreciation of the National Guard's important roles in protecting the United States' homeland. This was particularly due to the fact that shortly after arriving



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

New Assignment: Brig. Gen. Wendy Johnson accepts the colors for the Nebraska Air National Guard from Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, during the June 2 change of command ceremony in Lincoln, Nebraska.

in the headquarters following his command of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, the Nebraska National Guard began a months-long mission supporting the hurricane relief efforts in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"That was a tremendous learning experience," Stevenson said. "It was a tremendous exposure into the (domestic operations) capability of the National Guard."

Stevenson joined the Guard in 1997 following eight years in the Air Force. He has flown more than 4,000 hours and is a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Along with serving as the assistant adjutant general and commander of the 155th ARW, he commanded the Offutt-based 170th Group, the 155th Operations Group, the 173rd Aerial Refueling Squadron and in numerous other positions of leadership.

Stevenson said he is confident the Nebraska Air National Guard is well positioned to continue to accomplish its important missions.

"For many years, (General Johnson) has been the consummate wingman to me in many roles," he said. "She is always ready and capable of taking the lead and has always been there with really good advice, great judgement (and support). She always asks the right questions and nearly always has had the right answers."

"You have been terrific to work with and beside, and I know that I am smarter and better because of your leadership," Stevenson said. "I know that the Nebraska Air National Guard is going to be in great hands with you at the helm."

Bohac echoed those comments, saying Johnson's work in leading the Nebraska National Guard's joint staff has made a significant impact across the state as well as nationally. "She has done just a phenomenal job in that capacity in helping us think



Outgoing Leader: Brig. Gen. James Stevenson, outgoing Nebraska Air National Guard assistant adjutant general, addresses the crowd.

through our role, not just here in Nebraska, but in the nation, about how we are going to execute when it comes to things like defense support to civil authorities," he said.

"(General Johnson) has really worked hard to bring a vision to this effort, particularly in making the Air Guard a full-fledged partner in (the emergency operations) environment," Bohac added. "I look forward to your new role as the assistant adjutant general for Air and as the commander of the Nebraska Air National Guard."

Johnson's career in the Nebraska Air National Guard began when she enlisted into the organization in 1984 as an administrative clerk with the 155th Combat Support Squadron in Lincoln. She earned her commission as a second lieutenant in the Nebraska Air National Guard after graduating from the Air National Guard's Academy of Military Science in Knoxville, Tennessee, in September 1988.

Since then, Johnson has served in a variety of leadership positions, including multiple commands at the flight, squadron and group levels. She has also held numerous non-command positions including equal opportunity officer, logistics officer, and the 155th Air Refueling Wing's executive officer. Johnson is a veteran of multiple overseas deployments including an assignment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility where she served as the deputy Air Reserve Component advisor from December 2007 until April 2008.

During the ceremony, Johnson said that she has a number of priorities to work on, such as continuing to build and maintain readiness, force development and ensuring that the organization is positioned for future missions and opportunities. Later, she said she never expected to have an opportunity like the one she now faces.

"Quite honestly, I didn't see this coming and never expected to be at this point," said Johnson. "However, as leaders we are constantly preparing ourselves to be ready to move up to the next level of responsibility when the time comes."

"That's why I'm excited to take on this new mission and help lead our Nebraska Air National Guard Airmen as they take on their many challenges and missions, while also ensuring that they continue to maintain the readiness to do what they have always done: serve our state and nation whenever and wherever we are needed."



Courtesy Photo

Joint Service: A United States-led joint operation aided in the recovery and repatriation of three American service members on April 15, from the Quang Ngai province in Vietnam.

worked with were able to narrow their search to four locations.

"The Vietnamese kept really good burial records," Wellman said. "Interpreters also interviewed villagers to gather information on possible crash sites to search."

The four crash sites the teams were searching were from F-4 Phantom and A-4 Skyhawk aircraft.

"Searching crash sites that involve super-sonic jets makes the task extremely difficult," Wellman said. "A lot of the times you are looking for teeth or some type of personal belongings, such as dog tags, watches, boots or helmets."

In all, the trip was two months long, March 3-April 15, with 36 nights spent in the jungle

searching recovery sites.

"This was a very rewarding and somber experience," Wellman added. "Everyone involved was very motivated and had a great attitude."

The recovery mission was overall a success, with three service members honored during a repatriation ceremony before the signing of diplomatic documents between Vietnamese leadership and the United States. Repatriation is the process of returning someone to their own country, and the signed paperwork officially allows the transfer to take place.

"The members were then placed in a casket draped in a flag and flown back to Hawaii," he said. "Once the flight arrived in Hawaii, the remains were placed in a DPAA facility where their DNA was matched against a database. Once there was 100 percent confirmation of their identity, the family members were notified."

The DPAA was established in 2015 and has since been conducting recovery missions of personnel who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action.

"A lot of people don't know that this mission and agency exist," Wellman said. "I want to bring awareness and educate people of this mission. They are always needing help and I am sure that people would volunteer. I think bringing someone home to their family is huge."

Nebraska EOD flight aids local law enforcement in ordnance disposal

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus
Staff Photojournalist

Three Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians from the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron responded to a call from the Omaha Police Department's Bomb Squad after military ordnance was turned in on the OPD's firework amnesty day, July 12, in Omaha.

The Omaha Police Department called the EOD flight to look over and dispose of the military ordnance because EOD is responsible for any military ordnance, no matter how old or new it is.

"EOD is responsible for all military ordnance from cradle to grave and that includes stuff as old as ordnance from the civil war," said Tech Sgt. Mike Gibson, an EOD technician with the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron. "If it was made by the military at any point in time, we're responsible for it."

Once EOD gets to the location, they begin assessing the ordnance by looking for any markings or nomenclature and taking measurements to identify what kind of ordnance it is. In this case, the ordnance had no visible markings and was an 8-inch diameter projectile. EOD will then take it to a demolition range for disposal.

"We transport it in the safest manner we can," Gibson said. "We'll wrap it in a bomb blanket, which is a Kevlar blanket; we're going to sandbag it to keep it from moving around and will secure it in place."

After loading the ordnance onto their truck, EOD headed to the Nebraska Army National Guard's Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, where the Army National Guard allows them to use a demolition range to safely dispose of the ordnance.

"We counter-charge it with our own explosives so that we can detonate it in a controlled manner," Gibson said.

The ordnance that EOD disposed of was not live, meaning it did not have any explosives inside of it, but if it had been live, the ordnance could destroy an entire house and send off large pieces of shrapnel. The owner modified the ordnance by welding two bars onto the side and used it as a door stop for his barn before turning it into the OPD. These modifications caused concerns for the EOD technicians as to how safe the ordnance was.

"When the ordnance is degraded to the point this one was with no markings, you don't know if it's live or not, and if it is, you don't know what could set that off," Gibson said. "Maybe you just picked it up and dropped it the right way, and that's the day it decided it was going to blow up. So they're just unsafe. These things are weapons of war, not door stops."

It is recommended to not keep ordnance like this around the home.

"Inherently these (ordnance) are dangerous if they've been sitting on a shelf for a hundred years or if they've been in somebody's basement," said Senior Airman Isaac Maytum, an EOD technician with the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron. "Regardless, they can be dangerous and still kill people long after they get taken off the battlefield."

EOD is responsible for the disposal of military ordnance but also supports local law enforcement agencies, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation by disposing of ordnance or supporting the secret service in locating hazards to VIPs.

In order to provide these services, EOD must conduct training to include annual, semi-annual, monthly and supplementary. This includes classroom and hands-on training needed to conduct their job such as mission requirements, identifying ordnance and their function, and how to respond to varying situations in the field.

"On base we're responsible for [Improvised Explosive Devices], nuclear, biological, chemical, anything like that," Gibson said.

This EOD flight is one of 17 EOD flights in the National Guard and the only military EOD unit in Nebraska.

Gibson added that the unit is also responsible for ordnance off base, within four to five hours in each direction, and will respond with the base commander's permission for anything like IEDs, labs or Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Gibson said EOD helps in keeping environments safe, but ultimately the importance of their job is saving lives.

Guardsman helps recover lost service members

By Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson
Staff Photojournalist

A United States-led joint operation aided in the recovery and repatriation of three American service members on April 15 from the Quang Ngai province in Vietnam.

The three service members, whose identities will not be disclosed until families are officially notified, went missing in action more than 40 years ago during the Vietnam War after the planes they were flying crashed during a mission.

Nebraska Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Michael Wellman, a 155th Air Refueling Wing aircraft flight equipment technician who is trained as a crash investigator, became the first National Guardsman selected to participate in recovery efforts of this type.

"Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) selects its members from a pool of certified crash investigators," said Wellman, a native of Waco, Nebraska. "Up until this point they have always selected from active duty service members. When I was notified of this assignment, I didn't have to think twice about it. This was a great opportunity and a chance to bring closure to some families."

With assistance from the Vietnamese government and with the help of eyewitness testimonies, the recovery teams Wellman

Fellow Guardsmen jump into action to save Airmen’s life when heart attack occurs during basketball game

As Panic Sets In

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus
Staff Photojournalist

“Holy crap, I killed our friend.”
Guilt set in Capt. John Kupka’s thoughts when he and four other Airmen turned over Tech. Sgt. Michael Alvarez, who was lying facedown and unresponsive on a basketball court.

The commander of the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron’s distribution flight, Kupka felt personally responsible for persuading Alvarez, a logistics planner with the 155th LRS, to play basketball with five other members of the Nebraska Air National Guard on Jan. 20 at the Spirit of ’76 Armory in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Alvarez, 42, had just started working out again after having foot surgery in November and decided playing basketball with his co-workers would be a good workout. That day he played a couple games of pick-up basketball with Kupka, Master Sgt. Jeremy Dean, Staff Sgt. Dan Schieffer, Staff Sgt. Matthew Riley and Senior Airman Jonathan Sobetski.

Alvarez then told the others he was going to take a break to catch his breath and rest. As the other players reached the other side of the court and turned around, they saw Alvarez facedown, lying in the middle of the court.

“We honestly thought he was messing around,” said Kupka, adding Alvarez was known for his pranks and sense of humor. “We rolled him over; he definitely wasn’t messing around. At that point, panic sets in. What do we do? What actions do we take from here?”

Realizing Alvarez wasn’t breathing, they immediately dialed 911.

Schieffer, an aircraft sortie generating crew chief with the 155th Maintenance Group, was the first to administer CPR. He and the others drew on the training they had received many times in the National Guard.

“We were talking with the operator and she asked if anyone knew CPR,” said Schieffer. “Everybody kind of freezes up in the heat of the moment like, ‘who’s the expert here?’ So I remembered how to do CPR and I immediately started.”

“I felt the first ribs cracking and popping, like ‘OK, well we started now, there ain’t no stopping,” he added.

Although it seemed like hours, Alvarez was out for 20 minutes.

“Time really kind of stopped there,” said Kupka. “It really slows down.”

Each of the other members took turns giving Alvarez compressions while others spoke on the phone with the 911 operator.

“It was definitely a scary situation starting out,” said Schieffer. “You never want to hurt a friend or anything like that. You’re just hoping that one last second like ‘hey, he’s going to be alright,’ but obviously he was not.”



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen

Life-Saving Shot: (From left) Senior Airman Jonathan Sobetski, Staff Sgt. Matthew Riley, Tech Sgt. Michael Alvarez, Master Sgt. Jeremy Dean and Staff Sgt. Dan Schieffer pose for a photo with the automated external defibrillator (AED) used to save Alvarez’ life following a heart attack, Jan. 20, during a pick-up basketball game.

While the Airmen continued CPR, Master Sgt. Ronald Schroeder with the Nebraska Army National Guard medical detachment, came into the gym and immediately started helping the others. Schroeder, a 20-year veteran medic, is an automated external defibrillator (AED) and CPR instructor. An AED is a device that can check the heart rhythm of a patient and attempt to restore it by sending an electric shock.

“I ran over there, saw they had an AED sitting right next to the patient, so I asked them why they hadn’t put that on yet and they said the dispatcher told them not to,” said Schroeder. “So I put it on his chest and right away it said to shock him, and that’s about the time that Lincoln Fire and Rescue showed up. So I shocked him once and then Lincoln Fire took over.”

Schroeder credited the Airmen for taking the actions they did to save Alvarez’ life.

“The number one thing was they started doing something,” said Schroeder. “They called 911. They got that process going. Those guys started doing chest compressions, so they kept the blood flowing. We started shocking him as soon as we could; Lincoln Fire took over and they did a great job.”

After two more shocks from the AED, they were able to stabilize Alvarez.

Kupka said the AED was very helpful and was pretty easy to use, since it tells the exact steps of how to use it and when to shock the patient if needed. Looking back, he said anyone who comes across a similar situation should immediately locate the AED and get it on the patient.

Later, Alvarez said he knows his friends’ actions made a critical difference.

“According to what the doctors said, I had died on the basketball court; I went into cardiac arrest,” said Alvarez.

Although the doctors are unsure, they think a piece of plaque broke off from the wall of one of Alvarez’

arteries, causing blockage. Alvarez’s doctor told him the heart attack caused him to have 100 percent blockage, but because he was given CPR, the blockage was brought down to 99 percent and saved his heart from permanent damage.

“The guys that saved me, that’s just unbelievable, that they reacted that quickly and just did what they did,” said Alvarez. “I owe my life.”

Alvarez’s body temperature was brought down and he was placed into a medical-induced coma to protect his brain from being damaged.

While Alvarez was being transported to the hospital, Capt. Doug Carlson, government relations officer at the Nebraska National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters and a personal friend of Alvarez, was notified about the incident and immediately called Alvarez’s wife, Lisa.

“My initial reaction was to go straight into military mode,” said Carlson. “All business and no time for emotions. I knew that could come later and I had to just keep focusing on getting his wife and kids to the hospital.”

Carlson stayed with Alvarez’s family and was at the hospital every day.

“He needed me in that moment, so I was there,” said Carlson. “He would have done the same for me without hesitation.”

Alvarez said he was thankful for what Carlson did for him during that time.

“He wasn’t there doing the physical stuff like those guys did, but he was there on the mental side and getting my family and helping them out,” said Alvarez. “He’s a good guy and I’m glad he’s in my life, ‘cause that helped quite a bit, that left less stress for me. That’s the key thing, keeping the stress level down.”

Looking back, everyone who helped Alvarez that day is thankful they had additional training like self-aid buddy care and CPR classes to fall back on.

Senior Airman Michael Vantine,



Able To Play Another Day: Tech Sgt. Michael Alvarez, 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron logistics planner, poses on the basketball court in the Spirit of ’76 Armory months after collapsing there from a heart attack during a pickup game. The other Airmen with him and an Army flight medic in the building are credited with saving his life by administering CPR and using an automated external defibrillator (AED) until paramedics could arrive.

an installation personnel readiness NCO with the 155th Force Support Squadron, said the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron’s fire department offers CPR classes every regularly scheduled drill for members of the Nebraska National Guard and every day for full-time members or civilians who would like to be trained on CPR.

As a civilian, Vantine is a firefighter for the Nebraska Air National Guard Fire Department as well as a CPR instructor.

“The importance of it is to save somebody’s life,” said Vantine. “I mean if someone goes down, collapses in front of you like your parents or some family member goes down, if you can help them because of that training, the better off they’re going to be, the more chances you’re going to be able to save their life.”

Vantine said taking the time to pay attention in these classes is worth it since an accident or life-threatening situation can happen at any time or anywhere with little or no notice.

“You might think you know it, but when the time comes to actually do it, that’s not the time to be like, ‘um I don’t really quite remember like I thought I did,’” said Vantine. “If I can have the chance to save

somebody’s life because of what I know, I feel like that’s important.”

Kupka said now he takes the time to get to know his Airmen and how to contact their families in the event of an emergency.

“Supervisors should know information about their Airmen’s personal life,” said Kupka. “So when Mike collapsed, I had never met his wife, formerly in passing, but not close enough to know how to get a hold of her or any of that kind of stuff.”

This incident also caused many people to reflect on who they are surrounded by in their own lives.

“It made me realize how important the people in my support system are,” said Carlson. “And, just like that, they can be gone.”

Since his heart attack, Alvarez has fully recovered and is back at work. Although his diet and lifestyle have changed, his fun personality is the same. He said the episode also changed his perspective on life.

“The 155th, the support that they gave to me and my family, especially to my wife was unbelievable, it was so instrumental and was healing for me and my wife,” said Alvarez.

He added, “Things look differently now, the sunsets look better, I try to make my relationship with my wife and my kids more meaningful now than before.”

Nebraska Air Guardsmen return from Pacific theater deployment

By Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson
Staff Photojournalist

Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing, returned from a deployment July 3, to Andersen Air Base, Guam.

The 60-day mission involved providing support to U.S. and allied aircraft supporting regional stability and security in the U.S. Pacific Command area of operation. The mission included Nebraska Air Guard KC-135R Stratotanker aircrew, aircraft maintainers and mission support experts. The effort, say members of the 155th ARW, was extremely important.

“We are there to provide support for the continuous presence of bombers, fighters and reconnaissance platforms,” said Lt. Col Bryan Scholtes, 155th ARW inspector general, who added that the Nebraska tankers provided critical support to the overall strategic effort. According to Scholtes, the deployment was split into two 30-day rotations with two separate teams splitting the deployment.

“This is a big change,” he added. “This is the first Pacific Command cycle that we have had that was mandated for a minimum of 30 days.”

The change in the length of the deployment may have been a first, but this was not a first for Scholte deploying to Guam.

“I started going to Guam in 2005 and this

was the busiest I have seen it,” said Scholtes. The refueling mission plays a significant role in the PACOM theater and is made possible with the support provided from maintenance personnel.

“The demands on PACOM are very high,” Scholte said. “They are very task saturated with the work that they do. Especially on the maintenance side. They are working 12-hour days every day.”

Requirements for continuous air power presence in the Pacific isn’t the only cause for increased strain while deployed to Guam. The salty wet tropical environment requires that maintenance specialists stay on top of the aging jets to keep them in the best shape possible.

“An added factor that has been put on maintenance is we have gone to a 30-day wash cycle of the jets,” said Senior Master Sgt. Steve Fisher, maintenance production superintendent with the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. “This is a process that takes a 12 to 15-man crew up to 30 to 40 hours of maintenance time to complete.”

The Nebraska Air National Guard routinely deploys to Guam to help support the PACOM mission and platforms which help maintain an air power presence in the region.

“Guam is a very strategic location and we can cover the region very well,” Fisher said. “The Guard has good jets and experienced maintainers that can really help with any shortfalls.”

‘I Am The Guard’ Room debuts at Nebraska museum

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

“Wherever a strong arm and valiant spirit must defend the Nation, in peace or war, wherever a child cries, or a woman weeps in time of disaster, there I stand...I AM THE GUARD.” That is the quote from the book, *“I Am the Guard,”* that greets visitors to the Nebraska National Guard Museum’s newest exhibit that was unveiled and dedicated on July 4 in Seward, Nebraska.

Entitled “I AM THE GUARD,” the new \$100,000 display was created to help people who have never served in the military better understand what the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard are, and how they differ from the other U.S. military services.

“The I Am The Guard Room provides patrons of the Nebraska National Guard Museum an experience of what it is like to join the military,” said retired Col. Gerald “Jerry” Meyer, Nebraska National Guard state historian. “We were well aware of the low percentage of people that currently serve in the military and we catered to the patron who wants to know what it is like to join the Nebraska National Guard.”

According to Meyer, who conceived of the idea several years ago, the display – which was built as part of a partnership between the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society and the Nebraska National Guard’s Construction and Facility Management Office – is designed to help educate people about the Nebraska National Guard through a series of physical

and digital displays.

Meyer said the displays, which were developed by a team of Nebraska Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen and members of the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society, are designed to immerse patrons in what it takes to be in the Nebraska National Guard before they exit onto the main floor of the museum to learn more about how the organization has served its state and nation since its founding in 1854.

This immersion begins immediately upon entering the room from the museum theater. There, visitors are greeted by a two-monitor-tall drill sergeant that welcomes them into the room.

“Standing in front of a virtual drill instructor is something that less than 1 percent of the American public experience today,” he said.

Meyer said the front of the room is designed to tell the story of how Nebraska Army and Air National Guard recruiters find new members, how they go through physicals, to taking the “oath of enlistment,” to attending initial “basic” training for the Army and Air Force. The whole



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Line It Up: A formation of footprints and a Nebraska National Guard drill sergeant beckons visitors to learn more about the new “I Am The Guard” exhibit at the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward.

unique to the Army or Air National Guard.

Beyond this is a monitor called the “20 Year Project.” This display features service members who are currently in the Nebraska National Guard and shows patrons what it’s like to serve today, Meyer said.

The grand finale to the room is three large screens entitled “Honoring Our Past to Inspire the Future” and it features some of our prominent veterans of the Nebraska National Guard. Patrons can stand before images and press the screen to hear interviews and learn about citizens who have served in the National Guard.

“The interactive experience of the touch

room is wrapped in images supplied by the Nebraska National Guard.

Once a patron is “in” the military, they can make a choice of Army or Air Force to see what each branch has to offer. Screens in the center of the room highlight the many different skills that are performed in each branch. This also allows the recruiters to show what skills are needed today.

On each side of the screens are rank and badges that are

screens gives patrons a chance to learn and discover more of our rich heritage and history of the Nebraska National Guard,” Meyer said.

One of the highlights will be the story of Omaha’s Warren Buffett who served as a finance clerk in a headquarters unit from 1951-56 and he relates some great stories of serving. The I Am The Guard Room was sponsored by the family of the late Duane Acklie.

“We are so proud to sponsor the exhibit,” said Holly Ostergard, daughter of Phyllis Acklie and the late Duane Acklie. “The Duane and Phyllis Acklie family and Crete Carrier Corporation are committed to supporting our military and honoring the service of all veterans. The family is proud to help preserve the stories of the brave men and women of the Nebraska National Guard for future generations.” “This room will be a unique interactive experience that is one of a kind in the National Guard Museum system,” she said in a pre-dedication news release. “We look forward to seeing it in operation.”

Meyer said the exhibit is the latest step in creating a state-of-the-art museum.

“The I Am The Guard Room is the only display like it in the National Guard Museum System,” Meyer said, adding that the room complements earlier efforts such as the development of a new 10-minute Nebraska National Guard history video that is shown in the adjacent theater, and the more recent “Proclamation and 1854” and “Price of Freedom” exhibits that were also completed prior to July 4.

“The room has been extremely well received since opening on July 4.”

Retiree Council active in community

This definitely has been an interesting year weather-wise. From intense heat and humidity to torrential rains and early snow, one can certainly experience all seasons in one or two days. Make sure you have your house ready for the colder weather, and locked up tight if you’re a snowbird. Safe travels wherever you go.

On Nov. 3, more than 100 retirees and their spouses braved the cold weather to attend the retiree briefing held at Camp Ashland. Approximately 10 vendors from various agencies were present to provide information to them on topics including Omaha National Cemetery, VA benefits, Space-A travel; National Guard Museum and other beneficial topics.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac briefed the group on the status of the Guard and Mr. Ryan Sothan, Attorney General’s Office, provided a very detailed and well-received briefing on cyber-security and awareness with Facebook, social media, and cell phones.

Many amazed faces were seen in the audience when he talked about the relative ease of hacking! Tri-Care was well briefed by Lori Symonsbergen, and the Space-A travel briefing was informative as well.

Those who attended commented this was the best event they’ve been to in some time! A huge thanks to Lt. Col. Ted Hanger and Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Hartman who did the hard work to put this on. Kudos to them. Stay tuned for information on the next briefing to be held most likely next Spring and in the western part of the state.

Join the Email List

With the advent of electronic media, it’s easier for us to spread the word via email. But, we do have a number of retirees who do not use computers, so we still mail hard copy information to them on a regular basis. If you’d like to be included on the email list, let us know.

Got Questions?

Got questions and don’t know who to contact? Call or email us and we’ll get you to the right office to assist. Have you moved, changed a phone number or added an email address? Please contact us to update your information so we can keep our information current.

From the Retirement Services Sergeant

Greetings! Our trip in late July across the state providing ID card

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

DEERS/ID Card Stations

- ♦ G1 – 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524: (402) 309-8192/8168/8156;
- ♦ “Spirit of 1776” Armory 1776 N. 10th St. Lincoln, NE 68508 (402) 309-7359/7373;
- ♦ Penterman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln (402) 309-1724/1719;
- ♦ Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600 Room E209: (402) 309-1542;
- ♦ Norfolk Armory 817 S. 1st St. Norfolk, NE 68701 (402) 309-8900/8908;

- ♦ Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney: (402) 309-7758/7752;
- ♦ 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), 220 County Road A, Bldg. 508, Ashland, NE 68003, (402) 309-7809/7628;
- ♦ Offutt Air Force Base: (402) 294-2374;
- ♦ The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

Remember, you need two forms of ID when you arrive for your appointment.

Area Retiree Events

♦ Lincoln, Army National Guard retirees: **First** Monday of each month, 7 a.m., Virginia’s Travelers Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway

♦ Lincoln, Air National Guard retirees: **Last** Monday of each month, 7 a.m., Stauffer’s Café, 5600 S. 48th Street

♦ Lincoln, Retiree Lunch: **Third** Wednesday of each month, 11 a.m., Patty’s Pub, 311 N. Cotner Boulevard

♦ North Platte area retirees: **Second** Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Lincoln Highway Diner, 320 Rodeo Road, North Platte

♦ Kearney area retirees: BattleGrind Coffee group meets every Saturday at various locations. Contact Garth Scism for more information.

♦ Omaha retirees: Meeting on the **Second** Wednesday of February, April, June, August, October and December at 5:30 p.m., VFW Club, 5083 S. 136th Street

If any other towns have retiree breakfasts, coffee gatherings or evening meals and want to share that information, please let us know and we’ll add you to the list so others can join you.

and retirement services to Central and Western Nebraska was a success and will likely be repeated again in 2019. We’re currently looking at potential dates for 2019 in Kearney and Scottsbluff.

Pre-retirement briefs for those with 18 or more years of qualifying service for retired pay will also be starting soon. Be sure to reserve your spot once dates are available. For great information regarding retirement planning and benefits in the meantime, please go to <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/> for more information.

We encourage you to call (402)

309-8162 if you have had a change in address or spousal status so we can update the Retiree data base.

Keeping you informed and helping you anyway possible is very important to me, my section and the leadership of the Nebraska Army National Guard. If you have any questions or need assistance, you can reach me, Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Hartman, Retirement Services NCO, at 402-309-8162 or dennis.j.hartman.mil@mail.mil.

Thank you for your service and a BIG thank you to all the family members for their support, too. Have a wonderful rest of the year!

Museum honors history, welcomes future during Fourth of July events

By Spc. Lisa Crawford
Editor

Seward, Nebraska, is known as “America’s Fourth of July City,” and this Independence Day even the heat couldn’t melt the red, white and blue patriotism of the holiday from the hearts of the people who came to celebrate the birth of our nation at the Nebraska National Guard Museum.

This year’s annual celebration began with an hour-long event on the museum’s lawn which included the unveiling of a new interactive exhibit known as the “I Am the Guard” Room, and recognition of the 25 Year Anniversary of the State Partnership Program between the Czech Republic and the Nebraska and Texas National Guard.

“This is a place where that story can be told and those that maybe don’t know all of our stories can come and learn and find out who we are and what we’ve done in order that we... are able to do what we are doing this morning, which is to gather freely without the fear of oppression or persecution,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general. “That’s what this museum’s about. It’s the history of that.”

Before the crowd, Roger Mundt and Jeremie Kerkman of Crete Carrier unveiled the official sign for the new “I Am the Guard” Room. The pair represented the Duane and Phyllis Acklie family and the Crete Carrier Corporation, which employs many military members as drivers, office and shop personnel, and has a fleet of 20 Patriot Trucks which are offered to select drivers who have served in the armed forces.

“Duane Acklie was a U.S. Army veteran and proud of his service,” Kerkman said. “This ‘I Am The Guard’ Room is being dedicated to all past and present members of the Nebraska National Guard. We expect generations of future service members will come through the room and make the decision to serve this great state and country. We hope you enjoy the Museum and will tour the new room which

will be the standard for military museums in the future to help patrons understand and experience military service.”

Karen Tichota, a nurse from Eagle, Nebraska, said the Fourth of July dedication celebration was her first visit to the Nebraska National Guard Museum.

“I was very impressed,” said Tichota, who comes from a very military-oriented family. “It’s a must stop when you come to town, and a wonderful opportunity for the younger people to see what they can do for their country. I think we are very blessed in this community to have that.”

The Fourth of July celebration at the museum included multiple reenactors, educational sessions and demonstrations, including a mounted-horse weapons demonstration performed by Dave Gordy, a former U.S. Army Reserve sergeant from Ottumwa, Iowa, portraying Maj. George Marshall during World War I.

“This is my first time being at the Fourth of July here, so it’s a new experience, and definitely a lot bigger than I was expecting, but being here at Seward is great,” said Gordy, who slept on one of the exhibit bunks in the museum for the weekend of the event. “The hospitality has been great, and it’s really a lot of fun.”

Gordy said he enjoys doing reenactments and demonstrations to help teach raw history – the “true grit and dirt that’s really out there.”

“To keep the history alive,” he said, answering why he’d wear a 70-year-old wool uniform outdoors on a 100-degree day. “To keep things moving forward and so people don’t forget. It’s stuff that people don’t really put any thought to or understanding anymore.”

“It’s all interlaced, somewhere,” he added. “You might not see ‘this caused this,’ the cause and effect that made things to happen; but you can see the fingers and the direction of history nudging things in certain ways. And that’s what we need to preserve and share with others at events like this.”

Equality: Bestowed or Achieved?

Retired Guard general helps celebrate women’s equality

By Sgt. Jessica Villwok
Staff Photojournalist

“It’s my country as well.” That’s the quote from Army Maj. Beatrice Stroup that retired Brig. Gen. Roma Amundson used while speaking at the Nebraska National Guard Women’s Equality Luncheon, hosted by the Special Emphasis Group, Aug. 22, at the Joint Force Headquarters building in Lincoln. Amundson, who was Nebraska Army National Guard’s first woman to reach the rank of brigadier general before her retirement in 2011 after a 33-year military career, served as the keynote speaker for the annual Nebraska National Guard luncheon that celebrates the anniversary of the Aug. 20, 1920, ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that allowed women to vote. “Is equality bestowed or achieved?” Amundson asked. “To have it bestowed upon you it is not the same as achieving it. In order to exercise equality you must continually work to warrant those privileges. That is a task of every generation.”

Throughout her speech, Amundson discussed three important factors for women’s equality: the importance of recognizing Women’s Equality Day, how the military was used as a political tool to institute equality for women and how the military served as an agency of necessity to initiate change for women in the work force. “History shows that it is often the case that the military, as an institution, has been a catalyst for initiating social, political and economic change in the United States,” Amundson said. “Whether out of necessity to have adequate forces or by political pressure to incorporate the idea of equality.” Women have made big advances in today’s armed forces she said. Compared to the World Wars where most women could only serve as nurses, clerks, mechanics, laundresses or code breakers, today’s Army is much different as women are able to serve in virtually every capacity, including combat roles. Amundson said those advances didn’t just happen simply by chance. “I do not believe that equality is something that women should insist comes to them merely by virtue of



Empowered Speaker: Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Roma Amundson speaks at the Nebraska National Guard Women’s Equality Luncheon, Aug. 22, at the Joint Force Headquarters building.



Photos by Sgt. Jessica Villwok
Celebrating Equality: Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Roma Amundson visits with audience members after speaking at the Nebraska National Guard’s Women’s Equality Luncheon, hosted by the Special Emphasis Group, Aug. 22 in Lincoln.

Following her own military career, Amundson continued to serve. She is currently serving her second term on the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners. She is also a realtor for Home Real Estate since 1996. “We know how she is very active in the community,” said Mary Schmidt-Rodriguez, a Nebraska National Guard graphic artist and member of the Special Emphasis Program group, on how Amundson was chosen as the event speaker. “She is active as a female, active in politics and business. As the first Nebraska female brigadier general, she’s very important to the organization and has many great things to impart to everybody.” “I feel very privileged to live in a time when I have the freedoms that I have,” said Spc. Anna Tenille Stoeger, an avionic mechanic for Lincoln’s Company A, 1-376th Aviation Battalion, as she reflected on the presentation and the significance of the 19th amendment for women’s equality today.

Trailblazing Air Guard leaders speak at Women in Aviation lunch

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus
Staff Photojournalist

Women from the Nebraska National Guard and Duncan Aviation attended the Women in Aviation Luncheon, June 12, at Hangar B, Duncan Aviation in Lincoln. The luncheon featured women in leadership positions speaking about and answering questions of how to be a leader. Two of those speakers included Brig. Gen. Wendy Johnson, the assistant adjutant general of the Nebraska Air National Guard, and retired Col. Tami Thompson, now the assistant professor and director of the Master of Business Administration Program at Nebraska Wesleyan University. The goal of the panel was to discuss obstacles they face in their leadership positions, why they are where they are today and why they think they are successful. The panel talked about leading by example, encouraging and supporting each other and finding a mentor to look up to for advice. “I hope (this luncheon is) a role model that women can be leaders,” Johnson said. “They can be effective and there are hurdles, but they are manageable and there are mentors.” To be a good leader, Thompson said a person should figure out their strengths and find a way to fit that into their leadership role. She also said it is good to figure out

what members’ goals are and help them find a way to reach those goals. After being asked what was difficult and what was easy for each of them as a leader, Johnson said helping people see they’re a member of a team instead of an individual or an individual unit is what comes easy to her. She said being a team leader helps a person get better results when the team sees the same goal and receive encouragement to work together toward that goal. Conversely, she said, that as an introvert, making speeches and talking in front of large amounts of people is something she finds difficult. Over time, however, it has become easier and takes practice. Johnson and Thompson both talked about taking advantage of the training available to women in their careers. “Be flexible and take any opportunity that shows itself because you’ll learn a lot regardless if it’s something that you’re well-versed in or not,” Thompson said. “You will walk away from it learning.” When talking about how she became a leader, Thompson said to not be afraid of the unknown and unplanned paths



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus
Lead By Example: Brig. Gen. Wendy Johnson, the assistant adjutant general of the Nebraska Air National Guard, and retired Col. Tami Thompson, assistant professor and director of the Master of Business Administration Program at Nebraska Wesleyan University, speak at the Women in Aviation Luncheon, June 12, at Hangar B, Duncan Aviation in Lincoln.

that occur in a career. She said as a leader, it is good to be flexible and to learn from the unplanned paths that one chooses to take.

Award-Winning Review Team



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

On July 16, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac helped recognize the Nebraska National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters’s U.S. Property and Fiscal Office Internal Review Team as the 2018 National Guard Internal Review Office of the Year. “We have a great reputation in the state of Nebraska for what we do in this endeavor because you help us be better every time we take a look at a piece of this organization,” Bohac said. “Incredibly proud of what you do for us, and very grateful for what you do.”

Werner receives ESGR Freedom Award

By 2nd Lt. Drew Nystrom
Staff Photojournalist

Werner Enterprises, an Omaha-based global transportation and logistics company, has been awarded the 2018 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award by U.S. Department of Defense Secretary James N. Mattis. The award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their support to their employees who serve in the National Guard and U.S. Reserves. “Congratulations to the entire Werner Enterprises team on earning this prestigious national award,” said Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts. “This award recognizes the outstanding support Werner provides to their teammates, many of whom are also members of the National Guard and U.S. Reserves.” In earning the award, Werner was lauded for its numerous examples of support, including the hiring of 10,000 military members and veterans, and nearly 850 military and veteran spouses in the last five years. The company was also recognized for initiating an apprenticeship program to create a direct-employment pathway for those currently serving, veterans, and their spouses. It provides driving experience and fast-track schooling. Additionally, all veterans and service member drivers receive a symbol of their service to place on their truck to showcase their service. “While family support of a National Guard member serving their state and nation is perhaps one of the most critical elements in our readiness, civilian employers and their support is another foundational element. Each are important to our success,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general. “Employers across the state are flexible, supportive, and understanding of the demands and sacrifices placed upon our National Guard members and their families. This award shows Werner is leading the way, setting benchmarks and we can’t thank them enough.” Werner was nominated by Nebraska Air National Guard Capt. Adam Cassidy, 155th Maintenance Squadron, who has worked with Werner for nearly three years. “Werner has been nothing but supportive,” Cassidy said of Werner with his Guard career. “I couldn’t do it without their support. If I had a civilian employer that was different than Werner, I would probably be working on an exit strategy from the Guard. But they enable me to do what I do, and enable the Guard to do what it does.” Cassidy said a lot of companies talk about supporting the military, but Werner does more than talk through the actions they take to support their employees, which made it easy to write the award nomination when he had “such good material to work with.” “They certainly deserve it,” Cassidy added. “They do the hard work there.” The award was established in 1996 to draw attention to the support provided by employers who go above and beyond to support employees who choose to serve. Werner was one of only 15 companies in the nation recognized this year out of more than 2,000 nominated employers. “Our company is committed to supporting all veterans, veteran spouses, and those who currently serve in the National Guard and Reserve,” said Werner Enterprises President and Chief Executive Officer Derek Leathers. “We are proud to have the opportunity to support those who have dedicated themselves to serving our country.”

PROMOTIONS

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Lieutenant Colonel

Mark W. Bales
Eric P. Baptiste
Nicholas M. Breen
Dale L. Burrage
Edwin W. Davis
James R. Hewitt
Charles D. McWilliams
Reuben D. Rieke Jr.

Major

John F. Ayers
Moses M. Deutsch
John P. Gassmann
Melissa J. Kramer
Adam R. Krcilek
Rachel A. Manske
Charles E. McGreer
Jessica E. Prusaflores
Tyler R. Wilterding

Captain

Owen M. Bargar
Edward D. Bosland
Matthew S. Burke
Tonya S. Burke
Andrew J. Callahan
Damien L. Cullen
Savannah R. Ericksen
Dennis R. Hatfield
Jorge J. Jones Peart
Travis A. Kirchner
Joseph F. Kumor
Jacob I. Lee
Brandon M. Meyer
Jessica K. Pan
Kevin M. Rose
Bradley D. Steinman
Vincent R. Struble
Nicholas V. Thalken

First Lieutenant

Jared M. Klassen
Emily K. Zink

Chief Warrant Officer 4

Peter G. Steiner
Monty A. Woodward

Chief Warrant Officer 3

Chad M. Bayne
Heath A. Bragg
Courtney L. Miller
Joshua A. Schaaf
Timothy J. Shaner

Warrant Officer 1

Dayton C. Rasmussen

Sergeant Major

Lucas L. Poppe

Master Sergeant

Gregory A. Brown
Jason B. Douglas
Aaron J. Haag
Jason W. Priksat
Brandon J. Robinson
Robin J. Trospen
Alan J. Wineinger

Sergeant First Class

Mathew M. Brown
Richard S. Couch
Ethan D. Dodd
Nicholas J. Driggs
Cherie L. Hron
Kevin M. Hunter
Jerod W. Ideus
Luke E. Katz
Brison G. Kuhn
Brody J. Mayberry
Nicholas A. Province
Dustin E. Schlote
Garrett F. Shultz
Andrew K. Singasaas
Erin D. Smith
Matthew W. Teinert

Staff Sergeant

Georgia G. Allen
Timothy B. Failor
Lynda L. James
Ryan R. Jensen
Alayna J. Kechely
Kody J. Marshall
David M. Mueller
Edward N. Neidig
Joseph E. Prichard
Ashley N. Stollberg
Bryan J. Ward
Keenan J. Wiese

Sergeant

Julia I. Anderson
Joshua R. Bowman
Gage M. Boyce
Justin N. Budd
Zachary M. Cronin
Kaela A. Croushorn
Derick T. Gansebom
Jacob A. Garrelts

Barrett D. Gibbons
Joshua J. Gilbertson
Russell A. Glassmeyer
Nathan R. Graber
Samuel E. Higgins
Daniel J. Krawczyk
Khristofer J. Kuhlmann
Khang V. Le
Alexander K. Lorimor
Benjamin W. Lyons
Christopher S. Mays
Dustin R. Payne
Ryan J. Roberts
Ryan L. Rogers
Arturo J. Romero
Alexis E. R. Rowell
Gregory L. Salnický II
Luke I. Schlueter
Annie T. Szczepaniak
Jose A. Torres
Michael F. Wallace
Dianna R. White

Specialist

Guillaume A. Affognon
Joseph M. Alumit
Zachariah T. Amick
Dylan Z. Andelt
Bryson S. Bartell-Finley
Dillon B. Bearskin
Justin A. Brown
Phillip M. Byrom
Mario G. Cortez
Collin M. Dirks
Kristin K. Dobish
Logan J. Dowse
Colton D. Engel
Daniel W. Fellows
Darius D. Flessner
Joshua Fred
Paul T. Gutha
John R. Haberer
Antonio R. Holbrook
Antonio C. Hoover
Bobby G. Ivey
Shane E. Jarzynka
Joshua R. Kampschnieder
Brendan L. Kouma
Seth F. Lampert
Masi S. Lapointe
Tyler D. Lauenstein
Devon M. Lee
Grayson G. Matulka
Jake R. McMahon
Kristina Y. Melton
Timofey Y. Nevzorov
Logan J. Paben
Michael S. Paronto II
Justin M. Pettit
Werner D. Ramirez
Mason R. Russell
Nicolas P. Russell
Wade A. Scamehorn
Donald A. Sheltrown
Jacob T. Skarp
Eric K. Soe
Brendan C. Stricherz
Jaiden D. Switzer
Wesley J. Tannehill
Enrique R. Tercero
Ethan P. Thomas
Devon E. Thompson
Alejandro R. Trejo
Steven J. Wilson

Private First Class

Irvin D. Audelorios
Walker J. Barnes
Lane T. Campbell
Rhett M. M. Dye
Stephen J. Flint
Shaelynn L. Goodall
Nathan A. Guess
Blake J. Hall
Dillon R. Haney
Aaron C. Harker
Travis A. Hasbrouck
Taylyn T. A. Higel
Amber L. Holly
Brittany J. Kerbel
Darren D. Kosmicki
Moises A. Landaverde
Omar M. Madrigal
Ross L. Novotny
Joseph P. Oconnor
Bret A. Roberts
Tyler D. Schrack
Drew M. Schultz
Jacob A. Sunday
Dillion W. Teichmeier
Dylan J. Thor
Kaleb R. Vak
Trevor C. Vater
Austin J. Wineland
Jacob M. Woodliff

Private

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Jace A. Caniglia
Matthew J. Fanning
Jesse F. Grimmer
Joshua P. Rambo
Gabriel L. Sellers

Command Sgt. Maj. Robert C. Keck
Command Sgt. Maj. Monte A. Kerchal
Command Sgt. Maj. Eli A. Valenzuela
1st Sgt. Steven L. Barnes
Master Sgt. Carl K. Dehling
Master Sgt. Daniel W. Nastase
Master Sgt. Maritza J. Pearl
Master Sgt. Mary M. Schiltz
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Danielle A. Nuss
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James J. Westerdale

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Zachariah J. Nichols
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Ciera L. Morris
Nicholas J. Scholtes
Colette I Thorell

Airman

Cari M. Howell
Emily J. Simpson
Taren A. Wattier

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Sgt. 1st Class Ethan B. Schreurs
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel J. Walford
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AWARDS

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Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa A. Domeier

Meritorious Service Medal

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Lt. Col. Nicholas M. Breen
Lt. Col. Steven Collins
Lt. Col. Thaddeus D. Fineran
Maj. John F. Ayers
Maj. Christopher J. Hansen
Maj. Kevin M. Hurtt
Maj. Kevin L. Janousek
Maj. William P. McGreer
Command Sgt. Maj. Bradly V. Anderson
1st Sgt. Pamela R. Whisenhunt
Master Sgt. Alan J. Wineinger
Sgt. 1st Class Kevin M. Hunter
Sgt. 1st Class Demario C. Mitchell
Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas C. Reis
Sgt. 1st Class Jason E. Roberts
Staff Sgt. Tony T. Franklin
Staff Sgt. Justin D. McCoy
Staff Sgt. Nathan C. Schumann

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Capt. Tyler E. Horning
Capt. Erin C. H. Rodell
Capt. James M. Small
Capt. Ryan E. Thompson
1st Lt. Trevor J. Jacobson
1st Lt. Zackary L. Klapperich
2nd Lt. Bernard J. Nicola
Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy J. Preister
Master Sgt. Kyle D. Miller
Sgt. 1st Class Jeramey Anderson
Sgt. 1st Class Riley P. Beaman
Sgt. 1st Class Dennis J. Hartman
Sgt. 1st Class D J Johnson
Sgt. 1st Class Andrew K. Singsaas
Sgt. 1st Class Joseph L. Strack
Sgt. 1st Class Cody A. Trindle
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Staff Sgt. Travis M. Benda
Staff Sgt. Amber J. Gralheer
Staff Sgt. Robert L. Halmes Jr.
Staff Sgt. Lynda L. James
Staff Sgt. Dean P. Martin
Staff Sgt. Alex D. Peyton
Staff Sgt. Joshua E. C. Sladky
Staff Sgt. Matthew M. Stern
Sgt. Christian Gonzalez
Sgt. Joel D. Hying
Sgt. Jacob T. Mikesell
Sgt. Kathy H. Reyes
Spc. Lexus A. Heitoff
Spc. Antonio C. Hoover
Spc. Walker J. Prather

Army Achievement Medal

Maj. Jacob T. Park
Maj. Jonathan D. D. Wymer
Capt. Daniel S. Sauer
1st Lt. Sarah C. Filiaggi
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Keal S. Bockelman
Sgt. 1st Class Phillip E. Runyan II
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn M. Sullivan
Sgt. 1st Class Cody A. Trindle
Staff Sgt. Brittany N. Alcala
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Staff Sgt. Jordan T. Hopwood
Staff Sgt. David P. James
Staff Sgt. Lynda L. James
Staff Sgt. Michael V. Rice
Staff Sgt. Daniel L. Roeber
Staff Sgt. Scott D. Seals
Staff Sgt. Lemuel R. Sheard III
Staff Sgt. Joshua E. C. Sladky
Staff Sgt. Matthew M. Stern
Staff Sgt. Franco I. Villanueva
Sgt. Trent A. Bottolfsen
Sgt. James J. Brown
Sgt. Lyndon W. Griner
Sgt. David A. Halstead
Sgt. Jacob D. Harter
Sgt. Brandon L. Lambert
Sgt. Zachery L. Sehnert
Sgt. Joshua C. Stollberg
Sgt. Michael C. Trimble
Cpl. Levi D. Kaiser
Cpl. Sean M. Licari
Spc. Nicholas D. Bernasek
Spc. Garret S. Brame
Spc. Eduard Y. Bursuk
Spc. Michael W. Denklauf
Spc. Austin R. Duermeyer
Spc. Zachariah L. Edmonds
Spc. Daniel W. Fellows
Spc. Triston A. Grieser
Spc. Nathan J. Hanson
Spc. Korey E. Lamb
Spc. Jeffrey D. Lechner
Spc. Alexander N. Petersen
Spc. Douglas H. Shaw
Spc. Donald A. Sheltrown
Spc. Zachary H. Stang
Spc. Jackson M. Stoneman
Spc. Cacey N. Vavra
Spc. Corey J. Winchel
Pfc. Arich R. Knaub

Staff Sgt. John A. Youngblood
Sgt. Jeremy L. Samples

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Senior Master Sgt. Steven Guyton

Pfc. Joel L. Mundorf
Pfc. Brett B. Rowley

Humanitarian Service Medal

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Col. Craig W. Strong
Lt. Col. Jan K. Behn
Lt. Col. Thaddeus D. Fineran
Lt. Col. James R. Hewitt
Lt. Col. Christopher M. Perrone
Lt. Col. Reuben D. Rieke Jr.
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2nd Lt. Kramer S. Andersen
2nd Lt. Jonathan M. Policky
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Chief Warrant Officer 4 Marcus A. Groetzingen
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Daniel N. Hill
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brandon L. Bennett
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dallas W. Bundy
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Richard C. Davis
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lloyd T. Morris III
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joshua A. Schaaf
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Derek T. Whisler
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Aaron R. Carpenter
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kevin C. George
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Galen L. Kreifels
Warrant Officer 1 Timothy T. Beckmann
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1st Sgt. Gus R. Swanson
Master Sgt. William T. Buettner
Master Sgt. Ronald K. Schroeder
Master Sgt. Rachel M. Stafford
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Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey J. Hergott
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Sgt. 1st Class Jessica L. Jackson
Sgt. 1st Class William D. Jacobsen
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Sgt. 1st Class Ty S. Tucker
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Staff Sgt. Leroy S. Koenig
Staff Sgt. Sherri L. Maberry
Staff Sgt. William P. Nolan
Staff Sgt. Steven R. Paulson
Staff Sgt. Troy A. Perkins
Staff Sgt. Alex D. Peyton
Staff Sgt. Nicholas A. F. Sasada
Staff Sgt. Lemuel R. Sheard III
Staff Sgt. Jedediah F. Taff
Sgt. Keyle R. Alcorn
Sgt. Daniel G. Anderson
Sgt. Kaleb P. Bateman
Sgt. Benjamin R. Chambers
Sgt. Zachary M. Cronin
Sgt. Zachary D. Findley
Sgt. Bryce J. Fowler
Sgt. Michael A. Frakes
Sgt. John R. Gahan
Sgt. Derick T. Gansebom
Sgt. David E. Gerhardus
Sgt. Dylan J. Hergenrader
Sgt. Joel D. Hying
Sgt. Patrick J. Kelly
Sgt. Megan M. Liekhus
Sgt. Zachary T. Manley
Sgt. Danielle M. Martin
Sgt. Seth R. Osterloh
Sgt. Ryan M. Polich
Sgt. Anna M. Pongo
Sgt. Shalyn K. Prochnow
Sgt. Chase A. Quinn
Sgt. Erik O. Servellon
Sgt. Raymond S. Smith
Sgt. Dustin A. Swisher
Sgt. Keith W. Tinnell
Sgt. Bradley J. Wardyn
Cpl. Levi D. Kaiser
Cpl. Andrew A. Kessler
Spc. Anthonyjohn O. Aduloju
Spc. William A. Bazan
Spc. Jason A. Camp
Spc. Jordan E. Consolver
Spc. Lisa J. Crawford
Spc. Daniel W. Fellows

Spc. Joshua Fred
Spc. Isidro Galarza Fernandez
Spc. Alexander M. Harms
Spc. Brent S. Hellbusch
Spc. Michael J. Henn
Spc. Raven S. Hill
Spc. Benjamin M. Hoffart
Spc. Justin E. Hrubby
Spc. Yinsor Kambou
Spc. Neil J. Kermmoade
Spc. Craig R. Kimball
Spc. Michael A. Lange
Spc. Bema K. K. H. Male
Spc. Crystia M. Michalski
Spc. Brandon J. Moninger
Spc. James R. C. Moore
Spc. Audrey A. Novotny
Spc. Michael K. Petersen
Spc. Owen M. Prettyweasel
Spc. Michael L. Rogers
Spc. Jacob T. Skarp
Spc. Alejandro R. Trejo
Spc. Jesse G. Tuttle
Spc. Cacey N. Vavra
Spc. Jacob P. Viox
Spc. Shelby A. Ziegler
Pfc. Whisper M. Harris

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

1st Sgt. Natosha D. Siemek
Master Sgt. Joseph J. Dunlap
Sgt. 1st Class Cody A. Trindle
Staff Sgt. Neville F. Cole
Staff Sgt. Colton J. Stepp
Sgt. Jacob E. Hill
Sgt. Harold E. Meyer
Sgt. Otis E. Seiler
Sgt. Liam R. Wakeman
Cpl. Austin D. Niemann

Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit

Lt. Col. Steven P. Petersen

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Capt. Joshua Metcalf
1st Lt. Scot N. Mullis
2nd Lt. Collin E. Baldwin
2nd Lt. Noah G. Stewart
2nd Lt. Aaron J. Svoboda
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Aaron R. Carpenter
Staff Sgt. Dustin J. Knoell
Staff Sgt. Christopher E. Moulton
Staff Sgt. Edward N. Neidig
Sgt. Ryan P. Baldwin
Sgt. Benjamin W. Lyons
Sgt. Anna M. Pongo
Sgt. Shalyn K. Prochnow
Sgt. Elizabeth A. Purdham
Sgt. Dustin A. Swisher
Sgt. Jessica A. Villwok
Sgt. Ryal E. Wood
Spc. Tyler J. Brom
Spc. Audrey A. Novotny
Spc. Devon E. Thompson

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Brian L. Medcalf
1st Sgt. Sean R. McMahon
Sgt. 1st Class Brody J. Mayberry
Staff Sgt. Jamie Bartholomew
Sgt. Darrin M. Fehr
Sgt. Brandon J. Kapke
Sgt. Nicholas G. Rucker
Sgt. Caleb C. Schauer
Sgt. Taylor D. Siebrandt
Sgt. Annie T. Szczepaniak
Spc. Zachariah T. Amick
Spc. Anna T. Stoeger
Spc. Denver E. Trojan
Spc. Dylan R. Wilson
Pfc. Reme K. Brown
Pfc. Daniel L. Doolittle

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Maj. Edward J. Merkle
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1st Lt. Trevor D. Piening
Chief Master Sgt. Paul J. Sabatka
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Senior Master Sgt. Jody L. Kouma
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Senior Master Sgt. Bryan J. Wright
Master Sgt. Rene A. Arriola
Master Sgt. Michael J. Barbur
Master Sgt. Boyd W. Bowder
Master Sgt. Megan L. Brozovsky
Master Sgt. Scott A. Clayton
Master Sgt. Matthew J. Conboy
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Master Sgt. Byron M. Eloge
Master Sgt. Suzanne E. Glover
Master Sgt. Ronald J. Hagge
Master Sgt. Craig A. Hilderbrand
Master Sgt. Shaqundall Jones
Master Sgt. Matthew J. Jordan
Master Sgt. Kevin K. Krausnick
Master Sgt. Brandy L. Myers
Master Sgt. Jamison M. Nitz
Master Sgt. Wade L. Schuett
Master Sgt. Matthew L. Stebbing
Master Sgt. Casey D. Svitak
Master Sgt. Benjamin D. Venteicher
Tech. Sgt. Benjamin I. Beermann

Continued on 19.

RETIREMENTS

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Lt. Col. Randall S. Ames
Lt. Col. Brett E. Petit
Lt. Col. William J. Prusia
Maj. Kenneth J. Boatman
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1st Lt. John S. McNally
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Chief Warrant Officer 4 Todd C. Sumovich
Chief Warrant Officer 2 James A. Score
Command Sgt. Maj. William B. Beiber

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Command Sgt. Maj. Monte A. Kerchal
Command Sgt. Maj. Eli A. Valenzuela
1st Sgt. Steven L. Barnes
Master Sgt. Carl K. Dehling
Master Sgt. Daniel W. Nastase
Master Sgt. Maritza J. Pearl
Master Sgt. Mary M. Schiltz
Sgt. 1st Class Kelly S. Alexander
Sgt. 1st Class Terence G. Burns
Sgt. 1st Class George B. Goodon Jr.
Sgt. 1st Class Jason A. Mcatee

Sgt. 1st Class Edward W. Pickinpaugh
Sgt. 1st Class Ethan B. Schreurs
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel J. Walford
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew M. Zimmermann
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Master Sgt. Connie Cooper
Master Sgt. Joel Debauche
Master Sgt. Jennifer Eloge
Master Sgt. Kevin Fedon
Master Sgt. Brian Gayer
Master Sgt. Marsha Lane
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Master Sgt. Aaron Wescott
Master Sgt. Mark Wiemeyer
Tech. Sgt. David Job

Guard Family
NEWS
You Can Use

Changes to
Post-9/11 GI
Bill benefits
transfer policy

WASHINGTON (DOD News) — The Defense Department issued a substantive change July 22 to its policy on the transfer by service members in the uniformed services of Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits to eligible family member recipients.

Effective one year from the date of this change, eligibility to transfer those benefits will be limited to service members with less than 16 years of total active-duty or selected reserve service, as applicable.

Previously, there were no restrictions on when a service member could transfer educational benefits to their family members. The provision that requires a service member to have at least six years of service to apply to transfer benefits remains unchanged in the policy.

“After a thorough review of the policy, we saw a need to focus on retention in a time of increased growth of the armed forces,” said Stephanie Miller, director of accessions policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. “This change continues to allow career service members that earned this benefit to share it with their family members while they continue to serve.” This change is an important step to preserve the distinction of transferability as a retention incentive, she added.

If service members fail to fulfill their service obligation because of a “force shaping” event -- such as officers involuntarily separated as a result of being twice passed over for promotion or enlisted personnel involuntarily separated as a result of failure to meet minimum retention standards, such as high year of tenure -- the change will allow them to retain their eligibility to transfer education benefits even if they haven’t served the entirety of their obligated service commitment through no fault of their own.

All approvals for transferability of Post-9/11 GI Bill continue to require a four-year commitment in the armed forces and, more importantly, the member must be eligible to be retained for four years from the date of election, officials said.

The policy affects service members in the uniformed services, which includes the U.S. Coast Guard as well as the commissioned members of the U.S. Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Former recruiting, retention leader
to continue serving in retirement

By Capt. Edward Bosland
Staff Photojournalist

What does middle school, the Avon Lady, the University of Nebraska-Kearney and a 34-year military career have in common? Only Lt. Col. Will Prusia can answer that question.

Prusia, recent commander of the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion, retired from the Nebraska National Guard on June 30 to pursue a career helping troubled teens.

Prusia’s military career began by walking into the wrong recruiting office. Having decided to pursue a teaching career, a 17-year-old Will Prusia sought out a National Guard recruiting office to learn about educational benefits being offered in Nebraska.

“I knew I wanted to be a teacher and I knew that my parents couldn’t afford it...I decided to join the military for the educational benefits and certainly for the service as well,” Prusia said.

However, instead of finding a Nebraska Army National Guard recruiter, he found himself in a regular Army recruiting station, enlisting into the delayed entry program, for two years of active duty, as a military police officer.

Prusia left for Fort McClellan, Alabama, in June 1984 where he completed both his basic and advanced individual training. Within days of his graduation, Prusia found himself in Germany as an active duty Soldier. While in Germany, Prusia looked for a way to extend his service so that he could continue to serve after his return to the states.

“I knew it would be challenging to transition from Germany to ‘fort living room’ without being on the soil,” Prusia said.

Prusia extended his term of service, spending the extra time stateside where he found a place to live and made his final plans for college. While still enlisted with the active Army, he worked with a reserve component career counselor to join the National Guard.

“My official end (of time in service) was on a Friday and on Saturday, the very next day, I was in a National Guard formation, in the armory in Hastings, Nebraska,” Prusia said.

Prusia was also soon admitted into the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

“...1989 to 1993 was essentially SMP (simultaneous membership program) time between ROTC and the National Guard,” Prusia said.

Graduating from college, and commissioning through ROTC were only the beginning of a long and fulfilling relationship with UNK ROTC. In 2006, Prusia was tasked with reestablishing the Military Science and ROTC program at his alma mater. Restoring a program that had ceased to exist between 1996 and 2006 is still something Prusia



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

A Farewell Smile: Lt. Col. Will Prusia smiles during the change of command ceremony where he relinquished command over the Nebraska National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion, March 29, prior to his official retirement after 34 years of military service in June.



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Measuring A Career: Retiring Lt. Col. Will Prusia and his wife, Angela, hold up a quilt made up of the various uniforms that Prusia wore during his 34-year military career.

considers to be his “greatest opportunity and accomplishment” of his military career. A big part of that feeling is due to the fact that he had to ‘go it alone’ for the most part.

“No one told me how to do it, so working through the process of rewriting the course description, rewriting the syllabus, learning the academic approval process, developing relationships, recruiting students and finding space on campus, took a lot of perseverance,” Prusia said.

He was fortunate enough to locate some archived course descriptions and catalogs that aided in the process. “It is a great accomplishment, simply because of the relationships that it established between the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska National Guard, what it is doing to contribute to the officer corps, and as a commission source,” Prusia said.

The ROTC program at UNK still prospers today.

Providing mentorship is something that Prusia strongly subscribes to.

On July 1, the first day after his official retirement, he assumed the full-time position of national director of camps for an organization called Teen Reach. Teen Reach is a national organization that works with 12- to

15-year-old foster children, providing the young people with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and a constructive, positive example at weekend camps.

“Most of these teens have faced some kind of trauma. They are foster kids and there is a reason they are in foster care,” Prusia said. He and his wife, Angela, both experienced middle school teachers, began working with Teen Reach about 10 years ago.

“We loved teenagers, working with them, coaching them, encouraging them, mentoring them, so when we heard about Teen Reach, we decided that was what we needed to be a part of.”

Since then, he and his wife have worked to build and develop the program.

Prusia has had his share of mentors. When asked what historical figure he most admired, Prusia paused for a moment before responding: “Every day, I gain greater respect for my father.”

“He was a legacy changer for our family, changed the trajectory, our faith, God in our lives. He’s been a significant part of that,” Prusia said, before suddenly changing course. “Well, hold on. It’s the Avon Lady. The Avon Lady started coming to our front door when I was five or six, sharing her faith, loving us, being kind to us, never giving up on us, befriending us.”

Ruth Roberts, the Avon Lady, was also the pastor’s wife who would regularly visit the Prusia household, and whose son would become Prusia’s best friend.

If it had not been for the Avon Lady, “I would not be here today, my life would be totally different,” Prusia said.

Over a long career, Prusia learned some valuable lessons he has shared with young Soldiers just starting their career.

“Be patient, you don’t need to get promoted right away, but also advocate for your own career,” Prusia said.

Prusia advises that Soldiers need to be proactive and know their timelines.

“When it comes to Captains Career Course, go as soon as you are eligible, and when it’s time for ILE, CGSC, you go as soon as possible,” he said.

He is also still a firm believer in the value of mentorship.

“Find someone you can emulate, observe, in and out of uniform, someone who is going to help you grow,” Prusia said, adding that getting involved in one’s local community is also extremely important.

“Just make yourself available to the young people around you, whether it’s going to school as part of the Teammates program, or befriending a single parent family, encourage them in what they need to know in order to be successful in life,” Prusia said.

As the end of his career approached, Prusia said he would not change a thing.

“I got to go to Afghanistan, sit on top of a wall and talk to my wife on FaceTime while looking at an Alexander the Great outpost. There are no regrets.”

AWARDS continued from 18.

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| Tech. Sgt. Kristopher P. Bousquet
Tech. Sgt. Adam E. Bowman
Tech. Sgt. Nathan T. Camp
Tech. Sgt. Mary R. Couture
Tech. Sgt. Daniel J. Dibbern
Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey D. Ebeling
Tech. Sgt. Matthew W. Gullickson
Tech. Sgt. Derek B. Hollrah
Tech. Sgt. Amanda J. Kahler
Tech. Sgt. Rebecca L. Kechely
Tech. Sgt. Kody L. Kelly
Tech. Sgt. Matthew J. Kobza
Tech. Sgt. Travis A. Laframboise
Tech. Sgt. Anthony A. Manno Jr.
Tech. Sgt. Jason M. Melton
Tech. Sgt. Christopher J. Sautter
Tech. Sgt. Eric M. Shaw
Tech. Sgt. Terrance M. Smith
Tech. Sgt. Christopher J. Tank
Tech. Sgt. Brett A. Ziemann
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Dieckhoff
Staff Sgt. Jason D. Johnsen
Staff Sgt. Cheva Jumnonngart
Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Krepel
Staff Sgt. Bryan A. Mattes
Staff Sgt. Hieu V. Nguyen
Staff Sgt. Robert T. Ohnesorge
Staff Sgt. Brent J. Schiermann
Staff Sgt. Michael A. Smith
Staff Sgt. Katherine T. Welsh
Staff Sgt. James D. Witter III
Senior Airman Alaytra A. Beck | Air Force Commendation Medal
Maj. Robert C. Butler
Maj. Mikayla M. Carlson
Maj. Ryan N. Mcgrail
Capt. Jonathan A. Adams
Senior Master Sgt. Michelle C. Laframboise
Master Sgt. Michael J. Barbur
Master Sgt. John P. Garza
Master Sgt. Eric L. Pyatt
Master Sgt. Joshua M. Triplett
Master Sgt. Rusty A. Zortman
Tech. Sgt. Sandi L. Harvey
Tech. Sgt. Corey F. Jordan
Staff Sgt. Julie A. Flaherty
Staff Sgt. Stephanie R. Lewis
Staff Sgt. Daniel M. Schieffer

Air Force Achievement Medal
Master Sgt. Chaz R. Jensby
Staff Sgt. Cheva Jumnonngart
Staff Sgt. Ryne S. Packett
Staff Sgt. Skylar S. Pickerings
Staff Sgt. Gus E. Stamps
Staff Sgt. Ted R. Unterseher
Staff Sgt. Katherine T. Welsh
Staff Sgt. James D. Witter III
Senior Airman Tyler J. Dirksen
Senior Airman Kole R. Fehling
Senior Airman Ethan D. Haberman
Senior Airman Mattie M. Schake
Senior Airman Amy J. Wahlmeier |
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Senator trains with Nebraska Soldiers, Airmen

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Nebraska’s U.S. Senator Ben Sasse, a member of the U.S. Senate Armed Forces Committee, and Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac joined with roughly 40 Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, Aug. 8, at Camp Ashland, Nebraska, for a roughly hour-long physical training session.

The event, which was coordinated by Capt. Doug Carlson, Nebraska National Guard government relations officer, was designed to allow Sasse to experience military physical fitness training while also giving the Nebraska National Guard the chance to talk with Sasse about a number of Nebraska Guard initiatives currently in the works, such as the Guard’s latest efforts in cyberspace defense and innovation.

Mostly, however, it was an opportunity for both Sasse and Nebraska National Guard leaders to underline the importance of physical fitness in today’s complex world where Soldiers and Airmen are expected to be physically and mentally prepared to operate



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Getting Physical: Nebraska U.S. Senator Ben Sasse works out with members of the Nebraska National Guard, Aug. 8.

in both the cyber and physical realms of modern military operations.

The session was conducted under the watchful eyes of the Nebraska Joint Force Headquarters’ 1st Sgt. Daniel Malizzi and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Adam White, state master fitness training coordinator. Together, they put the group of Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen through a series of rigorous warm-up and cool-down exercises, which book-ended a series of fitness stations modeled on the U.S. Army’s newly-unveiled combat fitness test.

“We need to recognize that brain is every bit as or even more important than

brawn in the long run. And yet, we’re talking about war. So, all of our men and women who are going to serve have to be prepared to serve in the real world and that requires physical readiness,” said Sasse shortly after the P.T. session concluded, his bright red Nebraska t-shirt hanging wetly from his shoulders from both the exertion of the workout and the dewy ground on which many of the exercises were conducted.

“(Unfortunately) the digital revolution is leaving a lot of our kids less and less physically fit.”

Sasse said that’s particularly evident in many statistics that show only 25 percent of today’s men and women have the educational, legal or physical qualifications needed for military service.


“That’s a problem for our whole country,” Sasse added.

Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, concurred.

“If you can’t have the endurance and the skills out in a combat environment or an austere environment, you’re not going to survive,” Bohac said. “And that means putting your fellow Soldiers or Airmen at risk.”

Street Talk

“If you could change one thing about the Nebraska National Guard, what would it be?”



Pvt. Boenerges Duran
402nd Military Police Battalion

“Not making us do the ‘hurry up and wait,’ but patience is a virtue.”

Spc. Teagan Edwards
734th Transportation Company

“I think we need to integrate with more units. We tend to stick to just our home units and not the state as a whole.”






Staff Sgt. Josh Cowsky
1-134th Cavalry Squadron

“Faster out-processing for unfit Soldiers. It is keeping people in slots when there are other Soldiers who want to move up, but can’t.”

Lt. Col. Bryan Bettey
Joint Force Headquarters

“I wish there was a way to increase understanding of the demands placed on our Citizen Soldiers to civilians and employers in today’s changing world environment. It’s no longer a one weekend a month, two weeks during the summer job.”






Pfc. Arthur Hruska
Co. E, 134th Infantry (LRS)

“More survival training. Like basic camping skills and learning everyday stuff that can be used anywhere. I know the NCOs know a lot that I would think learning from them would be useful in general.”

Sgt. Sonny Swanson
402nd Military Police Battalion

“Better morale boosters and less mandatory fun. We need more things geared toward Soldiers instead of just Soldiers’ families. If you have better boosters, I think our retention would improve.”



Warrior mindset improves readiness

With the Pentagon’s new so-called “deploy or get out” policy in place, and the Army’s fitness test changing to the Army Combat Fitness Test, it’s clear the entire Department of Defense is placing emphasis on readiness – and individual Soldiers and Airmen should as well.

Since I enlisted in the Army National Guard in 2014, I have struggled to meet both physical fitness training requirements, and body composition standards. On more than one occasion, I have come disappointingly close to being flagged for these deficiencies, but because I’ve never truly failed, I’ve only continued to make the same mistakes instead of working on making improvements.

Earlier this year, when Secretary of Defense James Mattis told reporters, “You’re either deployable, or you need to find something else to do,” was when I first started looking at my own personal readiness level. Was I deployable? Or could I be removed from the military? And when the Army announced in July the six-event Army Combat Fitness Test would replace the current test of just pushups, sit-ups and a 2-mile run, I knew I needed to make improvements in order to succeed as a Soldier.

More recently the Army clarified what deployable meant, outlining in the Retention Policy for Non-Deployable Soldiers the six criteria Soldiers must meet, including being “capable of passing the Army Physical Fitness Test or meeting the physical demands of tasks required for a specific deployment.”

While meeting the minimum physical readiness standards are obvious, prior to this policy there seemed to be more wiggle room should you ever fail to meet them. For example, if you fail an Army Physical Fitness Test, you will be flagged from positive actions, but you are allowed to re-test (and hopefully pass) within a certain time period. But with the heightened focus on immediate readiness and deployability, and new policies and changes occurring regularly, meeting personal readiness standards daily is now ideal, if not even required.

The Army directive states readiness is ultimately the personal responsibility of each individual service member and I fully intend to make my own readiness top priority, especially as we head into a new year. To do so I plan to adopt what is known as “a warrior mindset.”

Former Navy SEAL Richard Machowicz stated in his book *Unleash the Warrior Within* that, “Being a warrior is not about the act of fighting. It’s about being so prepared to face a challenge and believing so strongly in the cause you are fighting for that you refuse to quit.”

Having a warrior mindset, to me, is the epitome of being a National Guard Citizen Warrior, and living the motto, “Always Ready, Always There.” Instead of training physically for an annual fitness test with three events, it’s about training year-round to be combat ready, even when you work a desk job. Or instead of dieting two weeks before a weigh-in or a special event, it’s eating healthy and drinking enough water the majority of the time. It’s training for and believing you will climb Mount Everest, even if you never leave the Midwest.

A Different Perspective

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Lisa Crawford

The most important part of having a warrior mindset is knowing and believing in the *why*. My *why* is to fulfill a personal calling of service to others before self and to prove that I can become and do whatever I put my mind (and body) to do. That’s why I joined the Army in the first place, to position myself in a career where I can make a difference and push myself at the same time.

Lately, however, I haven’t done well at pushing myself. In fact, I’ve been dwelling more on self-pity and blaming so many different things for my various struggles – for example, I often blame genetics on my body composition issues. It took a past platoon sergeant, who I have always looked up to and respected, to set me straight.

He took all the excuses I was making and turned each one around into a personal strength. My lack of motivation and available time for exercise were because I am over-committed to working hard on other areas of my life. My genetics excuse for my height and weight issues was due to my ancestral heritage, which has passed on the body build and spirit of a warrior. The excuse that my past experiences were indicative of my future results was in fact just proof that I am a fighter who hasn’t quit yet, even when I have failed.

It was this path of thinking – of turning all negatives into positives that can be used to push you forward toward accomplishing your goals – that I have latched on to. It was this warrior mindset that I now want to embrace for my life moving forward.

Knowing your *why*, embracing the Warrior Ethos – “I will never quit,” – and preparing yourself (physically and mentally) for whatever challenges may come, is how to ensure you are deployable, ready for any mission and the best *you* you can be.

Full-time service that plays to your strengths

I am a Broadcasting-Production major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

This past spring, right before the end of the 2017-18 school year, I started applying for technician jobs within the Nebraska Army National Guard.

After several tries, I was still unable to get past the USA Jobs filter system. I had heard about some temporary technician opportunities, so I sent an email to Warrant Officer Tim Beckmann from the 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade who had a supply technician vacancy available. We had gone over the summary of duties in a sort of informal interview and I was primed to start as soon as my file had gone through the Human Resources Office.

I was going to be placed as a GS-05.

Several days later I received a call from Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes from the Nebraska National Guard State Public Affairs Office. He had come across my resume as it was making its rounds through the Human Resources Office and was intrigued by my videography experience and schooling. There were several projects he wanted my help with in support of the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting Office and the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward, Nebraska, and he asked if I would be interested.

There was a catch, though, he said as he apologized for stealing me from Beckmann. Instead of coming on as a supply technician, I would be placed as a public affairs photographer/videographer, which would actually be a bump in paygrade by two steps.

Considering this position was directly related to my schooling and future career goals, it would’ve been foolish to reject the offer.

Even though I was hired for video experience, I had the opportunity to take still photography a handful of times. Up until that point, I hadn’t had a lot of chances to polish my photography skills, but as the spring and summer moved along I was able to brush up and teach myself new techniques. In fact, on my first day of work, I was tasked with getting photos of warrant officers for a wall-wrap in the museum. One of my photos managed to make the cut and is there to this day.

Later that month, I assisted with covering the Operation Bald Eagle project at Camp Ashland where Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac spoke with local third grade students as they watched a nearby eagle’s nest. One of my photos was even published in this *Prairie Soldier* newspaper.

The primary reason I was hired was to assist in the creation of several interactive videos for use in a new exhibit at the Nebraska National Guard Museum. Our first goal was to create a life-sized drill sergeant experience that was triggered by a motion sensor. I got to experiment with studio lighting and the challenges of creating a video with the camera flipped sideways so it would fit the screens correctly. It was a learning experience for the entire office.

We filmed three times for two different drill sergeants, and the video is now in the museum.

The second video I created was of several Soldiers and Airmen recreating the Oath of Enlistment. We had about 15 people come in and recite the lines of the Oath. I was then responsible for picking and choosing one line each. I got to

Another Voice

Sergeant

Samuel Crane

experiment with creative lighting, and gained a lot of experience in editing with Adobe Premiere Pro with this assignment. That video is now played on a constant loop in the museum and is likely to stay for quite some time.

These were just two of the projects I had the chance to work on, but there were many others.

For example, about two years ago the Public Affairs team had the opportunity to interview Warren Buffett on his experiences in the Nebraska Army National Guard. I got to cut up some of the clips with individual titles to add them to a museum exhibit. The exhibit features clips floating across a touch screen monitor where you could select the ones you wanted to view.

Another time, I was responsible for editing a video project for the Nebraska Army National Guard’s recruiting team. In the weeks before I was hired, Spc. Lisa Crawford and members of the recruiting staff had interviewed eight Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers about the experiences they have had since enlisting.

Each individual file was about 40 minutes long and I was responsible for editing these videos into 5-9 minute segments, which were then handed to recruiting to be used as part of their web and social media marketing efforts.

Overall, I have learned a lot about the video trade through job experiences and my work experiences here have added value to what I’ve already learned at the University. I gained a lot in video editing, studio set-up and videography experience.

I’ll take this experience at the Public Affairs Office and apply it in future employment, and maybe someday I’ll even make my way back to the PAO and apply my experiences there further.

Nebraska paratroopers place third in international competition

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**
Editor

Four teams of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers competed in the 2018 Leapfest International Airborne Competition, Aug. 5, in West Kingston, Rhode Island, with one team placing third overall. The four teams included two from the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), one from the 195th Quartermaster Detachment (Rigger Support Team), and one from Company E, 134th Infantry (Long-Range Surveillance). All of Nebraska’s teams placed in the top 20. The top Nebraska team was Team 40 from the 195th FSC which included Sgt. 1st Class Chris Martin, Staff Sgt. Tyler Anderson, Staff Sgt. Matthew Salomons, Sgt. Tate Higgins and alternate jumper Sgt. Ryan Hoffman. The team earned third place with a combined time of 48 seconds for eight jumps – 14 seconds behind first place.

“It’s an honor to go and represent Nebraska and the 195th,” said Martin, 195th FSC liaison noncommissioned officer. “And not only to go and have the opportunity, but to be competitive and place in the top three.” The other 195th FSC team – Team 41 – came in 10th place. Team 9, the final competition jump for members of Co. E, 134th Infantry (LRS) prior to their inactivation later in August, secured 12th place. The 195th QM Det. (RST) – Team 29 – earned 17th place. “Sometimes in the Guard we struggle with perceptions of us being less qualified or not as professional, but we can go to an international event with teams of that caliber – special operations, active duty, and other components and services – and be able to show them that we are competitive and professional and good at what we do,” Martin said.

Seventy total teams participated in the event, with 39 teams from the United States. Other countries participating this year included Italy, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Republic of South Africa, Botswana, Czech Republic, Canada and the United Kingdom. Each country also issued paratroopers who jumped under the direction of a foreign jumpmaster “foreign wings” as part of an exchange tradition.

“It’s a great experience to be able to not only participate, but also interact with paratroopers from other countries,” Martin said. “We can tell jokes and laugh, but we still want to beat them, and vice-versa. Every team out there is really professional, and it just goes to show the caliber of individuals who choose to voluntarily fall from the sky.” Of the 350 total competitors, 195 were from the United States, including 23 active duty military teams, one government civilian team and 12 Army National Guard teams. The teams represented 15 total states, with 28 Army teams, six Air Force teams and five



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Berner

Almost There: A Nebraska Army National Guard paratrooper dives onto the X on Castle Drop Zone, Aug. 5, during Leapfest 2018 at West Kingston, Rhode Island. Leapfest International, hosted by the Rhode Island Army National Guard, was made to promote high level technical training and esprit de corps within the International Airborne community.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Berner

Leapfest: A U.S. Army paratrooper parachutes down using his MC-6 parachute onto Castle Drop Zone, Aug. 5, during Leapfest 2018 at West Kingston, Rhode Island.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. William Ploeg

Practice Falls: Multinational paratroopers practice parachute landing falls while participating in sustained airborne training, Aug. 4, during Leapfest 2018 at West Kingston, Rhode Island. Leapfest is the largest, longest standing, international static line parachute training event and competition hosted by the 56th Troop Command, Rhode Island Army National Guard.

possible to the designated area is a must. This competition makes you more proficient as a paratrooper and as a Soldier.” Individual jump times are important, but Martin said it’s the ability to function as a team that makes Nebraska’s paratroopers successful.

“After the first jump we were in first place, and we looked at each other and were like, ‘Wow!’” he said. “You go there just wanting to do your best and when you do well, it’s a real honor to represent. And for the most part, the 195th interacts well, as one cohesive team to always accomplish the mission.”

Nebraska Soldier vies for national title

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**
Editor

This year’s Nebraska National Guard Soldier of the Year progressed from the state, through to the regional level, and on to the national stage competing for top honors in all of the Army National Guard.

Nebraska National Guard sent the year’s best Soldier and noncommissioned officer to represent the state at the Region V Best Warrior Competition in Arkansas.

Spc. Devon Thompson, 1-134th Cavalry, placed first during the state competition in April, and – along with Nebraska’s top noncommissioned officer, Staff Sgt. Dustin Knoell, 209th Regional Training Institute – moved on to the Region V Best Warrior Competition in Arkansas. There, Knoell earned runner-up in the noncommissioned officer category while Thompson again prevailed as the top Soldier.

The 2018 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition took place at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, where Thompson was matched against 13 other Army National Guard Soldiers from across the country. The grueling competition took place July 23-27, and put the Soldiers through a variety of obstacles and tests, concluding with

a ruck march. The Pennsylvania National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion partnered with Gettysburg National Military Park to conduct the 12-mile ruck march as part of the Best Warrior Competition. The National Guard Soldiers



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Charles Davis

Pulling For Gold: Nebraska Spc. Devon Thompson, 1-134th Cavalry, pulls a weighted litter, May 16, during the Region 5 National Guard Best Warrior Competition in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

marched through the historic and honored ground of the Gettysburg Battlefield in full uniform, carrying a 35-pound rucksack to test Soldiers’ determination and physical limitations.

While Thompson didn’t take a top position at the national level competition, he did proudly represent the Nebraska Army National Guard.

“I was very proud and humbled to represent the Nebraska National Guard at both the regional and

national level,” Thompson said. “Born and raised a Nebraskan I was honored to not only represent the state at regionals, but the Midwest at nationals.”

While Thompson said he didn’t perform as well as he could have at nationals, having fallen behind at the start while completing a land navigation course after record rainfall in the area. Still, the competition was overall a rewarding experience for the Soldier.

“The best part was making lifelong friends with the men I was competing against,” Thompson said. “I want to give credit to all the other competitors, they were no joke, and pushed me to my limits.”

Thompson said anyone wanting to compete in the Best Warrior competition in the future needs to buy into the work and trust the process.

“Training and preparing can get straining,” he said. “You need to hang tough and work through those times to be successful. Just keep in mind that the Best Warrior Competition is not something you come to, it’s something you go from.”

Thompson added that regardless of where a person places in the competition, as long as a Soldier gives it their all, had fun and made connections – then they will embody what it means to be a best warrior.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Olympic athlete visits Fit for Life

The fifth iteration of the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Fit For Life training took place Aug. 4-17 when nearly 40 Soldiers reported to the Camp Ashland Training Site for the intense two-week training period dedicated to improving Soldiers’ physical fitness and improving the state’s physical readiness rates. Assisting with the training this session were a handful of members from the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, Total Soldier Enhancement Training team, an elite Soldier-led training specifically tailored to increase Soldiers’ performance and resiliency.

On Aug. 8, Spc. Leonard Korir, a U.S. Olympic team member, completed a training demonstration for the Fit For Life Soldiers, running laps on the track at the training site.

Korir, who won the 2015 New York City Half Marathon in 1 hour, 1 minute and 6 seconds, would run a total of 16 miles that day as part of his training while his track and field coach, Capt. Robert Cheseret, monitored his time.

During their visit, Korir, Cheseret and Capt. Kelly Cain, a WCAP performance dietitian, shared their personal experiences, training techniques and tips for better performance with the Fit For Life Soldiers.

Unstoppable: Miles ran for Kentucky National Guard Soldier

By Airman 1st Class Jamie Titus
Staff Photojournalist

Members of the Air and Army National Guard marathon teams showed their support for a fellow runner, Sgt. Angela Sullivan, a combat medic with the Kentucky Army National Guard’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 201st Engineer Battalion, by wearing shirts sold by the Kentucky Army National Guard marathon team during the 41st Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon on May 6 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

In February, Sullivan lost her left leg to osteosarcoma, the most common type of cancer that starts in the bones, and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. She hopes to be fully healed and running the Lincoln National Guard Marathon again by 2019.

In order to show their support and raise money for Sullivan’s medical treatment, Maj. Varinka Ensminger, Kentucky National Guard Medical Detachment, and Sgt. 1st Class Amy Parker, human resources specialist, 149th Brigade Support Battalion, began selling t-shirts and tank tops which read: “Hardcore #MilesForA” to members of each state’s national guard marathon team and any others who wanted to support Sullivan. Some team members wore the shirts during the Lincoln National Guard Marathon, while others took photos with them to send on to Sullivan, who was resting at home. The money raised from the shirts will go to Sullivan and her family to help pay for medical bills, traveling expenses and any other costs they may have.



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

Supportive Steps: Pedro Ochoa, Alaska National Guard, finishes the Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 6, in a #Miles4A support shirt.

“I wanted to make sure she can have what she needs, and we’re going to do what we can,” Parker said.

Before she was diagnosed with cancer, Sullivan was part of the Kentucky National Guard marathon team for three years. Parker said Sullivan was training for this year’s marathon when she started having pain in her left thigh. Originally thinking it was just an over-use running injury, she iced it and completed physical therapy. When those self-remedies didn’t seem to be working, she went to see a doctor, who found Sullivan had an inconclusive mass in her left thigh above the femur.

While on crutches, Sullivan got a hairline fracture, and as she was getting an X-ray to view the fracture, her femur broke in half, forcing doctors to amputate her left leg on Feb. 18. At that time they also learned the cancer had reached her lungs and chest.

But the cancer and the ampu-



Photo by Spec. Lisa Crawford

Kentucky Strong: Sgt. 1st Class Amy Parker (second from right), human resources specialist, 149th Brigade Support Detachment, Kentucky Army National Guard, headed a fundraiser with her other Lincoln National Guard Marathon teammates to sell shirts to support a fellow runner, Sgt. Angela Sullivan. Sullivan, combat medic, Headquarters, 201st Engineers Battalion, lost her leg to Osteosarcoma Cancer and is currently undergoing chemotherapy.

tation haven’t stopped Sullivan from staying in shape and working toward her goal to be running again by 2019.

“She’s very determined, very positive attitude, she doesn’t let the cancer beat her,” Parker said. “She’s got the will to do it, so she will do it.”

Parker said that there has been a lot of support for Sullivan. The majority of the marathon teams took photos with the shirts and those photos were put together for a video

that was sent to Sullivan. Parker said she will be taking that video with her while she goes through chemotherapy as inspiration.

Ensminger, who was also instrumental in starting the fundraiser, was excited to see other runners supporting her friend.

“Probably the coolest thing was that some people ran in her shirts today,” Ensminger said. “So when I saw them I was like ‘Yes! Oh my God, this is Awesome!’”

Although Sullivan was not in

Lincoln for the marathon, she was there in spirit with the Kentucky National Guard team.

“This motivates her,” Ensminger said. “The last mile is always the hardest mile, so the last mile and last point two were for her.”

The Kentucky National Guard family is fully supportive of Sullivan and will do whatever it takes to help her beat cancer, Parker said.

In total, the Kentucky National Guard marathon team was able to raise more than \$1,000 for Sullivan.

Student Flight aids National Guard marathon runners

By Jonah Schmitt
Student Flight Member

Nearly 20 Nebraska Air National Guard Student Flight members joined their Army and Air Guard teammates in manning a hydration station at Holmes Lake Park in Lincoln during the 41st Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

Nebraska’s newest Citizen Airmen provided water and orange slices to the runners and gave special encouragement to more than 160 Guardsmen from 45 states and two territories who made the 26.2-mile trek in unusually warm conditions.

The student flight is made up of new Nebraska Air National Guard recruits who have already sworn-in, but are waiting to attend U.S. Air Force Basic Military Training and technical schools.

“The Student Flight program is for non-prior enlistees to assemble during drill weekends and know what to expect before going to BMT,” said Tech. Sgt. Daniel Dibbern, 155th Air Refueling Wing recruiter. “It’s critical we take care of our Airmen from the very beginning. We brought the student flighters to the marathon so we can find different ways to serve fellow Nebraskans.”

Along with lending much-needed sustenance at the 19-mile hydration station, the student flight members were able to interact and talk with Guardsmen who have been in their shoes, wondering what comes next.

According to Gage Garman, Student Flight member and Omaha native, getting involved in the day’s activities was rewarding.

“It’s been fun, new, and it gives you a sense of being a part of something bigger,” Garman said.

Along with the individual – full and half-marathon – races, Guard runners also sought spots on the prestigious “All Guard” National Guard Marathon Team, which consists of 60 to 65 runners: 40 males, 15 females and five masters runners, aged 40-years-old or older.

Nebraska Guardsmen ruck to remember



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson

Memorial Finish: Master Sgt. Chris Deters, 92nd Troop Command, shakes hands with fellow Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers, May 6, after finishing the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. Deters and other Soldiers and Airmen marched in uniform with full rucksacks the entire 13.1 mile distance of the half-marathon portion of the race to honor Nebraska’s fallen.

By Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson
Staff Photojournalist

Keeping with tradition started a few years back, a group of Nebraska National Guard service members chose to wear their full military uniform and don a weighted ruck to complete the 13.1-mile half-marathon course during the 2018 Lincoln National Guard Marathon on May 6 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Nebraska Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode, 155th Air Refueling Wing occupational safety manager, carried a 30-pound pack and ruck marched alongside nearly a dozen fellow Guard Soldiers, Airmen and retirees.

Tontegode, who has participated in the marathon for the past 17 years, chose to ruck rather than run his last two races for what he calls “a very good reason.”

“This is an event to memorialize and remember the fallen Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard that have paid the ultimate sacrifice,” Tontegode said.

Fellow guardsman, Nebraska Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Brian Hiller, assistant operations non-commissioned officer, 92nd Troop Command, also chose to ruck the half-marathon distance through Lincoln.

“I have had Soldiers over the years that have passed over in Iraq,” Hiller said. “I wanted to remember their sacrifice, and all of the Nebraska National Guard members we have lost.”

To bring awareness to the purpose of the ruck march, some service members carried banners and pinned pictures onto their packs, honoring the fallen service members.

“From the stand point of the Citizen-Soldier, sometimes when they are not wearing the uniform and they go about their day-to-



Honored Tradition: Chief Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode, 155th Air Refueling Wing occupational safety manager, carries a 30-pound pack, May 6, during the Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

day life, people forget that there are people making sacrifices close to home,” Hiller said. “This type of event brings top-of-mind awareness to the public that there are people in their community that are making sacrifices for their freedom.”

To prepare for the half-marathon ruck march, Hiller, along with fellow 92nd Troop Command Soldiers, Col. Eric Teegerstrom, commander, and Master Sgt. Christopher Deters, senior logistics noncommissioned officer, started training five months prior to the event. The group trained twice a week at various locations for varying distances regardless of weather.

“There were times that we were out in snow storms, windy conditions and freezing temperatures,” Hiller said. “There is a certain aspect of shared hardship in preparing for something like this.”

Hiller said that he was most struck by the amount of public appreciation and interaction received from runners and viewers alike along the marathon route.

“Every minute or so someone was thanking us for our service or encouraging us along the way,” he said. “I felt proud to be representing the Nebraska National Guard in that aspect, and next year we are going to try to get more people to participate with us to bring more awareness to the public.”

D.C., Florida, Indiana take top honors during 41st annual National Guard Marathon in Lincoln

By **Spec. Lisa Crawford**
Editor

The heat did not deter more than 160 National Guard runners and ruck marchers from making their way to the finish line of the 41st Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon held on May 6 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Taking top honors in the National Guard men's and women's division were runners from District of Columbia and Florida, while the Indiana National Guard team took home the National Guard team title at this year's race.

Capt. Kenny Rayner, commander of the District of Columbia Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 74th Troop Command, earned his second consecutive first-place title in the National Guard's male division, finishing the 26.2-mile course with a time of 2 hours, 38 minutes and 55 seconds. Rayner also finished sixth overall of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

Finishing first in the National Guard women's division and the fourth woman overall with a time of 3 hours, 11 minutes, 29 seconds was Capt. Kimberly Quinn with the Florida Army National Guard's State Surgeon's Office.

The Indiana National Guard Marathon Team – including qualifying runners Jake Fisher, Eric Brown and Blaine Zimmerman, took the top team title away from multi-year defenders Pennsylvania National Guard with a combined average time of 2 hours, 59 minutes and 38 seconds. The Hawaii National Guard Marathon Team came in second place with an average time of 3:01:27, with the New Mexico National Guard team taking third at 3:03:35.

Maj. Jason Doffin, captain for the Indiana National Guard Marathon Team, said that after several years of finishing either second or third, the team members made it their mission to come together for the win this year.

"Mission accomplished," Doffin said.

Rayner also approached this marathon with goals of improvement over previous years.

"I ran faster than last year, so I was pretty happy about that," said Rayner who secured a position on the All Guard National Guard Marathon Team for the fifth time. "I just really love the Guard atmosphere. It's hard to get a competition where all the Guardsmen from most states come together like this. I see some of these guys once a year, but it's like they are really good friends. You come back and it's like you just saw them the other day. It's great camaraderie."



Photo by 2nd Lt. Drew Nystrom

Second Race, First Place: Finishing first in the National Guard women's division was Capt. Kimberly Quinn, an operations officer with the Camp Blanding Joint Training Center near Starke, Florida. This was only her second full marathon ever.

Marathon Winners		
Male	Female	Team
1. Kenny Rayner <i>Washington, D.C.</i>	1. Kimberly Quinn <i>Florida</i>	1. Indiana National Guard
2. Jake Fisher <i>Indiana</i>	2. Varinka Ensmín <i>Kentucky</i>	2. Hawaii National Guard
3. Javier Torres Rolón <i>Puerto Rico</i>	3. Amanda Homes <i>Nebraska</i>	3. New Mexico National Guard

Rayner said he usually runs the Boston Marathon, but this year he ran the Tokyo Marathon instead. By running in the Tokyo race, he said he was able to have more recovery time to prepare for the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. The weather, however, still brought him down from where he hoped to be.

"It just got really hot," Rayner said, noting that the second half of the course lacks shade of any kind. "The heat kind of got to you, but you just try to maintain pace, keep it steady and not fall apart."

More than 13,500 runners registered for the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. Among those athletes, more than 160 from the Army and Air National Guard, representing 45 states and two U.S. territories, pounded pavement for 26.2 miles in 85-degree weather to compete for coveted positions on the "All Guard" National Guard

Marathon Team.

The Lincoln National Guard Marathon has a long history of Guard and local community cooperation, said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general.

"The marathon is a fantastic opportunity for the National Guard to build upon that grassroots connection that is created for every one of us back into our communities; but most importantly, the connection that we make for the United States Army and the United States Air Force, because no one does it like we do," Bohac said.

According to the National Guard Marathon coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Sterns, the competition is designed to promote physical fitness and military readiness in the National Guard. The top runners at Sunday's race will be selected as members of the 2018 "All Guard" Marathon Team, which travels to promote the National Guard and



Photo by Spec. Lisa Crawford

Returning Champion: (Left) Capt. Kenny Rayner of Alexandria, Virginia, and commander of the District of Columbia Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 74th Troop Command, earned his second consecutive first-place title in the National Guard's male division.

New Top Team: (Below) The Indiana National Guard Marathon Team took the top team title away from multi-year defender, Pennsylvania.



Photo by Spec. Lisa Crawford

assist in recruiting and retention efforts across the United States.

Sterns said the Marathon Program promotes both local and national levels of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Military Competitions Programs. The Marathon Program additionally encourages and enhances the National Guard Retention Program by instilling physical fitness, self-discipline, and esprit de corps among National Guard members from all 50 states and U.S. Territories.

"The Lincoln National Guard Marathon is an important event that brings Soldiers and Airmen together with the local community to promote health and fitness within the State of Nebraska," Sterns said. "As National Guard members it also instills camaraderie between the runners who come from all over the United States and Territories to compete."

Nebraska marathon team runs 26.2 miles on home turf

By **Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley**
Staff Photographer

The Nebraska National Guard marathon team, comprised of six runners of various ranks, came together in Lincoln on Sunday, May 6, to run in the 41st Annual

Lincoln National Guard Marathon. Staff Sgt. Keith McDermott, a native of Columbus Nebraska, said the runners came from all across the state, so they had to rely on their own grit to train for the grueling 26.2 mile run.

"Most of us



Photo by Spec. Daniel Balkovic

Miles Of Smiles: Army Capt. Joe Kumor of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team runs with a smile on his face while listening to music, May 6, during the Lincoln National Gaurd Marathon.

are all spread out quite a bit," said McDermott, a Basic Leadership Course Small Group Instructor with the 1-209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) at Camp Ashland.

"A lot of times you're independently working on your own," said Capt. Amie Sughrue of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-376th Aviation. Sughrue, who lives in the rural area outside the city of McCook, Nebraska, said she had to modify her approach to training. "There was a lot of country road training for this one."

Team Cap-

tain, Capt. Amanda Homes, a native of Lincoln, said a good training plan can make all the difference. Homes, a Survey Section Leader for the 72nd Civil Support Team, simultaneously prepared for her wedding along with the marathon less than two weeks apart.

"For me, it's just having a good training plan, and getting miles in. This year, I really focused on not just the fitness aspect but the nutrition aspect as well," Homes said. "I think it really paid dividends for me."

All their training was put to the test, when the team came together for the marathon. Temperatures were mild at 7 a.m. from outside Memorial Stadium in Lincoln when Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, fired the pistol start. But by 10 a.m., the temperatures climbed to the mid 80s, presenting new challenges to the team.

"It was definitely hot by the end of it," Homes said. "If it could have stayed the temperature it was at the beginning, it would have been perfect."

The heat was an additional challenge in the grueling grind of running the 26.2 mile marathon.

"It's a total gut race for me," McDermott said. "My class calls it the death race because nobody runs that far."

Homes agreed and added, the challenge is part of the reward.

Fortunately, the team came together and took care of each other to



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

Hydration Station: Staff Sgt. Keith McDermott takes a cup of water from marathon support volunteers, May 6, while passing through an aid station during the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. McDermott ran as part of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team.

make sure they were all successful.

"The camaraderie is awesome," Sughrue said. The tips and tricks the runners shared with one another made all the difference in the race.

The team is always looking to recruit new members for the next race. Homes is continuing to try to grow the amount of participants on the team by working with recruiting and retention to expand their presence in the state.

"The trials of the marathon and the camaraderie involved present

an opportunity to those Guard members willing to take a chance and prove themselves," Sughrue said.

"Just like regular Army stuff, the camaraderie is amazing. The people are out there to help build each other up and certainly everyone is competitive, but you're still going to pull your buddy along."

At days end, the Nebraska marathon team, tired and fatigued crossed the finish line at the 50-yard marker on the turf of Tom Osbourne field in Memorial Stadium.

■Excellence in Competition

‘The Last LRS’ takes top shooting honors

By **Spc. Daniel Balkovic**
Staff Photojournalist

More than 100 Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard converged at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, Aug. 3-5, to participate in the Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, informally called the TAG Shoot.

This annual event promotes the ground combat power doctrine and the four elements: maneuver, fire-power, protection, and leadership, where marksmanship training is a fundamental aspect of all four elements. While open to both Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard, only Army National Guard Soldiers competed this year.

This was the 18th year 1st Sgt. William Cary, non-commissioned officer in charge, was involved with competition after spending the first six as a competitor and the past twelve as a member of the cadre. Cary said he is no stranger to competitive shooting, as he is also a member of the All Guard team and the President’s Hundred. “The purpose of this is to increase the marksmanship ability of the Soldiers attending this event,” Cary said.

Soldiers spent three days on the range competing in various relays with the M9mm pistol and the M16A2 service rifle. Although the competition is divided into teams, shooters are also competing for personal bests. Competitors were responsible for grading each other after relays, before being double graded and ranked based on points earned. Competitors shot mostly on paper targets to calculate the most accurate results.

During the three-day competition, Soldiers performed various tasks including firing and advancing in 100 meter increments from as far out as 500 meters.

The pistol range required Soldiers to run 300 meters in under two minutes before firing to simulate a more realistic environment of being stressed, tired and winded before firing weapons.

The event was spread over three different ranges: the pistol range, the known distance (KD) range, and the 25 meter zero range, which also doubled as a paper target 300-meter range. Included was the nationally recognized George S. Patton match on the pistol range, as well as the John J. Pershing match – a match unique to Nebraska taking place on the rifle range.

Capt. Joshua Metcalf, an infantry officer from Valentine,



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Villwok
Shooting Tall: More than 100 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers competed in the Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, Aug. 3-5.



Photo by Spc. Daniel Balkovic
Flying Brass: A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier fires rounds from his M16 rifle during the 2018 Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley
It All Adds Up: Soldiers count hits and patch up targets in the pits of the Known Distance Range at Greenleaf Training Site during the 2018 TAG Shoot competition.

Nebraska, oversaw the event.

“The EIC is the Excellence in Competition, and basically it’s run the same way all across the country, everywhere you

or previous shooters teamed up with two new or less experienced

go,” he said. “It’s a standard match and the points you earn from these matches can allow Soldiers to distinguish themselves nationally.”

Nebraska has held the event annually for more than two decades. When it first began, the Tag Shoot had more competitors and fired more weapons systems. Recently the event has shifted focus to the primary weapon of today’s Soldiers.

“It’s a really fun time, and of course you’ll do OK as long as you remember the fundamentals,” Metcalf said. “But if you want to come here and have a chance to win, you’re going to need a lot of practice on the civilian side.”

Each team includes four Soldiers with two experienced shooters

shooters.

“You do get a lot of repeat winners,” Cary said. “But it forces units and teams to configure their team with new and older shooters, so that even the playing field.”

“I’ve always loved to shoot,” said Spc. Brooke Schrader, a first-time competitor with the 1st Infantry Division’s Main Command Post – Operational Detachment. “I wanted to learn new techniques from this great experience. It’s nice having the pressure.”

Approximately 32,000 rounds of ammunition were fired over the course of the event. After the ranges were cleared, a few riflemen stood above the rest. In total 12 awards were given for both individual and team efforts.

The highest individual awards, the State Sergeants Major Combined Arms Individual Championship and the Gary Anderson Excellence in Competition Award, both went to 1st Sgt. Steven Brewer, of Company E, 134th Infantry (Long-Range Surveillance). Brewer also won the Open Individual Pistol Championship.

Brewer’s team, The Last LRS, took home the most titles including top honors for the Service Pistol Team, General George S. Patton Combat Pistol Team, Rifle Team, Combined Arms Team and the John J. Pershing Rifle Team.

Team Wolf Cola won the only other top team award, the Combined Rifle Championship. Other individual award winners included: Novice Individual Pistol Championship to Staff Sgt. Joshua Cowsky; Novice Individual Rifle Championship to Sgt. Ashton Henderson; and Open Individual Rifle Championship to Staff Sgt. Heath Wragge.

Nebraska hosts midwest’s best National Guard marksmen

By **Lt. Col Kevin Hynes**
State Public Affairs Officer

Some of the Midwest’s top shooters descended upon the Greenleaf Training Site in early August for the annual National Guard Marksmanship Advisory Council (MAC) Region V competition. The annual event, which rotates between states, brought together more than 60 Army and Air National Guard shooters from Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Louisiana and Nebraska.

During the course of the Aug. 1-2 competition, competitors participated in both team and individual matches designed to test their pistol and rifle marksmanship skills. The teams were made up of both experienced shooters who had competed in the MAC V competitions in the past and novice shooters who were experiencing the multistate matches for the first time.

When the dust cleared, the team of Master Sgt. Timothy Russell, Staff Sgt. David Ball, Staff Sgt. Jerry Dement and Staff Sgt. Travis Mathews from the Missouri National Guard Team A narrowly defeated the Nebraska National Guard’s Team A made up of 1st Sgt. Steven Brewer, Capt. Travis Wahlmeier, Sgt. Levi Loomis and Staff Sgt. Heath Wragge in the Combined Arms Team Championship by the score of 6,013 to 5,941. Nebraska teams also finished sixth and seventh overall in the combined matches.

While the matches were about competition, they were also a significant training exercise. According to the competitors, the matches were both an opportunity to prove themselves against the region’s top marksmen while also gaining valuable insights into the shooting discipline.

“It’s going good,” said Sgt. Jacob Allen, an artillery specialist with the 1st Battalion, 206th Field Artil-

lery Regiment in Dardanelle, Arkansas. According to Allen, a first-time MACV competitor, the event was helping him learn more about what it takes to be an expert marksman. “It’s good to kind of get a feel for how everybody is versus the units you’re used to competing against. It’s good competition.”

“I’ve been kind of watching other people’s stances and things like that,” Allen said about what tips he was picking up while in Nebraska. “They’ve been giving me some tips and helping me with my form and things like that. So, it’s a good time.”

Watching how their fellow shooters prepared and then competed in the matches wasn’t the only opportunity for good training. According to some of the match’s more experienced shooters, the fact that the regional competition rotates between the states also provides significant training benefits.

“You have a lot of skills that come into play when you rotate to different sites every year,” said Oklahoma’s Air Force Master Sgt. Troy Chadden, unit deployment manager for the 137th Special Operations Support Squadron in Oklahoma City. “Those of us who live out on the plains where it’s often windy are often better shooting in the wind where somebody from Louisiana...



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
Taking Aim: Some of the region’s best Army and Air National Guard shooters take aim at distant targets during the Aug. 1-2 Marksmanship Advisory Council (MAC) Region V marksmanship matches at the Greenleaf Training Site. The annual competition brought together shooters from Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas and Louisiana.



Checking The Results: Sgt. 1st Class Brian Blankenship, Nebraska Army National Guard, records the results of a shooting match while serving his tour in the “pits” at the Greenleaf Training Site’s rifle range during the Aug. 1-2 regional shooting competition.

they don’t have as much wind down there – in fact they’re often praying for wind to bring the humidity down – they’re usually better shooting in hot and muggy conditions.”

“So, we learn things from each other,” Chadden said. “We also have

D, 2-151st Aviation in Hammond, Louisiana, Eicke said his first opportunity to shoot in the MAC matches was definitely eye-opening.

“I’m learning a lot about wind holds, elevation for distance that I’m hoping to bring back to my unit,”

people from different units – I’m in the Air Force and others are in the Army – who do things differently.”

The biggest benefit, Chadden said, was the fact that competitions like the MAC challenge Soldiers and Airmen to continue to learn, to sharpen their skills and to pass on their knowledge to others.

“(This) really throws a lot of challenges at people who are used to the normal qualification and training they get at their individual units,” he said. “This really expands people’s skills beyond what they are taught in the normal training system.”

Count 1st Lt. Gary Eicke as an enthusiastic supporter of the competition program. A Louisiana Army National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot and commander of Detachment 1, Company

said Eicke shortly after completing a rifle match.

Eicke said competing against some of the region’s top shooters – some of whom have significant national championship shooting experience – was “an adrenaline rush.”

“It creates a lot of pressure to do well at it,” he added.

Those feelings of adrenaline and pressure to do well don’t change too much with experience, either. Nebraska’s Sgt. 1st Class Brian Blankenship, readiness sergeant for the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Training Center Command at Camp Ashland, is a veteran of roughly 25 MAC competitions. He said that the value of the matches never changes, adding that the exchange of information is extremely important in keeping marksmanship skills honed.

“The biggest value is the exchange of information,” he said. “We’re able to talk to each other about our particular techniques, which we can then take back to our respective states and continue to build our state shooting teams.”

“We learn some things from them and hopefully, they learn some things from us,” Blankenship said, adding that’s particularly important for the new shooters who are getting to experience the competition for the first time. “Hopefully (the younger shooters) are gaining some techniques that they can take back home and practice... some of which you can do while sitting in front of your television at home.”

“The biggest thing that I typically tell new shooters is to start stretching,” he added, laughing. “Yoga could become your best friend.”

Blankenship said that even after 25 years, the matches are still something he looks forward to.

“I’ve been doing this for 25 years or so, and I’m still doing it,” he said. “I don’t do as well all of the time, but I still have fun.”