

Friday,
May 15, 2009
Issue 14

The Desert Raven



81st BCT Monthly Command Information Newsletter

81st BCT: protecting the future of Iraq



1st Lt. James Sims from 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st Brigade Combat Team provides security during a medical assistance patrol outside Joint Base Balad, Iraq. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

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Message from 81st BCT Commander

*By Col. Ronald Kapral
81st BCT commander*

We are in the final quarter of our deployment. The redeployment plan is starting to take shape and plans are being worked. I know the number one question on all Soldiers and their families is when we will be going home. I wish I could give you exact dates, but I cannot. The plans are still in the preliminary stages and I am sure you remember how many times our movement plans changed when we left Washington State and Fort McCoy. We are facing the same challenges now. We should have a solid plan around the middle of next month and we will



provide that information as soon as it is available.

Lately, there have been an increasing number of Soldiers who have received disciplinary actions. Even though we are approaching the end of our mission it does not mean we forget all the standards we have set. The rules and regulations remain in effect and will be enforced. I expect all Soldiers to uphold the finest duty performance and live within those rules.

We have been working long and hard. The long hours and warmer weather are starting to take their toll on everyone. We must ensure we look out for one another and take care of each Soldier. We should focus on preparing our equipment and administrative requirements for the deployment back home. Be vigilant in your duty performance. Continue to strive to maintain the highest standards. Go home with all the awards and honors you deserve. Do not make that stupid mistake that can take that all away.

You are the finest Soldiers in the Army today. I want to thank you for all the hard work you have done and thank the families for the sacrifices they have made. Keep up the great work and take care of each other. 🇺🇸

Message from 81st BCT Command Sergeant Major

*By Command Sgt. Maj.
Robert Sweeney
81st BCT command sergeant major*

Our days here in Iraq are now in the double digits and our replacements are hard at work training at their mobilization station preparing to replace us! Brigade and battalion staffs are hard at work developing the plans and orders to get us all home as fast as they can, however, this is not going to get done unless we all spend the time preparing our Soldiers. Much of the work ahead is going to be at the unit level where I, as the brigade command sergeant major, see the first sergeant engaging all of his NCOs and Soldiers in accomplishing the mission and seeing that all of the tasks are done and done correctly.

Now is the time for awards submissions, completing OERs, NCOERs and the completion of LODs. However big or small the injury you have, an LOD should be done to document that you were injured in Iraq. This

might seem trivial to you now, but 10 to 15 years from now you might be looking to file a claim with the VA and it will be this document that will substantiate your injury for your claim.

No matter where the commander and I travel to lately we get great reports on how well the Soldiers of the brigade are performing! When Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Grippe, the Mutli-National Corps-Iraq command sergeant major, visited with me recently, he commented that no matter where he goes in Iraq he sees Soldiers with the 81st brigade patch and they are doing a great job!



I believe our brigade covers more terrain and locations than any other brigade deployed.

Our outstanding performance is traced right back to our leadership. I believe we have some of the best officers and NCOs who do not accept mediocre performance. Leaders who will not let complacency settle into their formations. Leaders who continuously lead from the front and set the example. Leaders who genuinely care for the welfare of their Soldiers. To the Soldiers who accomplish the mission and to the leaders who lead the missions, I thank you all for a job well done!

Finally, I want to again thank our friends and families back home for the love and support you have given us all. Personally I believe you are carrying a heavier load than we are here and I need you all to hang in there for we do see light at the end of tunnel and soon we will all be home together. 🇺🇸



May's featured NCO: Sgt. Erica Rinard

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

Being a noncommissioned officer is not always an easy job. It takes discipline, understanding and hard work. It also means living up to a higher standard and setting the example for the troops who look up to you. While on deployment with Charlie Company, 185th Armor (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st Brigade Combat Team, Sgt. Erica Rinard of Victorville, Calif., a Standard Army Maintenance System-Enhanced (SAM-E) clerk, challenged herself both mentally and physically, proving that she is a great example of what an NCO should be.

"Sgt. Rinard is an NCO who lives by the NCO creed in all that she does," said Capt. Curtis Goller, the C Co. commander. "She lives the Army values. She's highly dedicated, motivated and intelligent, which is why she was chosen to be the SAMS-E Clerk, although not



Sgt. Erica Rinard's 7-year-old Malcom (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Erica Rinard)

formally trained in that [military occupational specialty]. She performs her work with integrity and discipline. When she has a problem, she figures out the solution and she fixes it. When a task needs to be accomplished, she devises a plan and executes the plan, and completes every task to standard. She is truly a credit to the NCO Corps."

Taking on the position of a SAMS-E clerk was no easy task, but Rinard's history of easy adaptability helped her along. After beginning her military career as a supply specialist, she quickly became proficient as a retention NCO, motor transport operator and a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic before becoming the SAMS-E clerk for C Co., 185th Ar. (CAB). As the SAMS-E clerk, Rinard reduced the motor pool prescribed load list from 1,865 lines to 640 lines and maintained 100 percent status on ordering and turn-in of all recoverable parts, according to her NCO in charge, Sgt. 1st Class John Lee.

At home Rinard works full time as tank mechanic at Fort Irwin, Calif., a position she calls "the coolest job ever."

But being adaptive and good at your job is only part of what makes a great NCO.

"Sgt. Rinard helps others in the section by being a sounding board for the Soldiers," said Lee. "She is always willing to lend an ear or shoulder. She takes the time to be a leader, mentor and friend. Her dedication to work inspires others to do

their best and strive for excellence."

Rinard said she believes Soldier care is the key to being a good NCO. She looks to leaders, both good and bad, to help her become a better leader herself and strives to keep up troop morale both on and off duty.

"My spare time while in Iraq primarily consists of drawing - creating works of art for others enjoyment and to raise morale, if just a little," she said.

Rinard also spends a fair amount of time in the gym. The former college athlete attended Southern Oregon University on a track and field scholarship. After breaking a number of track and field meet records, and at one point the college 200-meter-dash record, ranking her as sixth in the nation, she suffered an injury, ending her running and college career. But she continues to challenge herself and stay fit, most recently by entering a body building competition held on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. The competition offered her more than the chance to show off her hard work, it allowed her to face her long-held fear - stage fright. Many Soldiers from her unit came out to show their support and she was awarded first place.

Rinard has also been honored with many military awards, but for now the married mother of one said her awards are: "...locked away for the day my son is old enough to understand when I explain to him the reason why I was absent from his life for so many years in a far off land supporting Soldiers laying down their lives so others may live without fear. Till that day, awards and medals are greatly appreciated, but they are not the main reason why I have volunteered for the second time around to deploy with people I know, but to make sure each and every one of them makes it home safe to their families."

Rinard's selfless attitude and caring personality have made her an asset to her unit in more ways than one.

"In addition to being an outstanding Soldier and an example for all the NCO Corps, she's an excellent human being who is a pleasure to be around," said Goller. "She has character, and a great personality. She adds to the morale of the unit just by her presence."

Sgt. Erica Rinard and her battle buddy take a momnet during a "Take Back the Night" sexual awareness night walk on COB Speicher, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Erica Rinard)



Sgt. Erica Rinard smiles with her mother, brother and sisters. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Erica Rinard)



May's featured NCO: Staff Sgt. Jon Gray

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

Noncommissioned officers are an invaluable part of every unit, but some NCOs stand out among their peers by exemplifying true dedication. Staff Sgt. Jon Gray from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-185th Armor (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st Brigade Combat Team has shown those around him just how invaluable NCOs can be. He not only excels in his duties, but also makes sure his troops and those around him do as well.

Gray joined the active duty Army in 1994 and gained a lot of his experience running a battalion communications shop with the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg N.C. After four years on active duty with the 82nd he joined 1-185th Ar. (CAB), California National Guard and deployed with them to Iraq in 2004. Now he is serving with 1-185th Ar. (CAB), on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. Both his active duty and Guard service have helped him grow to be an expert in his field. Now he is helping others to gain that same level of knowledge.

"With his extensive knowledge and expertise in the communications field, he has mentored the sergeants in the communication section on how to run a communication shop without him," said Capt. James DeConinck, the 185th Ar. (CAB) S-6, and Gray's officer in charge. "One of his roles as an NCO is to prepare his Soldiers to take over his job if anything should happen to him. Staff Sgt. Gray allows his Soldiers to learn on their own, but provides guidance when necessary. He gives them his intent and end state and allows his Soldiers to determine the best course of action to complete that task. He doesn't micromanage his NCOs. Once the task has been completed they do an after action review together. This allows him to impart his knowledge and help the Soldier grow. Staff Sgt. Gray gains a fresh perspective from the Soldier also. It is a learning process for both of them."

Though he was originally assigned as the battalion

communications NCO in charge, Gray was selected to go to the Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) Course at Fort Huachuca, Ariz. He is now responsible for making sure the counter remote control improvised explosive device (RCIED) electronic warfare device (CREW) is working properly on every vehicle in the battalion

before it leaves the base. Gray gladly accepted this duty, knowing it could potentially save the lives of Soldiers in his battalion and help them with convoy security duties. Not wanting to leave the communication section he had spent so much time preparing for deployment, Gray volunteered to run the battalion communications section and to mentor other NCOs on the operation of a battalion communication shop.

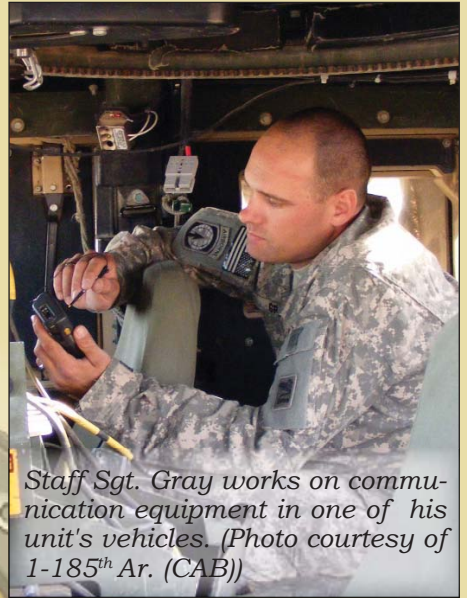
"The responsibility of being an EWO is big enough, but he volunteered to take on another stressful position. I am indebted to him for his dedication because it allowed me to be able to focus on my duties as the battalion S-6," said DeConinck.

He has a lot of responsibility and still has a reputation for paying attention to detail according to Master Sgt. Heath Conkle, Gray's supervisor. "Staff Sgt. Gray is responsible for the pre-mission checks of [electronic warfare] and communications equipment on each and every vehicle before it leaves the [base] on mission. Through his attention to detail, no mission has been hampered by faulty communications or [electronic warfare] equipment."

Gray believes good NCOs set high standards for Soldiers around them to follow. Even with the added responsibility Gray has made time to create a better future for himself and his family, as well as set an example for other Soldiers. In the little free time he has, he is taking online courses with Excelsior College to get his degree in business administration. He has also made sure Soldiers on his team get the same opportunities by helping them enroll in online classes, as well as with navigating their way through the Army Tuition Assistance Program.

"He spends a lot of his personal time taking online courses and is passing them with good grades. It has been a while since he was in school, but his tenacity to

See GRAY Page 20



Staff Sgt. Gray works on communication equipment in one of his unit's vehicles. (Photo courtesy of 1-185th Ar. (CAB))



Staff Sgt. Jon Gray's wife Traci Mallard and two sons, Ryan and Justin. (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Jon Gray)



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN HEROES

By Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney
81st BCT Command Sergeant Major

For many Americans Memorial Day signals the beginning of summer and the end of another school year. They will all be looking forward to the three-day weekend firing up the barbecue and enjoying time with family and friends and never take the time to reflect "What is Memorial Day" unless they have been personally touched by the loss of a fallen comrade, friend or family member.

Memorial Day was first observed as "Decoration Day" by Gen. John A. Logan, the National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. Gen. Logan issued General Order Number 11 on May 30, 1868 in which he wrote: "...gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with choice flowers of springtime ... let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us as sacred charges upon the Nation's gratitude, --the Soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan." He used this occasion to place flowers on the graves of Union and Confederate Soldiers buried at Arlington National Cemetery. It was not until after World War I that it was changed to Memorial Day to honor all Americans who have paid the ultimate sacrifice and died in war.

For families and friends back home you can pay honors by attending you local Veterans organization Memorial Day services. Visit the cemeteries and place flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes. Reach out to our families and friends who have lost a loved one. Fly "Old Glory" from your home and take time

to pause and reflect each time you see it and thank those who have answered this nation's call to duty and made the ultimate sacrifice for us all.

To the Soldiers of the 81st Brigade Combat Team, it is not a three-day holiday for us. Our missions will go on that day, but we will take time to honor our fallen comrades in our own personal ways. As we do this, I want you to all remember those 81st Brigade Soldiers and their families from the last deployment who made the ultimate sacrifice. We will never forget you.

Cpl. Glenn Watkins - Co. B, 1-161st Inf. Bn.

Sgt. Damien Ficek - Co. C, 1-161st Inf. Bn.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Ottolini - Co. A, 579th En. Bn.

Sgt. Quoc Tran - Det. 3, Co. B, 181st Spt. Bn.

Spc. Donald McCune - Co. B, 1-161st Inf. Bn.

Spc. Jeremiah Schmunk - Co. C, 1-161st Inf. Bn.

Spc. Patrick McCaffrey - Co. A, 579th En. Bn.

2nd Lt. Andre Tyson - Co. A, 579th En. Bn.

Spc. Daniel Unger - Co. A, 1-185th Ar. Bn.

Sgt. Jeffrey Schaver - HHC, 1-161st Inf. Bn.



For me every day is Memorial and Veteran's Day, for I do not forget those who have gone before us and those veterans who have served so honorably for us over the years. Our American way of life is paid for and preserved by their commitment and honor to our nation.

I would like to leave you all with a poem written by Moina Michael written in 1915 who conceived the idea for wearing red poppies on Memorial Day.

"We cherish too, the Poppy Red That grows on fields where valor led, It seems to signal to the skies, That blood of heroes never dies"



HELP US MAKE THE DESERT RAVEN BETTER!

What is your unit doing? We want to know! Send your stories, story ideas and/or photographs to emily.suhr@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil or emily.suhr@us.army.mil by the 10th of each month.

Photographs need to be in a JPEG or TIFF format. Please include a Microsoft Word document identifying who is in the photo (Identification = full name, rank, unit, duty position and hometown), what they are doing, when and where.

Don't forget to tell us who took the photos and/or who wrote the story!



Welcome to Camp Ramadi University

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

Servicemembers on Camp Ramadi, Iraq, can take college courses and complete exams necessary to receive certifications thanks to a resourceful 81st Brigade Combat Team Soldier with a need, some motivation and a few friends.

Spc. Ryan Severson from Headquarters Company, 81st BCT and a couple of his friends spent countless hours after work and in their down time over several months getting a testing and education center up and running on Camp Ramadi. It can all be credited to Severson's drive, desire to accomplish something during this deployment and frustration with the lack of resources available on Camp Ramadi.

"Coming into the deployment I was bound and determined to go home with more than I came with. Whether that's college, certifications or whatever," said Severson. "Then showing up to Ramadi and finding there's nothing pretty much sucks. But I took some of the Central Texas College courses, fumbled through Go-Army Ed and figured all that out. I was planning to fly to Balad to get [information technology certifications]. I started to look into whether I could just do it here and one thing led to another. I filled out the paperwork and got the approval and it has kind of gone from there. It went from Pearson Vue to Pro Metric to all of this other stuff."

During his down time and at night he decided to work toward the creation of a testing and education center for the entire base. Severson contacted the testing company Pearson Vue and after extensive research and a long, arduous process became registered to open one of only five testing centers in Iraq, according to Capt. Aaron Garner, the assistant S-6 for the 81st BCT and supervisor for several of the Soldiers who created the center. Soon



Spc. Ryan Severson spends his off time working at the Camp Ramadi Testing and Education Center he initiated. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

the testing center expanded to offer two separate testing companies, Pro Metric (<http://prometric.com/>) and Pearson Vue (<http://pearsonvue.com/>). It now offers certifications in more than 90 career fields including information technology, insurance, medical and real estate, and an education center with a computer

**"I saw a Soldier
with a dream and
wanted to help fa-
cilitate that dream"**

**Sgt. Timothy
Kettlewell**

lab for studying and homework.

Near the beginning of the process, Severson realized he was going to need some help so he began recruiting volunteers. It wasn't long before he had several.

Sgt. Timothy Kettlewell and Sgt. Bruce Nguyen were the first ones to jump onboard and help out in their spare time.

"I saw a Soldier with a dream and wanted to help facilitate that

dream," said Kettlewell.

Sgt. Brian Nelson, Sgt. Tobias Suhr and Chief Warrant Officer Philip Keeler, all from HQ Co., soon stepped up to offer their support as well.

"They put in a lot of long hours, mostly on their own time, to make something happen for the camp that was originally assigned to an officer who got pulled away for other functions," said Maj. Paul Fison, the 81st BCT S-6.

The task of getting the building ready was not easy. Since the group was doing this in their spare time, a lot of the supplies came from unwanted scraps.

"We have had to scrounge computers, parts, chairs, lumber, plug adapters and anything you could think of," Severson said.

Almost immediately upon opening the testing center Severson had servicemembers wanting to take certification tests. In the first week alone he proctored seven tests for Marines and Soldiers on Camp Ramadi.

The education center is a 10-seat computer lab with internet access for education use only. Soldiers,
See EDUCATION page 24



Important notice for Wash. Guard Soldiers

WAARNG members personal information may have been compromised, find out how to protect yourself

By Lt. Col. Perry C. Chappell
WAARNG G-1

Recently, the Washington Army National Guard discovered that some documents routinely sent to another installation for shredding were actually being recycled rather than shredded. Therefore, there is some possibility that old records and files that may have contained personal identifiable information such as name, social security number, home address, date of birth, and/or home telephone number may have been recycled rather than shredded.

We have conducted a preliminary investigation and have found no evidence that any documents or personal information has been compromised. Moreover, we believe the probability is low that this

information could be acquired and used for an unlawful purpose. An official investigation is ongoing and any relevant information discovered through that investigation will be provided to you.

Nevertheless, please consider taking steps to protect yourself against the prospect of identity theft. The Federal Trade Commission recommends you contact one of the three credit agencies to place a fraud alert on your credit file. This free fraud alert is for a period of 90 days and can be renewed every 90 days at no charge. A fraud alert requires creditors to contact you before a new credit card is issued or an existing card is changed. Learn how to do this by following the guide on the FTC web site at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/>

alt150.shtm. You can start your fraud alert and monitor your credit report by contacting one of the three credit agencies: Transunion <http://www.transunion.com/index.jsp>; Equifax <http://www.equifax.com/>; or Experian <http://www.experian.com/>.

The Social Security Administration allows you to monitor use of your social security number. Their toll-free number is 1-800-772-1213. Additional contact information is found on their web site <http://www.ssa.gov>.

Please consider taking the precautionary measures listed above. We deeply regret any inconvenience this may cause you, and assure you that we are taking steps to ensure this does not happen again.

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact us by phone or e-mail at 1-800-306-1947 or Ngwapii@ng.army.mil.

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Capt. Jeffrey Heath, a Washington State Trooper and communications officer from HQ 2-146th FA, 81st BCT, holds up a Washington State Patrol Flag with Sgt. 1st Class Paul Scott, the Inspector General for 81st BCT, Staff Sgt. Jason Muzzy and Pfc. Virek Sok, both from HQ Co., 81st BCT, in Mosul, Iraq March 30, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)





Capt. David N. Redmond of Everett, Wash., leads the pack at the start of the 5K run during Highlander Games. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

Highlander Games give TF 1-161 a break from the day to day for fun and competition

By Capt. Mike Vincent
1-161 Inf. (CAB)

Task Force 1-161 took some time off the roads to enjoy some camaraderie, promote unit cohesion and esprit de corps.

The first Highlander Games was conducted throughout various locations around Joint Base Balad. The games were set to pit company vs. company in several point-driven individual and team events. The company with the most points at the end of the games was awarded an all expense paid MWR (Moral, Welfare, and Recreation) event to be used after mobilization. The games consisted of seven events: 5K run, strong man, basketball shootout, floor hockey, volleyball, pingpong and the boxing smoker.

"This is my second 5K run ever. I was scared I was going to be the last guy to finish. I didn't want to let the team down," said Hotel Company Staff Sgt. John A. Arnold of Billings, Mont.

After completing the opening event, the 5K run, a member of the Headquarters team, 1st Lt. Joseph L. Trudeau of Spokane, Wash. said: "That was really tough. The air is

warm and thick this time of the year. It was a challenge to keep up with the pack."

The Floor Hockey event was held at the MWR East Gym. Each company in the task force had a team participating.

"After working out at the gym, a few guys from Delta [Company] and Bravo [Company] get together at around 2300 hours and just play hockey all night. Sometimes, the games go for two to three hours. You're smoked after the games, but it's a great workout," said Capt. Timothy Ozmer of Spokane, Wash., the team captain for the D Co. floor hockey squad.

"The Highlander Games are just great. I was playing hockey against Chaplain Hammel and during the scrub, he pushed me up against the wall. Right then, he apologized for pushing me and I took the puck from him," said Sgt. Hyung C. Ahn of Seattle, Wash., a member of the Charlie Company maintenance section and the assistant team captain for Team Charlie Floor Hockey.

The basketball shootout, which consisted of attempting to make

baskets from the three-point line was no easy task.

"It's been months since I have been able to get out and play some ball. My arms and body are showing my age," Sgt. Romunda A. Holmes of Bremerton, Wash., the C Co. communications chief who participated in the Basketball Shootout, said.

"We've had successful MWR events before, but we wanted this event to capture everyone's interest and give everyone a day off to participate," said special projects officer and coordinator for the Highlander Games Capt. David K. Libby of Ferndale, Wash. "The hardest part of the whole thing was coordinating all of the events and synchronizing the times, locations and places around the heat of the day and to best suit the sponsoring units."

The final event of Highlander Games was the boxing smoker. This event pitted individual boxing contenders representing each company. The winner of each weight class gained points for their company and the company with the most points won the event. More

See Highlander Page 26



Spc. Thomas F. Carpenter of Pullman, Wash., and Staff Sgt. Stephen T. Elder of Shoreline, Wash., spar at the beginning bout of the Highlander boxing smoker during the lightweight bracket. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)



County Veterans Assistance Programs Now Available to Washington National Guard Members on 1st Enlistment

Courtesy of Kitsap County Veteran's Assistance Program

On April 9, 2009, Gov. Christine Gregoire signed a bill that closed a small loophole in Washington law that prevented access to local county veterans assistance funds by members of the National Guard and Reservists on their first enlistment.

Since the late 1890s, each county in Washington state has been required to set aside a small portion of property tax for assisting veterans in need, formerly known as the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Fund.

According to Leif Bentsen, coordinator for the Kitsap County Veterans Assistance Program, the law went through a major change in 2005.

"Unfortunately, an inadvertent omission prevented current members of the National Guard or the Reserves who had no prior service from accessing the funds."

The new amendment, EHB 1049, changed the definition of veteran to include current National Guard or Reserve members who have been deployed to serve in an armed conflict.

The change in the law was prompted by the Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board and sponsored by Rep. Christine Rolfes (Bainbridge). It passed unani-

mously by both legislative houses.

"We saw the impact on families during the first mobilization and unfortunately could not help those on their first enlistment. It took a couple of tries to get this amendment passed. Now we can at least help those families whose spouse has been deployed to, or has returned from, a combat zone, and is still on his or her first enlistment."

However, Bentsen cautions that every county in Washington state runs their program slightly different. Consequently, income eligibility requirements, the amount of money that might be available and what it can be used for can differ from county to county.

"What might work in Kitsap, might be entirely different in San Juan, Pacific or Garfield counties," said Bentsen.

The new law becomes effective 90 days after the legislature adjourned in April.

To find more information about your local county program, go to CVCWashington.org or check your local county website. Bentsen also said deployed Guard members who need help in locating their local county program can contact him at lbentsen@co.kitsap.wa.us

Microsoft is providing vouchers to Washington residents for free technology training

Courtesy of WorkSource

Microsoft, in partnership with the Washington WorkSource system, recently launched the "Elevate America" program. The program is providing more than 30,000 vouchers to Washington state residents for free on-line technology training.

The training gives Washington residents the opportunity to improve their computer skills using products that are present in many workplaces today.

There are three types of vouchers being offered by Microsoft:

1. Training for business worker
2. Training for IT professionals and developers

3. Certifications exams for Microsoft Office 2003 and 2007

All vouchers MUST be activated by July 31, 2009.

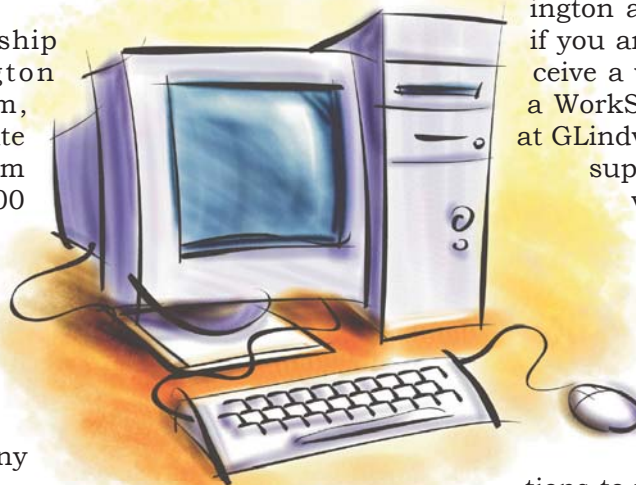
People who receive the voucher for "business worker" training may take up to a year to complete the training. The IT professional training and the certification exams must be completed by July 31, 2009. National

Guard Soldiers who are based in Washington are eligible to participate, even if you are deployed out of state. To receive a voucher, contact Greg Lindvig, a WorkSource veterans representative, at GLindvig@esd.wa.gov. Be prepared to supply the following information for voucher registration:

- Name, rank and unit
- Home address, phone number and e-mail address
- Gender and race
- Highest level of school completed

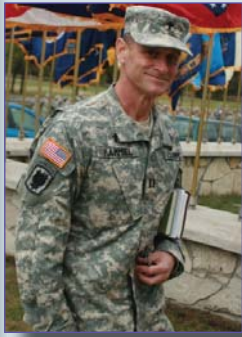
WorkSource will send the voucher code and instructions to you by e-mail. For more information about the Microsoft Elevate America

program, visit www.microsoft.com/elevateamerica. For more information about WorkSource, visit www.go2worksource.com





CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



By Maj. Joe Hammel
1-161st Inf. (CAB) Chaplain

The Desert Experience: An Invitation to Intimacy

I miss my wife. I miss catching the fragrance of her hair when it is being blown by a calm summer breeze. I miss walking behind her and watching the gentle sway of her hips as she ascends the stairs. I miss the sound of laughter from the kids over some mutually shared joke. I miss the aroma of toast and fresh coffee on Sunday mornings when I'm not rushing around trying to get ready for work.

I'm describing a snapshot of the intimacy I share with my wife and family – something that has developed over the years we've been together. But now we are half a world apart and I'm stuck here in a desert place, longing for the days when we can be reunited. Yet it is in the desert place that true intimacy has a chance to flourish, like a desert wildflower rising from the sands after a spring rain.

It was in the desert place that Moses learned intimacy with the living God. Psalm 103 says that God revealed His ways to Moses, but only His deeds to the people of Israel as they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. When Moses first encountered the Living God, he had to ask who He was. He said, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is His name?' Then what should I tell them?" (Exodus 3:13) In other words, Moses was asking God, "Who are you?" But after years of getting to know Him in the desert, Moses had the privilege of experiencing God like no other human being before him. As Moses stood before God on Mount Sinai, he asked: "If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so that I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor." (Exodus 33:13) Moses wanted to go deeper in his relationship with God, and God would not disappoint him. "The LORD replied to Moses, I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you and I know you by name." (Exodus 33:17)

Just like Moses, it is in the context of this desert experience in Iraq that we have an opportunity to cultivate intimacy with the One who invites us to spend eternity with Him. The question is, do we have eyes to see and ears to hear the invitation? Will this desert experience turn out to be just like any other ordinary year in our lives, or will it be a time when we really grow? The invitation has been given, but the choice is ours. The poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

Church Bulletin Bloopers

(taken from actual church bulletins)

Don't let worry
kill you off ~
let the Church
help.

Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight at Calvary Methodist. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.

During the absence of our Pastor, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when J.F. Stubbs supplied our pulpit.

Remember in prayer the many that are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles, and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.

Sermon: What is hell? Come early and listen to our choir practice.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.



Servicemembers, families can now go on a magical vacation for a lot less money

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

Recently, my husband and I returned to Iraq from my two-week R&R leave to Orlando, Fla. We had a great time visiting all four Disney World theme parks, Universal Studios, Universal's Islands of Adventure and enjoying the Florida sunshine. I know riding rollercoasters, hanging out with cartoon characters and acting like a kid isn't for everyone, but if it is, now is a good time for servicemembers and their families to go.

My husband, Sgt. William Gauthier from Alpha Troop, 1-303rd Cav. were able to save a lot of money on our R&R leave by using military discounts and doing a little extra research. There are many discounts being offered to servicemembers on travel and amusement in the Orlando area and around the nation right now. Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, Anheuser-Busch parks, including Sea-World and Busch Gardens, and many other theme parks are all offering free or discounted entrance to servicemembers and their family.

Servicemembers can also get a great deal using military resorts. Shades of Green in Orlando offers a beautifully landscaped property located on the Walt Disney World Resort property. The cost of the rooms range from \$93 to \$275 per night depending on rank and type of room. The cost of other comparable resorts in the area is much more. You can even book a room through their website <http://www.shadesofgreen.org/>

If you don't mind staying a few miles away, there is a strip located a few miles from the Disney property in Kissimmee, Fla., which is home to dozens of hotels and resorts. I found that by staying away from Disney World I saved a ton of money on food, souvenirs and entertainment. I found a place with steak dinner for only \$10.99. If buffets are your thing you're in luck, there were several offering \$3.99 breakfast buffets and \$5.99 dinner buffets. We booked a

condo at a resort near Kissimmee with miniature golf, a lake, water park, paddle boats, daily activities and much more for less than \$100 a night just by shopping around. We really liked having the variety of restaurants nearby.

We saved the most on theme park tickets. Walt Disney World is offering free five-day passes to four Walt Disney World theme parks, plus a total of five visits to a Disney water park, Disney Quest Indoor Theme Park or other Disney attractions to active duty servicemembers and National Guard and Reservists who are on active duty or have served and have orders dated after Jan. 1, 2009. They can also purchase up to five five-day companion tickets for \$99 per ticket. Universal Orlando is also offering a similar

package to servicemembers. They are giving one free theme park admission to servicemembers and discounted tickets for dependants.

Personally, I really enjoyed being able to go to Disney's Magic Kingdom, Disney's Hollywood Studios, Disney's Animal Kingdom and Epcot Center without the rush. The five days can be used any time in 2009. We went to Magic Kingdom Monday and Animal Kingdom on Tuesday, then took a day off to relax, lay by the pool and play miniature golf before returning to the parks on Thursday. Running around all day can be exhausting. I am sure it would be more so with children.

Food costs at the amusement parks added up quickly. One way to cut down on costs is to use one of the meal plans offered at the Disney World parks and Universal Orlando. For one price, the meal plans include meals
See DISNEY page 27



Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier



Letters from Home

2-146th FA Soldiers help bring cheer one box at a time

By Spc. Jessica Burdge
2-146th FA

Mail call can be an important time of day for the Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2-146th Field Artillery, 81st Brigade Combat Team. Some Soldiers are expecting packages from home. A noncommissioned officer waits patiently for his copies of the Army Times. Another Soldier ahead of him in line signs for an insured package. The burden of securing and delivering the Soldiers mail falls on the shoulders of Spc. Joshua Medford and Pfc. Katherine Brathovde. The two are HHB's mail clerks, which is one of the many duties that the administrative team they are assigned to deals with.

Brathovde has been in the Washington Army National Guard for just over 14 months and deployed with the 81st BCT in September 2008 where she was assigned to the HHB, 2-146th FA administration section. She resides in Lacey, Wash., and has yet to drill with her home station.

"This has been a great opportunity for me," said Medford, who hails from the Washington state capital in Olympia. "When I deliver mail to any of the Soldiers in the battery, there's always at least one person whose day I've made better. There have been times when I've seen a Soldier upset and depressed and simply by giving them their mail it turns their day around 180 degrees."

During his time on R&R, Medford had an idea for some of the Soldiers that weren't receiving mail.

"I had three Soldiers that hadn't received much of anything, and it showed. So I went to the store and put together three boxes for guys that I thought, in my opinion, weren't receiving any mail. I got married to my wife and we sent the boxes out with a picture of our wedding in each box."

This is Medford's second deployment with the 81st BCT.



Spc. Joshua Medford of Olympia, Wash., delivers a care package to Sgt. Erik Hanson of Forks, Wash., at HHB 2-146th FA's command post early in May. (Photo by Pfc. Kathrine Brathovde)

"Last deployment I received mail from family consistently and I've always shared with the other guys. It felt like the right thing to do."

Brathovde and Medford have counted all the mail that they have delivered to their battery. So far after six months in Iraq, the duo has delivered 2,028 articles of mail.

"Christmas time was crazy," laughed Medford. "One day I pulled in to pick up mail, I didn't bring a big enough truck; there were four pallets of mail for the Soldiers in the battery. Believe it or not my name wasn't on the mail roster that day."

Medford and other Soldiers often have toys sent to them to throw to the kids on the side of the road during convoy operations.




A HMWV carries a truckload of Christmas packages from home to 81st BCT Soldiers stationed on Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

"My parents and my wife have sent stuffed animals for us to throw to the kids. It makes me feel like I'm doing more for this country. It helps to keep the Soldiers in my battery safer too while they are out on the road," Medford said.

Still, in their line of work, the job of delivering mail has its ups and downs.

"Granted I may have mail for a Soldier one day, but the next week or two or three they may not receive any. It still feels good that I get to give them their mail and make their day, but sometimes I just feel awful that I have to tell someone that they didn't receive any mail when they ask. Every one of us is far from home and I feel bad when they don't receive anything for a while," Medford said.

Fortunately though, the mail keeps arriving and Brathovde and Medford keep delivering for their Soldiers. 



Washington National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program

81st Brigade's Yellow Ribbon Reunion Readiness Workshop

The Reunion Readiness Workshop is designed to educate families on what to expect upon return of your Soldier. Numerous topics ranging from TRICARE, Military One-Source, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Veteran Assistance and others. 81st Brigade Family Members and loved ones are encouraged to attend one of the workshops at the location closest to their home, regardless of their service member's unit location.

Many Dates—Many Locations
(Some Locations have been changed)

9:30 am—10:00 am Childcare Check-in
Workshop 10:00 am—3:00 pm Lunch provided

9 May 2009 Spokane & Camp Murray
16 May 2009 Yakima & Centralia
30 May 2009 Moses Lake & Seattle
13 June 2009 Pasco

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- ✓ Valuable Pre-During-Post Deployment Information
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- ✓ Lunch will be provided
- ✓ Mileage Reimbursement if requested

Bringing Washington to Afghanistan



Col. Daniel Kern, the Washington Army National Guard chief of staff, shows off the state colors atop a mountain with French soldiers in Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of Col. Daniel Kern)

DID YOU KNOW...

~ Before serving in the Continental Army, George Washington was a colonel in the Virginia Militia.

~ During World War II, the National Guard provided 18 divisions to the war effort, split evenly between the Pacific and European theaters. A nineteenth division, the Americal, was organized in the Pacific theater out of 'spare' National Guard regiments.

~ Twenty presidents have served in the militia or the National Guard.



THE RAVEN GALLERY



Retired Medal of Honor recipients Col. Robert Howard and Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell, tell their stories of heroism to members of HHB, 2-146th FA during a visit to COB Marez, Iraq April 12, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Virgil Akins)



Capt. Mike Vincent of 1-161st Inf. (CAB) hands out pencils to local Iraqi kids outside Joint Base Balad, Iraq, May 7, 2009. (Photo courtesy of Capt. Mike Vincent)



Sgt. 1st Class Billy McFarlane from HQ Co., 81st BCT prepares an IV bag during Combat Life-saver training May 12, 2009 on Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Spc. Shane Zoellmer from HQ Co., 81st BCT aims a fire hose at targets as firefighter Mike Whittle guides him during a Firemen's Challenge April 19, 2009 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Sgt 1st Class Kirsten Froelich of 81st BSTB promotes her nephew Staff Sgt. Beau Froelich April 6, 2009 on COB Q-West, Iraq. (Photo by Capt. David Raines)



Staff Sgt. Gregg O. Hutchinson of 1-161st Inf. (CAB) treats an Iraqi girl outside Joint Base Balad, Iraq, May 7, 2009. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)



May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

By Sgt. 1st Class Sheletha Quillin
81stBCT Equal Opportunity Advisor

Many people think of Asian Americans as one large group with little difference between those in the group. Actually, Asian Americans are one of the most diverse groups of all. As described in DoD Directive 1350.2, an Asian or Pacific Islander is a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. Some of the origins include China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands and Samoa.

This article will focus specifically on the Asian Americans of the Philippine Islands.

History: The Philippine Revolution against Spain began in 1896, ending two years later with a proclamation of independence and the establishment of the First Philippine Republic. However, the Treaty of Paris transferred control of the Philippines to the United States. U.S. rule of the Philippines began in 1899. Partial commonwealth status was granted in 1935. The plan for granting full independence was interrupted by Japanese occupation of the islands during World War II when the Bataan Death March was conducted in the Bataan Province. Finally, full independence was granted to the Philippines in 1946.

Social structure: Certain behaviors or occurrences that are deemed inappropriate or less likely in the U.S. are more acceptable or normal in the Philippines. Some of these include sexual preference, marriage primarily for economic stability and females in leadership positions. Also, unwed mothers and divorce are highly discouraged; getting and staying married are paramount.

Family: The Filipino family structure is different from other Asians because of many outside influences. Malaysian trade routes brought contact with Muslims. Spanish influence continued for over 378 years until the U.S. ousted Spain. Spouses share parental responsibility, authority, and decision making, similar to American culture. Filipinos have an extended family similar to the Chinese, which includes god parents. However, the family is less formal in its relationships. Love, respect, loyalty and responsibility bond the family unit. It is tre-

mendously important.

Language: The most prominent language is Tagalog. However, there are over 300 different dialects in the Philippines. The others are usually a spin-off of Tagalog but vary depending on the region of the country. One of the interesting aspects of Tagalog is there are no sounds for F, V, or Z. This can create some problems for Filipinos during their language orientations.

Religion: The Catholic religion is the most prominent, again due to the Spanish influence. Approximately 80% of Filipinos are Catholic. The other predominant religion is Islam (7%). The religious values and ceremonies of the Filipinos are not significantly different from other Americans. However, they are significantly different from other Asian Americans.

Education: Philippine education includes realistic training like gardening, quilting and other marketable skills. Teachers incorporate raising the national flag and prayer into the school day. Children sometimes use these creative skills after school to make up games and build their own toys. The school year is also different than in the U.S.; it starts in June and runs through March.

Interesting fact: The yo-yo was invented in the Philippines, but not as a toy, as a weapon! 🧸

Quotes from not so famous, but really nice Filipinos:

"Family is important. It's common to find an entire family all living on the same street. It's cool that I can go to the Philippines and take my family out to eat and party so cheaply. \$1 equals somewhere around 55 pesos. A McDonalds' meal is like \$1, so I can treat five people for only \$5."

Capt. Buddy Francisco, HQ Co., 81st BCT

"I am definitely going back there to live when I retire. I love [the Philippines]; it's where my heart is. I miss fish balls [chopped fish rolled into balls and deep fried] and being able to get food or a snack from the vendors in their shacks or on their bikes. The food is much fresher."

Staff Sgt. Ronald Cardenas, HQ Co., 81st BCT



Highlander Hard Bodies

Task Force 1-161 takes an opportunity to show off their guns in friendly competition

By Capt. Mike Vincent
1-161st Inf. (CAB)

Two members of Task Force 1-161 competed in the Joint Base Balad Hard Body bodybuilding competition held April 19, 2009 on Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Both male and female competitors of varying weight classes gathered on stage to show their hard work to a panel of judges. The judges determined the winner by observing seven different poses performed by the contestants to allow them to demonstrate their body size, symmetry, definition and cut. The winners of each weight class



Capt. Robert L. Bryant of A Co., 181st BSB puts his best foot forward and leads the way as the champion of the Hard Body heavy weight class competition. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

were each given a medal and allowed to compete for the overall Hard Body championship.

The Highlander competitors were Capt. Robert L. Bryant of Alpha Company, 1-181st Brigade Support Battalion from Auburn, Wash., and Sgt. Willie J. Johnson of Delta Company, 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion) from Seattle. The Highlander

team joined the competition together, training together and supporting each other throughout the event.

Johnson explains how they agreed to compete in Hard Bodies: "Capt. Bryant and I ran into each other during the mobilization at Fort McCoy. We found out that both of us enjoyed bodybuilding and made a pact. If there was a bodybuilding competition at JBB that we would both support each other and enter the event. We saw the flyer for the April competition and we both decided to compete. We only had 29 days before the event, so we trained pretty hard."

The training was intensive and time consuming for both Highlander competitors.

"I worked out three times a day for an hour and a half each," Bryant said. "I did chest presses, squats, arm curls and 20 minutes of cardio. I also took vitamins and whey protein powder to help me gain mass. I have done amateur body building competitions before and I knew what to expect and what is involved."

"Maintaining a strict diet is the toughest part," he continued. "Our diets consist of eating five times a day, only fruit, chicken, green vegetables, salads and water. We did have one cheat day, Sundays, where we could eat anything we wanted."

"The diet is tough," said Johnson said. "Especially since being on mission all the time, you have to bring food with you. Our gun truck crew always had a cooler of fruits for me to snack on. But, in the chow halls, they put the junk food and fatty cakes right near the exit. The hardest part about the competition is maintaining your self discipline and learning how to eat properly."

The Hard Bodies event lasted three and a half hours and involved approximately 20 competitors of varying weight classes. Each contestant was given 90 seconds for their individual routine. Then each contestant has to perform a set of required poses with all the competitors of their weight class.



Sgt. Willie J. Johnson of D Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB) shows off his "guns" during the medium weight class individual event. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

"I was so nervous up there and I couldn't relax," said Johnson. "But, Capt. Bryant was there to help me relax and stay focused. Its tough to do all that work and then get up there for three minutes and have someone tell you that you are not good enough."

"But, what really helped, was that my whole company showed up to support me and started cheering me on," Johnson continued. "The guys in my company understood the work I put into this and how much it took to stand up there naked and be judged. Their support gave me confidence and made it fun."

Bryant won the heavy weight competition and Johnson placed in his class. Both men intend to compete again in the Hard Bodies event in July and both will continue to train and stay in shape.

"This was a great team-building event," Johnson said. "I suggest everyone enter in the competition. It forces you to push yourself and gain the experience of being judged. Besides, what is the worst thing that could happen... you get into shape?"

"Once you get up there and begin your routine and the people start cheering you on, it becomes a lot of fun," Bryant added. "It was a great event, professional, well organized and fun. I think every competitor who steps up there to be judged is a winner."



Redeployment made easy

Find out what J9 has in store for the de-mob process and post deployment job opportunities

By Tom Riggs


J9, Transition Chief

Hard to believe in just two short months we will start to see you at Fort McCoy, Wis. The J9 team is excited about your return and committed to ensuring your transition is a smooth one. There are some changes to how we will handle your demobilization to streamline the process, ensure you have access to all your earned benefits and speed you on your way home to your loved ones.

One of the main differences those of you who have deployed before will notice is the change to day two of your out processing. If you remember the last time, you got to enjoy seven to eight hours of Power Point briefings on VA Benefits, TriWest, ACAP and a variety of equally exciting topics. As much as we know you love those briefings, they're gone! Truthfully, I bet you can't remember much about them, can you? We are going to replace all the briefings, handouts and slides with actual service delivery. And the good news is every form you need to fill out will already be mostly completed. No more boring sessions that start with "In block one, print your last name, first name and middle initial..." That will already be done for you, further speeding you through processing.

Want even more reason to like the new method of demobilization? Spend one day with us at Fort McCoy instead of spending three days in your home armory,

so you can go straight home. That's right, three full days off to enjoy your family, friends and home. So put a smile on your face, give us your best efforts and we'll get you home faster and better prepared than ever before.

I also want to tell you about our new website. I know you've heard a lot of negative news about the job market. Those folks haven't tried hard enough! We've already identified over 300 new jobs in a wide variety of careers and they are waiting for you. We have programs for certification or licensing, apprenticeships and direct entry positions. Your future is brighter than ever and you can start discovering it right now by going to <http://washingtonguard.org/FamiliesandVeterans.shtml>. This website is already loaded with great information and is getting better every day. Go there now to get a welcome message from the Governor, and then come back frequently for messages from your fellow citizens who are anxious to see you home. People like Edgar Martinez, Medal of Honor recipient Bruce Crandall, John Lee, the Director of Washington's Department of Veterans Affairs, and many, many others. They are all taking time to send their best wishes and to encourage you to visit the site often. We are adding new jobs and opportunities every day, so make sure to book mark the site and return often. The J9 staff is ready, willing and able to welcome you home. 



(Photo by Sgt Amanda Gauthier)



81st BCT Soldiers kick it up a notch with Tae Bo inventor Billy Blanks

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr

81st BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 81st Brigade Combat Team, Washington Army National Guard got a chance to work out with Tae Bo inventor Billy Blanks during his visit to Camp Ramadi, Iraq, April 30 and May 1, 2009.

Blanks and his associate, Tae Bo Instructor Melanie Neat, spent two days during their 12-day Iraq tour with the Soldiers and Marines of Camp Ramadi. During the visit, Blanks led a class of about 30 servicemembers in a high intensity aerobic Tae Bo workout.



Sgt. Lisa Scott of HQ Co. laughs during her workout with Tae Bo inventor Billy Blanks on Camp Ramadi, Iraq, April 30, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

fitness and answer any questions they had. He also offered his thanks for everything they do.

"It's a privilege and honor to be in front of you guys because you all give us the opportunity to have a free world and do what we want to do with our lives," he said. "To me, that's really special and I don't take it for granted."

This was Blank's sixth trip to Iraq to visit with the troops. He also runs the Billy Blanks Foundation, which puts together and sends care packages out to deployed servicemembers.

"Anything I can do for the troops, I'm going to do," he said.

After speaking with the troops, Blanks and Neat signed autographs and posed

"It was tough for me for some parts, but I did what I could and I enjoyed it and I got a good workout," said HQ Co. Sgt. Lisa Scott of Tacoma, Wash.

"It was awesome," added Staff Sgt. Derrick Grasty of Lacey, Wash., another HQ Co. Soldier. "It was so much better than doing it with the video. You can cheat at home, you can't cheat when he's standing there behind you."

After the intense workout, Blanks gathered the servicemembers around him to discuss



Staff Sgt. Derrick Grasty of HQ Co. throws a punch while working out with Tae Bo inventor Billy Blanks on Camp Ramadi, Iraq, April 30, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

for photos. One Soldier received a very special treat.

"I commented on how much I liked his shorts," said Scott. "The one side of the shorts had 'Jesus is Lord' and the other side had 'Tae Bo Warrior' and those words were also in another language, not to mention they were my favorite color, Purple! He thanked me and told me if I came back the next day he would give them to me, of which I thought he was joking."

He wasn't. Scott came back the next day and, as promised, Blanks gave her his workout shorts.

"I felt blessed to get such a gift and the autograph just made them that more special," said the mother of four who plans on preserving them.

"I just want to bring a part of home to them," Blanks said about why he visits Iraq. "Even if it's just for the hour or two that we're here, if I can bring just a little part of home and sit down and talk with them, that's the best." ■



Billy Blanks leads a Tae Bo class April 30, 2009 on Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)



America thanks Servicemembers

From TriWest Healthcare Alliance

It's not a 9 to 5 job. It's not a TV sit-com home life. It's a lifestyle. Sacrifice. Danger. Separations. They're part of it.

Military life comes with honor and pride in defending and serving our nation, and it's the only calling that, in many ways, the Family also serves.

Many civilians know this too, and they're finding their own ways to say thanks for your service and all that you do.

That's why in May for National Military Appreciation Month, the country says "thanks" to you and yours for upholding and paying for our liberties. You have backup among the civilian ranks.

Events and activities are planned in communities around the nation at baseball games, auto races, concerts, parades and more to celebrate those who wear the uniform. Find an event near you on the National Military Appreciation Month Web site at <http://www.nmam.org/events.htm>.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance, showing its appreciation, launched its Military May Days, a program with one or more events on each day throughout May, to give back to those it serves in 21 western states.


Know too, that giving back happens not just in May.

At one of Operation Homefront's chapter offices, the director is helping military families meet their everyday needs. She says she's standing in for her son, who was killed in Iraq on a Mother's Day.

Young adults work as camp counselors at the National Military Family Association's Operation Purple Camps around the nation so that children of military families can meet others like themselves and learn how to cope with deployments and a host of other issues that never occur to civilian children.

A Vietnam veteran whose legs could not be saved after a grenade blast wears shorts showing his stars-and-stripes-decorated artificial legs when he visits new amputees. He says they are a signboard that says things will work out.

On holidays neighbors and co-workers pool their resources and energies to collect reminders of home that are missed on overseas duty — you may know beef jerky is a hot item — and send gift packages to defenders they don't even know.

The things people do to support the military seem endless. They're finding their own ways to say thanks for your service and for all that you do. 

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator


By Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings
81st BCT SARC

Self-Care for Rape or Sexual Assault Survivors

Good self-care is a challenge for many of us and it can be especially challenging for survivors of rape or sexual assault. It can also be an important part of the healing process.

Physical self-care is an area that is often overlooked.

- **Food:** Food is a type of self-care that is often overlooked. We are often so busy that we don't have time to eat regularly. Or we substitute fast food for regular meals.
- **Exercise:** Exercise is one of the most overlooked types of self-care. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends at least 30 minutes of exercise five times a week. Exercise, even if it's just a quick walk at lunchtime, can help combat feelings of sadness or depression and prevent chronic health problems.
- **Sleep:** Although everyone has different needs, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) believes a reasonable guideline is that most people need between 7-10 hours of sleep per night.
- **Medical Care:** Getting medical attention when you need it is an important form of physical self-care. Some survivors put off getting medical care until problems that might have been easier to take care of have become more complicated.

We can all benefit from these self-care tips. They are not just for the survivors of rape or sexual assault. Make your self-care a priority, not something that happens (or doesn't happen!) by accident. 

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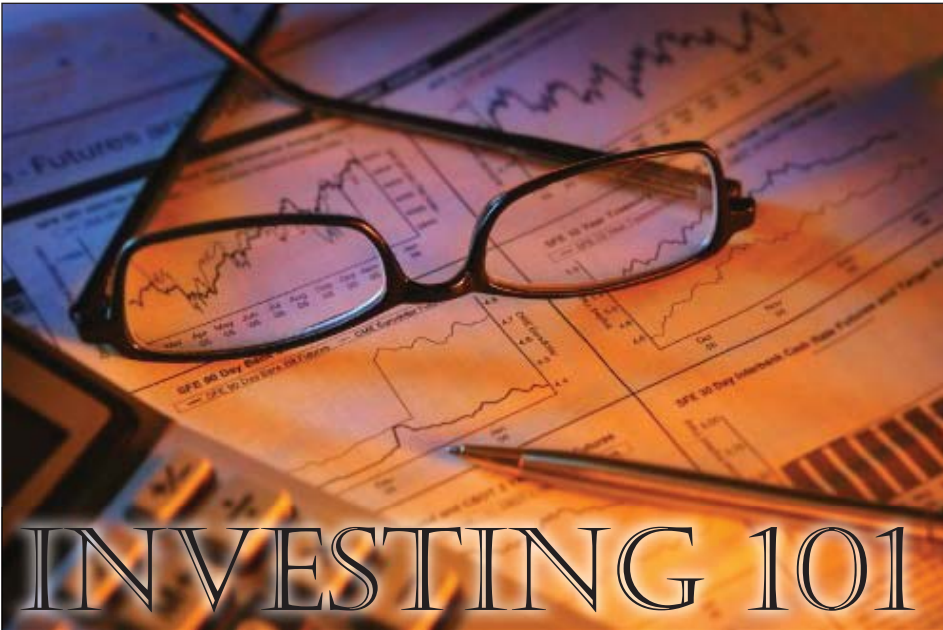
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By Maj. Todd Bonham
HQ Co., 81st BCT

Recent volatility and instability in the financial markets has created concern for investors. I'd like to share some thoughts on the issues that are affecting the financial markets.

Much of what we are experiencing now can be attributed to an increased mortgage default rate among residential homeowners. A relaxation of loan qualification standards and the mistaken assumption that home values would continue to increase without interruption or decline led to the creation of investments with significant default risks. As a result, the landscape of the financial services industry has changed swiftly and dramatically. These types of occurrences in the economy can and should be expected.

Investing, much like dieting, is a way of life. There is the long-term goal or series of prioritized goals that the investor should articulate.

A long term goal of many investors is retirement or financial freedom. Many of you have probably heard of the need for diversification. Think of diversification as it can be related in the game of baseball. Each player in the game of baseball is strategically placed to cover that specific space on the field. Different types of investments can and should be used to structure of mix of investments that should serve to cushion the fluctuation value and temper

that fluctuation to fit your individual risk tolerance. With that in mind, the more tempered the fluctuation the less likely the overall long term return.


In previous articles I discussed the Savings Deposit Program (SDP) and the Thrift Savings Plan. Both of the programs are good vehicles that can help you achieve your financial goals.

The SDP is essentially a savings account on steroids. This is an exceptional short term investment vehicle that allows you to achieve an abnormal return of 10 percent! This is the bucket where you should accumulate your emergency money. Money that will be used for a down payment on a home or pay for living expenses when you're in college in a few years.

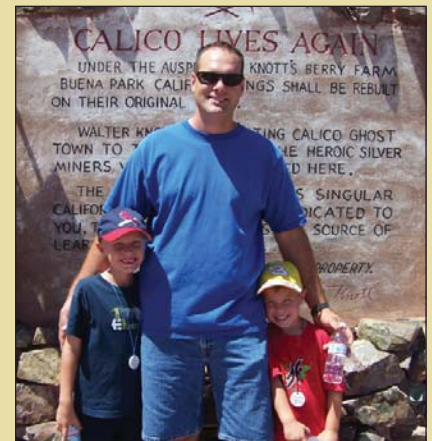
The TSP account is meant for saving for that long term goal, retirement. Don't worry, even if you're not staying in the military this is still a great place to start saving for that goal. You can always rollover the account into an IRA after you leave the military. It is this account that many investors need help to decide how to invest. The TSP has different types of investment vehicles that should be used to develop a portfolio that fits your risk tolerance and timing considerations.

There is no time like the present to plan for your future financial well-being. The U.S. economic system has many strengths. It is interesting

to note that since 1900 there have been 31 "bear markets," defined as a decline of 20 percent or more in the market indexes, followed by 31 recoveries. We have no reason to doubt that better times will return.

If you're looking to retire someday, now may be a great time to get started. Remember a few simple rules, stick with quality, always diversify, and invest for the long term. While no advice is guaranteed to be fool-proof, these strategies are designed to help your portfolio weather most market conditions. 


GRAY continued from page 4



Staff Sgt. Jon Gray hangs out with his sons Ryan and Justin prior to his deployment with the 81st BCT. (Photo courtesy of 1-185th Ar. (CAB))

accomplish his goals has allowed him to quickly get back into the mindset to be a successful student," DeConinck pointed out. "He has stressed to the signal Soldiers the importance of higher education, and his actions reinforce his advice."

Though his wife, Traci Mallard, and two sons, 8-year-old Ryan and 7-year-old Justin, miss him very much, they stand behind him and are proud of his hard work and his dedication to his job and family.

"Jon puts his heart into everything he does. He does everything he can for his family. He's the most honest and dedicated person I know," stated Traci. "Jon is a hard worker and does all he can to get the job done." 



Spc. Jessica Burdge of Fort Lewis, Wash. (left), and Spc. Denise Denniston of Toledo, Wash., both medics for HHB, 2-146th FA, offered their arms to Soldiers not familiar with sticking IV's during a Combat Lifesaver refresher course taught by Burdge. (Photo by Spc. Peters)



24-7 Medic

*By Spc. Joshua Medford
2-146th FA*

Any time a Soldier from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2-146th Field Artillery, 81st Brigade Combat Team has an injury, they know they can either wait for sick call in the morning to get it looked at or go see Spc. Jessica Burdge. Burdge, no matter how late in the day or night, will take time from her day to look over and treat any Soldier's injury.

"I've had a lot of House calls," grins the 25-year-old medic from Fort Lewis, Wash. "It doesn't matter what time of day it is, the Soldiers can always knock on my door."

But among the scrapes, cuts, bumps, bites and bruises, Burdge takes care of other crucial medical duties. Recently she has shouldered the task of completing the battery's line of duty injury paperwork, a task that is tedious and requires clerical skill.

When not on a convoy, Burdge has taught a multitude of medical classes to include Combat Lifesaver refresher classes to Soldiers that are not so familiar with IV sticks. Along with teaching classes, she has cared for the medical supply inventory for the battery, keeping the rest of HHB's medics and Soldiers fully equipped with the latest medical supplies, as

well as providing the proper instruction for how to use them.


Burdge came to HHB from Charlie Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, 81st BCT after completing a month-long school at Camp Buliss, Texas, prior to the mobilization of the 81st BCT. She will return to C Co. in the fall when the unit redeploys. This is her first deployment to Iraq since joining the National Guard in 2003.

Burdge also volunteered to deploy with the Oklahoma National Guard the day after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. She dropped out of college and left to serve as the lead medic for her company and provided medical aid to injured civilians during the aftermath for two months.

"It was the first time I was able to put my medical training to the test," she said. "That experience taught me what it was like to be away from my family for an extended period of time and know what it was like to be a medic twenty-four seven."

The experience in New Orleans prepared her for Iraq and Burdge is still the twenty-four seven medic.

"The leadership role that I've filled on this deployment has to be the biggest achievement for me. It's a good learning process, though stressful and overwhelming sometimes, but I look back on it and I feel very successful and accomplished," she said.

Upon returning home, Burdge plans on finishing her degree in elementary education and hopes to be hired as a Combat Lifesaver instructor while making up for time away from home with her Husband Darol, her daughter Kiersten and sons Ayden and Zachary. Her Husband Darol, an active duty Army medic, has deployed to Iraq once before and will deploy again soon. So the reunion could be short. 

HEALTH CORNER


*By Spc. Michael Rainwater
Medic, HQ Co., 81st BCT*

Water Toxicity

"Drink water!" Everyone hears these words most likely on a daily basis. Good advice? Yes, but is it enough? No.

The first time I encountered a heat casualty was while serving on active duty as a Marine infantryman. Our mission was a drug patrol along the Arizona/Mexico border. The first to suffer was an E6 platoon sergeant who fainted during a company formation and was placed on limited duty the rest of the tour. Ironically he had just given a long and robust speech about the importance of proper hydration. The second casualty was an E7 who lost consciousness while on a resupply to remote radio towers which were reachable only on foot. He lost his life.

Both heat casualties had one thing in common, they both were drinking massive amounts of water, and at the same time neither of them were eating meals on a regular basis. Skipping meals and or limiting food intake during periods of extreme heat is not uncommon. Many Soldiers "just don't have an appetite" when the temperature starts to soar. But skipping meals and drinking too much water can be dangerous.

For more information on water toxicity, visit <http://drbenkim.com/drink-too-much-water-dangerous.html> "California woman loses life after ingesting too much water" 



Compiled by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers looking for a job upon return home from Iraq have another option. Personnel Force Innovation Program is an Under Secretary of Defense initiative to obtain and place reserve servicemembers on active duty tours with Department of Defense agencies for one to three years. When active duty personnel are not available, PFI reservists are more cost effective than civilian employees or contractor support. Defense agency customers fund reserve member active duty costs.

PFI recruits National Guard and reservists for their extensive military and civilian expertise, agile problem solving skills and higher rate of graduate level education. Positions can be filled based on civilian experience and are not rank or military occupational specialty specific. Jobs range from paralegals to welders.

They pull from a pool of almost 1.5 million volunteers from all branches of the service for work in a variety of agencies. There are a variety of jobs available and they are considered active duty tours, so they include all active duty pay, allowances and benefits. The agencies also fund TDY costs, to include moving expenses.

There are positions available both in the U.S. and overseas. Tour lengths vary, but many are more than a year. The reservist's military service can prematurely curtail tours because of military priorities, such as contingency operations.

For more information, go to the PFI Web site at <http://pfi.dod.mil> and scroll through the list of tours, download the brochure or apply.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

81st Soldiers win relay marathon on Camp Ramadi

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

Sgt. Tobias Suhr of Seattle, with Headquarters company 81st Brigade Combat Team, finished the last leg of a marathon as his relay teammates, Col. Ronald Kapral, the 81st BCT commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney, the command sergeant major for the 81st BCT, cheered him on during a tribute Oklahoma City Marathon held on Camp Ramadi, Iraq, April 24, 2009.

Suhr, along with his teammates Lt. Col. James North, Maj. Kurt Shevalier, Maj. Kurt Rorvik and Maj. Kasey Vu, all with HQ Co., 81st BCT, took first in the relay por-

tion of the race with a time of 2:41:59. Though a sand storm was blowing throughout the race, more than 100 servicemembers from across the camp showed up to run the 26-mile marathon, which was organized by Lt. Dax Thomas of the Oklahoma National Guard.

"I really hope that people will remember why we fight," said Thomas. "Prior to 9/11, Oklahoma City was the spot on America's soil for the worst act of terrorism. Today we are still fighting people who want to destroy our way of life. I ran the marathon for not only all the people that were killed in Oklahoma City or on 9/11, but all servicemen and women that have given their lives for all. It was an honor to run the marathon in their name."



By Kathleen Wilcox
Washington ESGR

The National Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) sponsors an awards program designed to recognize employers for employment policies and practices that are supportive of their employees' participation in the National Guard and Reserve.

All employer recognition and awards originate from nominations by individual Reserve component members. Recognize your employer for their support, and nominate your boss for a **"PATRIOT AWARD"**. Your employer will

Is your Boss a Patriot?

Nominate your civilian employer for the "Patriot Award"

receive a Department of Defense Certificate of Appreciation and a Patriot lapel pin. All members of the National Guard and Reserve are eligible to nominate their employers.

Who is eligible?


Employers qualify for recognition when they practice personnel policies that support employee participation in the National Guard and Reserve.

How do you nominate your employer?

It's free and easy to recognize your employer. The easiest way to nominate your employer is to use the Patriot Award form on the ESGR website (www.esgr.mil). By

pressing the "Submit" option at the bottom of the form your nomination arrives at National ESGR headquarters within moments. If you wish, you can print a copy of the nomination for record.

Whichever way you make your nomination, it makes your employer eligible for higher level awards. A little extra effort to provide details will help us to recognize and properly award the most outstanding employers.

For additional questions about the Awards Program or ESGR in general you can contact the Washington Committee at 253-512-8468 or by e-mail bryon.burgess@us.army.mil 

TriWest.com simplifies healthcare access

By Tyler Patterson
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

Are you ready to take a stronger hand in managing your own health care? The online tools available to West Region TRICARE beneficiaries at www.triwest.com can help you do just that! Take control with tools like:

Online Account Registration

Update other health insurance information, review explanations of benefits, confirm authorization and referral status, change address information and more through your secure www.triwest.com account. Become a registered user to get started! TriWest does not share your information with outside parties.

Appointment Reporting

Registered users can report their specialty care appointment dates online instead of calling TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378) to report them. Already registered? Log in now and update your authorization and referral information with any upcoming appointments.

QuickAlert

QuickAlert, TriWest's online notification system, can alert you by e-mail or by phone when an authorization, referral or explanation of benefits has been processed

for your account. You'll still receive notification by mail in approximately one week, but you can save time and schedule specialty care sooner with QuickAlert!

ePay


Pay your TRICARE Prime enrollment fees automatically with ePay and never worry about missing payments again! Allotment, electronic funds transfer and credit card options are available.

'TRICARE 2 You' Online Library

The TRICARE 2 You Online Library features TriWest's all-new TRICARE benefit videos, current and archived articles from the "TRICARE 2 You eNewsletter" and useful links and resources.

Healing 2gether Online

Healing 2gether Online (H2O) is TriWest's comprehensive online resource for wounded, ill or severely injured service members and their families and caregivers.

Don't wait until tomorrow to start saving time by managing your health care online; register today and see just how easy, secure and convenient it can be! 



About TriWest

TriWest Healthcare Alliance partners with the Department of Defense to do "Whatever It Takes" to support the healthcare needs of 2.7 million members of America's military Family. A Phoenix-based corporation, TriWest provides access to cost-effective, high-quality health care in the 21-state TRICARE West Region. Visit www.triwest.com for more information.



Chairman Issues Military Spouse Appreciation Day Message

Courtesy of American Forces Press Service

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has issued a message to service members and their families around the world, commemorating May 8 as Military Spouse Appreciation Day.

Here is the chairman's message:

"Each May, our nation pauses to pay tribute to our past, present and future military spouses. Nothing could be more right, or more honorable, than this. Without our families, those of us in uniform cannot serve. And truly, our spouses serve just as much as we do.

"Despite the strain of nearly eight years of war and numerous critical engagements around the globe, America's military is stronger and more capable than

ever. From personal experience, I know that much of that strength comes from our spouses. They are vital to our success. And they make the journey of service – truly one we choose together – so much richer, rewarding, and satisfying.

"Military spouses bear great burdens, but they also know the tremendous difference they are making. That resilience is due not just to the rewards of service – which are great – but also by means of a critical network of support, one that many spouses themselves create.

"Deborah and I have seen and experienced this network ourselves – and believe us – it makes a big difference.

"On behalf of the Joint Chiefs and their families, we are proud to honor this occasion on the eighth of May. The unending service and sacrifice of our military spouses are worthy of both praise and an equally continuous commitment from a grateful nation."

Education continued from Page 6

Marines and Sailors can come in and do school work, whether college related, Skillsoft or military development. There are also some materials and resources available to take courses with the University of Maryland University College and assistance with setting up those classes.

The testing center offers an opportunity for servicemembers to walk away from deployment with a better outlook for their future, whether they plan to stay in the military or move on to a civilian career.

"In the Army, for example, to be a network administrator, you have to have Security Plus and Net Plus certifications," Kettlewell said. "These are civilian certifications that you are supposed to have as a mandate from DoD to be an IMO (information management officer). We offer those through Pearson Vue or Pro Metrics. We've had Soldiers and Marines get certified, ensuring that a lot of them meet the requirements of their billet or MOS (military occupation specialty). On the civilian side, these certifications are bullets that you are required to meet to obtain certain jobs. So the contractors, Marines and Soldiers



Sgt. Timothy Kettlewell, a volunteer from HQ Co., 81st BCT who helped get the Camp Ramadi Testing and Education Center started, helps Sgt. Nicholas Benfield navigate through his education choices at the center April 26, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

here that are taking these tests are that much further ahead when they get home. They are doing it while deployed, and that's huge. Like Severson said, 'be able to go out of this deployment with more than you came in with.'"

"It gives me an opportunity to complete some distance learning courses that I can apply toward a graduate degree," said Sgt. Brian Nelson, a currently-enrolled student

and certified test administrator. "So when I come away from this deployment I will have accomplished something that will contribute to my self-development. Instead of just spending a whole year in limbo, I am able to progress a little bit."

"[Because of the education center] I have been able to accelerate my civilian career and begin preparation for warrant officer school," said Kettlewell.



The Washington Adjutant General's Militia Ball

5p.m. Nov. 14, 2009

Double Tree Hotel Seattle Airport

18740 International Blvd, Seattle, WA 98188

Hotel reservations 1-206-246-8600

Room rates \$104 - ask for the "Militia Ball" rate

Tickets:

E1-E4: \$45

E5-E6: \$50

E7-E8 and W1-W3: \$60

O1-O3 and civilians: \$60

E9 and W4-W5: \$65

O4-O6: \$65

O7 and above: \$80

(Prices go up \$10 each after Oct. 15, 2009)

Mrs. Vicki L. Fraga
vicki.fraga@us.army.mil
253-512-8205

CW4 Rita Vacek
Rita.vacek@us.army.mil
253-512-8444

MSgt. Leslie Acton
leslie.acton@us.army.mil
253-512-8347

Ms. Connie Marler
connie.marler@us.army.mil
253-512-8205

Attire: Mess dress, dress blues, formal evening wear, or Army Class A w/ white shirt and bowtie/ Air- Service dress w/ bowtie



TRICARE helps Families face Autism

Brian P. Smith

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

Autism delays the development of important life skills.

Most people may take these social and communication skills for granted, but autism-related delays and problem behaviors usually start in infancy and can last a lifetime. Life is challenging not only for the diagnosed child, but for parents and siblings, too.

Talk to your child's primary care manager if you have concerns about your child's development. Developmental delays may have a number of root causes, but treatment is most effective with early intervention.

For an autism diagnosis, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) may help reduce problem behaviors and teach new skills, according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. TRICARE's Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration allows eligible active duty military families access to certain ABA services.

The demonstration benefit is growing to help families get the care they need. In the past three months, the number of Autism Services Demonstration supervisors has doubled in the TRICARE west region. TRICARE recently



increased the annual benefit reimbursement limit for certain Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) services, including the Autism Services Demonstration, by 20 percent.

TRICARE implemented a fiscal year (Oct. 1 to Sept. 30) ECHO reimbursement limit of \$36,000. Certain ECHO services remain subject to a \$2,500 monthly cap and count towards the fiscal year limit, with the exception of the following services that have no monthly cap but also accrue to the fiscal year limit:

- training
- rehabilitation
- special education
- assistive technology devices
- institutional care
- certain transportation
- services under the Autism Services Demonstration

Children eligible for the Autism Services Demonstration must have an active duty sponsor, be living in the United States, be age 18 months or older, and be enrolled in the ECHO program through their regional TRICARE contractor. A TriWest Healthcare Alliance ECHO case manager helps eligible families in TRICARE's 21-state west region to enroll into the ECHO program and the demonstration, find providers and get the required authorizations. TriWest also offers an interactive state-by-state directory of contracted EIA supervisors in the TRICARE West Region online at www.triwest.com/autism.

Registered users can also track reimbursements throughout the year by logging on to a secure www.triwest.com account to view past and current explanations of benefits. Beneficiaries who use ECHO are also responsible for monthly cost-shares based on the sponsor's pay grade. Cost information is available at www.tricare.mil/costs.


TriWest's ECHO case manager can help explain the program, the benefits and the costs. A case manager directory is available online at www.triwest.com/beneficiary/echo. You may also call 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378) for assistance.

HIGHLANDERS continued from page 8

importantly, the event gathered the entire Task Force to support each contender.

Sgt. Ronald Hayden of Tri Cities, Wash., said: "I give a lot of respect to every fighter up there. It takes a lot of guts to get up there in front of 300 people and box for three rounds. Not only are you exhausted at the end of the round, but you are under the pressure to not let the team down. It's really tough."

"The boxing smoker was a great success," Libby said. "Sgt. 1st Class Bigley, Capt. Horiel and I set up the boxing ring and put together some basic rules. But since the event, we have had tremendous interest from other tenant units throughout Joint Base Balad in sponsoring future boxing events."

At the end of the games, the scores were tallied and the winners were announced, but the true mission of bonding and solidifying an already solid and effective combat fighting force was accomplished. It's never too late or too much work for unit team building. Go Highlanders! 



Master Sgt. David Carr Jr. of Kent, Wash., performs his referee duties during the Highlander Games floor hockey event between Team Spartan and Team Gear Head. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)



DISNEY Continued from page 11

all day. We used the one at Universal and found it to be a good deal. Universal also sells drink bottles with free refills all day.

If you want to plan your day out ahead of time you can buy books with all of the parks laid out, a couple of other travelers recommended "Hidden Mickeys." All parks have free maps available at the gate. My number one plan-ahead tip: pick which ride you want to go on the most or you think will have the longest line. There is a program available at Disney World parks called Fast Pass. To use this free program you just slide your entrance ticket at a kiosk near the ride you want. You will receive a ticket with a time on it to come back to the ride where you will be able to go to the front of the line. You can only get one every few hours, and they sell out, so pick the one ride you don't want to miss first. We ended up standing in line for the Expedition Everest ride for 90 minutes, which wasn't bad considering they estimated our wait time to be 120. Universal has a similar program for a fee. I saw a few people who bought it and they went straight to the front of all the ride lines.

Even with 15 days in Orlando we didn't get a chance to go to Sea World or drive up to Busch Gardens in Tampa, both of which offer free admission to service-members and up to three dependents. I have previously visited Sea World in San Diego and really enjoyed

Helpful websites

Army MWR Travel: <http://www.armymwr.com/portal/travel/traveldeals/>

Busch Gardens, Seaworld, Sesame Place: <http://herosalute.com/>

Shades of Green: <http://www.shadesofgreen.org/>

Shades of Green ITT: <http://www.shadesofgreen.org/ATS.htm>

Disney World military discounts: www.disneyworld.com/military

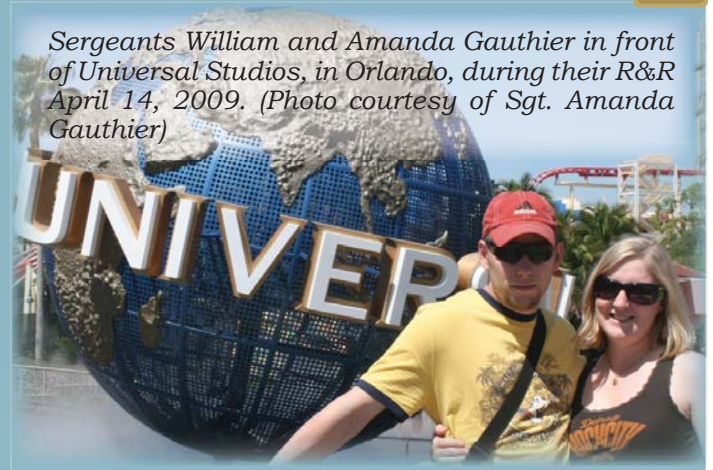
Other discounts for military: <http://www.4militaryfamilies.com/militarydiscounts.htm>

AKO Slick Deals recreation page: <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/428504>

Disneyland military discounts: <http://www.disneymilitarysales.com/>



Looking down the main street in Disney's Hollywood Studios, April 9, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Sergeants William and Amanda Gauthier in front of Universal Studios, in Orlando, during their R&R April 14, 2009. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

it. I was able to get free tickets by visiting <http://herosalute.com/>.

There is so much to do in the Orlando area. Besides the theme parks, there are several dinner shows, theaters, museums and other attractions like, Medieval Times, Pirate Dinner Adventure, Kennedy Space Center, Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum and Blue Man Group. My husband and I went to see the Blue Man Group. We also enjoyed shopping at the flea markets and outlet shopping in and around Orlando. If you are thinking of going on a vacation that has something for everyone, I recommend Orlando. 🍷

Hints

- Even if you stay elsewhere, stop by the ITR (Information Tickets and Recreation) office located in Shades of Green to get your discounted theme park, dinner theater or museum tickets.
- Do some research and book your room early
- Plan ahead. Bring your own water unless you don't mind paying \$4.00 a bottle.
- If you have a hungry family to feed the Meal Plan at Disney and Meal Deal at Universal are worth it.
- Take your time, there is never going to be enough time to see it all.



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PLEASE INCLUDE A MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENT.
IDENTIFY WHO IS IN THE PHOTO, WHO TOOK THE
PHOTO, WHEN AND WHERE.
(IDENTIFICATION = FULL NAME, RANK, UNIT, DUTY
POSITION AND HOMETOWN).



The Family Assistance Network

The California National Guard established a Family Assistance Network as a resource to Guard and other military families - especially those involved in current deployments. They have developed rosters of civilian, government, and military agencies that can help families dealing with issues that have surfaced because of active duty.

To find someone who can help near you visit:
<http://www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies>

