



WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

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MAGAZINE



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

MAJ. GEN. BRET DAUGHERTY RETIRES AFTER 44 YEARS IN SERVICE, TRANSFERRING COMMAND OF THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD TO MAJ. GEN. GENT WELSH.



COMMANDER IN CHIEF
WASHINGTON STATE GOVERNOR
The Honorable Jay Inslee

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U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty, former adjutant general of the state of Washington, is pinned by his wife, Mrs. Dolores Tenorio Chong Daugherty, during a retirement ceremony at Camp Murray, Wash., June 29, 2024. Daugherty retired after 44 years of military service, including nine years on active duty as an attack helicopter pilot and 12 years as adjutant general and director of the Washington Military Department. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Adeline Witherspoon)

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U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Bruce Eccleston, right, senior enlisted leader of the Washington National Guard, passes the colors to U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty, outgoing adjutant general, during a change of command ceremony on Camp Murray, Wash., June 29, 2024. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Adeline Witherspoon)

FAREWELL AND THANK YOU

COMMANDER OF WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD RELINQUISHES COMMAND, RETIRES AFTER 44 YEARS OF SERVICE

As he approached his mandatory retirement day, Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty reflected on what it meant to him to serve the state and nation in the United States Army and Washington National Guard as the adjutant general.

"I have had an amazing adventure, with 44 years as an Army officer and 12 years as the adjutant general. And it may take me 44 years to talk about all of them," said Daugherty during the change of command ceremony. "I still find it amazing that a regular guy like me from Federal Way can have such an amazing adventure and have been given so many opportunities."

During a ceremony on June 29, 2024, at Camp Murray, Wash., Daugherty handed the reins of command to Brig. Gen. Gent Welsh, wrapping up one of the longest and storied careers as adjutant general.

While Daugherty spoke highly of his entire time as a soldier, his time as the adjutant general for the last dozen years had some of the greatest impacts on him and his service. In 2013, he tasked the Washington National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters to focus their efforts on wildfire fighting operations. During nine of his 12 years as TAG, Guard members deployed to fire lines to support the Washington Department of Natural Resources as it fought historic fires across the state. In 2014, Guard members responded to a devastating landslide near the town of Oso, helping the small community with recovery operations. In 2016, under his direction, the Washington Military Department took part in the largest earthquake response exercise in the nation, preparing for the potential of a major Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. In 2020, Daugherty, along with Welsh and Brig. Gen. (Ret) Daniel Dent, led Washington National Guard members through numerous COVID-19 response missions, civil disturbance activations, two federal deployments to Ukraine and Poland and ensured election security during the 2020 elections.

"I am so very, very proud of this team and every single member of it. Thank you for what you do and thank you for what you are. I look forward to watching you continue your service for this state and this nation under the leadership of General Welsh," said Daugherty.

No stranger to leadership positions, Welsh served as Daugherty's joint chief of staff from May 2014 to April of 2017 before moving to the vice commander and commander positions at the 194th Wing and eventually taking over as the commander of the Washington Air National Guard in January 2020. During his incoming speech, Welsh highlighted the amazing work done during the past dozen years, but also talked about the continued challenges and global threats the Washington National Guard and Washington Military Department will face as he takes command.

"We are now living through some of the most dangerous times I have experienced in my 36 years of military service. Threats abroad from the People's Republic of China, Russia, Iran and North Korea have the potential to dramatically alter the international system and trajectory of the democratic world," said Welsh. "Domestically, threats of extremism, a likely contentious election season and a polarized society are at levels never seen since the 1960s. Additionally, climate driven disasters are becoming far more common, growing in both intensity and cost and demanding more enhanced preparedness. Your Washington Military Department and Washington National Guard is absolutely operating at the top of its game right now and ready to meet the task." - Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photo by Adeline Witherspoon



YOUTH ACADEMY CADET JOINS GUARD, TELLS STORY TO NEW CADETS

Mauricio Velasquez said he kept running away from his problems until he came to the Washington Youth ChalleNGe Academy. He, quite literally, ran away from home multiple times. He even ran away from the Youth Academy, heading to the ferries in Bremerton.

“I called my pops, and he told me if I kept running from things, I would never grow up,” Velasquez said. “So, if I keep running away from things challenging me, how will I ever grow up?”

Velasquez, 19, graduated from the Youth Academy in June 2023. Today, he is a member of the Washington National Guard, stationed out of Yakima.

In March, he returned to the Youth Academy with his recruiter Colten Nixon, where they talked to cadets during a career fair.

“The hardest day at boot camp is going to beat the hardest day here,” Velasquez told cadets. “Absolutely. I would say in terms of routine and discipline and things of that nature. As soon as you are used to the routine, you can get used to anything. You’re here for 22 weeks, and Army boot camp is 10 weeks. So, to me, it felt like it was nothing. I’ve done this twice.”

Velasquez said it took him two times to complete the Youth Academy. In 2022, he only lasted a couple of months before he was involved in a fight.

“Journeys for some of us are longer than for others,” Deputy Director Dennis Kerwood said. “And when I personally dismissed Velasquez, he asked me, ‘If you were going to dismiss me anyway, why have we been talking for so long?’ And I responded, ‘Because I care.’ And then I prayed he’d come back because dismissed cadets that come back often excel.”

And Velasquez did come back—going on to become company commander and starring in advertisements for the Youth Academy that aired on KOMO television and online.

He was even a speaker at the 2023 commencement.

“I am forever grateful for all of the cadets, all of the staff and all of the teachers,” Velasquez said during his commencement address. “There is something the commandant likes to say, ‘There will never be more people committed to your success than when you are here.’ It’s absolutely true. There isn’t a minute that goes by when someone isn’t doing something for you – whether you realize it or not -- preparing your transcripts, grading your homework, teaching you to be better than you could. This program allows you to be the best version of yourself. I’m the best version of myself for being here, and I am grateful I had the opportunity to come back.”

Surrounded by new cadets, Velasquez encouraged them to put aside their egos.

“The youth academy gave me a second chance,” he said. “I was afraid they were going to see all of the bad things in me. And I just tried to show there was still good in me.”

He said the lessons he learned at the Youth Academy have helped him become a better soldier for the Washington National Guard. It helped him get through boot camp simply by knowing and understanding the different exercises and routines. That got him noticed by drill sergeants, who put him in leadership roles right away.

He says he’s still learning his way through the Guard but is optimistic he’s found his place.

“You’ve got to be the kind of follower you want when you were a leader,” he said. “Be the best you can be.”

- Story and Photo by Steven Friederich

"YAKIMA BURN"

Washington State Guard take part in Wildland Firefighting Training

During its June Annual Training, the Washington State Guard took part in Operation Yakima Burn, a three-day field training exercise at the Yakima Training Center (YTC) to better prepare for wildfire season.

On June 5 and 6, members of the Washington State Guard arrived at YTC to set up for in-processing and secure ranges. On June 7, more members arrived to begin the FTX. The exercise started with a fire brief, followed by training sessions in the field to learn about equipment, fire science and how members would support a potential fire call-up. Once the FTX was over, the State Guard members went through the process of demobilization, much like they would in a real fire situation.

“The Washington State Guard did a great job planning and executing and for them this is a first of its kind exercise,” said Col. Angela Gentry, director of operations, Joint Force Headquarters, Washington National Guard.

For the State Guard, a multi-day annual training is a lot of work since they do not have a full-time staff to help plan and execute events. The Washington State Guard is an all-volunteer unit organized under the Military Department of the State of Washington and work directly with the Joint Headquarters Staff. Its members come from all walks of life and normally serve without remuneration meeting monthly, within their organized units stationed at strategic locations throughout the state.

“The depth of duty and service represented by the Washington State Guard, as a true volunteer force, is inspiring and impressive. We are blessed to have so many talented and passionate professionals – a collectively compounding force, as part of our joint enterprise,” said Gentry.

Washington State Guard members are often called up to support wildfire season, but in a more supportive role. In the past decade during major fire activations, the State Guard has acted as liaisons for local authorities and tribes and provided radio communications support.

- Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photo by Abigail Clark





COMMO CHECK: 194TH COMMUNICATIONS SQUADRON HOSTS CATASTROPHIC COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGE

Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photo by Stephen San Jose

The Washington Air National Guard prioritizes readiness and modernization, especially in the face of rapid technological advancements and global threats. To address these challenges, the 194th Communications Squadron hosted the final portion of the National Security Innovation Network (NSIN) sponsored Catastrophic Communications Challenge (C2C) on June 5th at Camp Murray, Washington.

The event focused on testing and evaluating leading-edge critical communication technologies supporting the National Guard following events like a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake when terrestrial communication systems are inept.

“We partnered with four small businesses, down selected from a program record 34 companies, that came out to Camp Murray to show off their equipment and compete with each other,” said Senior Master Sgt. Chris Hodges, Operations Superintendent, 194th Communications Squadron.

In recent years, the Air National Guard has emphasized innovation events, bringing industry and the whole-of-government together. Teaming with NSIN, service members relate to innovators from defense, academia, and entrepreneurial ventures to solve national security issues in new ways. The Air National Guard’s innovation office held a problem-sourcing seminar at Camp Murray last November hosted by NSIN. The innovation office used these seminars to help Guardsmen better define their problems and work toward better ways to solve them. The 194th Communications Squadron was chosen for this follow-on event to assist them with a long-standing problem: how they establish communications for the Wing’s Emergency Operations Center during disasters.

“We went back to NSIN and applied to be part of their challenge program and were accepted,” said MSgt Christopher Pavel, State Innovation Director, Washington Air National Guard. “This led to a record submission of small businesses applying to the program; a group was selected to compete in a one-day pitch event with the top five finalists invited to demonstrate their products in field conditions simulating the EOC with no other form of communication.”

The 194th Wing's Emergency Operations Center is in the Wing’s complex on Camp Murray and is activated to contact all Wing personnel in the event of a major emergency in the state. However, the facility has outdated equipment and needs updating.

“This Catastrophic Communications Innovation event was briefed at the Annual Domestic Capabilities Priorities (DCP) conference in early May. Every ANG Wing attends the DCP, and the presentation on the C2C Challenge was met with a lot of excitement,” said Col. Ryan Price, Commander of the 194th Mission Support Group. “The National Guard is consistently called upon to respond to needs stemming from disasters in our local community. The ability to effectively communicate is critical to meeting these needs promptly.

Col. Price was part of the planning team for the Cascadia Rising 2022 event and has been a part of the Washington National Guard’s Homeland Response Force. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding the available capabilities.

“The Air National Guard’s current capabilities are bulky, costly to operate, difficult to transport, and have significantly lower capabilities. They have not kept pace with industry,” said Price. “The innovation being produced through NSIN, such as what this Catastrophic Communications Challenge is doing, will directly impact our ability to support better and meet the needs of our community during future catastrophic incidents.”

At the event, Airmen tested products and scored the best overall product using pre-determined grading criteria. This also allowed airmen to compare the current systems they operate and identify potential solutions to support their future needs.

“I am grateful for the ingenuity and time invested by all challenge participants. Partnering with industry to find and innovate new solutions to challenging problems the National Guard faces is key to our success,” said Price.



Washington National Guard, Malaysian Armed Forces wrap up Bersama Warrior 2024

After two weeks consisting of a command post exercise and strengthening relationships, Bersama Warrior 2024 wrapped up during a closing ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 15, 2024. Brig. Gen Michael Ake, land component commander, Washington Army National Guard, Brig. Gen. Ken Borchers, director of the joint staff, Washington National Guard and Brig. Gen. Brig Jen Datuk Mohd Zaini Hj Hashim, Malaysian Armed Forces, officiated the ceremony.

Bersama Warrior is an annual joint, bilateral exercise sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted by the Malaysian Armed Forces. This year included a staff exercise that provided a joint and bilateral venue that emphasized on security cooperation and capacity building of partner nations, contributing to the overall security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

“The take away I would like to see coming out of Bersama Warrior 24 is that we show a continued tradition of building meaningful partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region and show that we are a partner that can be relied upon and that we are going to be there for our partners in the future,” said Borchers.

More than 40 American service members from the Washington National Guard comprised the primary training audience for Bersama Warrior. Since signing a formal partnership through the National Guard Bureau-sponsored State Partnership Program in August 2017, the Washington National Guard and Malaysian Armed Forces have participated in subject matter expert exchanges and exercises like Bersama Warrior.

“Due to extensive scheduling challenges, the execution of Bersama Warrior this year reflected perhaps even more than usual the deep commitment felt by both the Malaysian Armed Forces and the Washington National Guard toward their relationship,” said Col. Jim Perrin, exercise planner with Joint Force Headquarters. “Together, the combined task force demonstrated the continued value of building multinational teams, achieving shared understanding of complex problems, and enhancing interoperability while arriving at dynamic solutions.”

- Story by Joseph Siemandel





AIRBORNE AND AIR ASSAULT EXCHANGE SETS UP FUTURE FOR MALAYSIA AND WASHINGTON ENGAGEMENTS

A recent engagement with Malaysia has laid the foundation for future State Partnership Program exchanges between the Special Operations Detachment Pacific, the 1161st Rigger Detachment and Headquarters Company, the 56th Theater Information Operations Group and the Malaysian Army's 10th Rapid Deployment Force.

"The purpose of this was to conduct an exchange of operating procedures and best practices with regard to airborne operations and air assault operations," said Lt. Col. Denny Frey, operations officer, 56th Theater Information Operations Group. "Based on the success of this exchange, the 10th Rapid Deployment Force wishes to maintain an annual exchange to focus on these topics to continue building interoperability and capability."

From May 9-23, 2024, six Washington Army National Guard members, who are jumpmaster, rigger, airborne and military freefall qualified, took part in the first hands-on airborne and air assault subject matter exchange with more than 75 Malaysian Army soldiers. Jumpmasters are the expert paratroopers in an airborne unit who train and teach the military techniques for jumping from airplanes or helicopters. These members are responsible for training soldiers at the Army Airborne School to become paratroopers and managing airborne jump operations in airborne units across all branches of services. Members of the Washington Army National Guard Special Operations units must maintain jump status and routinely conduct training to ensure the soldiers maintain their qualifications.

Guard members were able to bring their expertise to Malaysia. They focused the exchange on air assault planning and execution, including loading and unloading procedures from UH-60 Black Hawks and CH-47 Chinook aircraft, ground tactical planning, landing zone selection and other air assault planning considerations.

"The 10th RDF demonstrated excellent efficiency and capacity within their airborne operations program," said Frey.

While this was the first exchange of its type, the units have already discussed building the program moving forward.

"The exchange included dialogue around the possibility of 10th RDF sending personnel to attend Leap Fest in July/August 2024," said Frey. Leap Fest is the largest, longest-running international military static line parachute competition in the world.

"We also discussed having them join us for an exchange jump later this year at Joint Base Lewis-McChord to develop a long-lasting relationship with our Malaysian partners building to future cooperation in 2025 and beyond," said Frey. - *Story by Joseph Siemandel*

WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD, ROYAL THAI ARMY — REINFORCE BONDS WITH STRYKER EXCHANGE —

With a focus on further enhancing the partnership between the Royal Thai Army and the Washington Army National Guard, 1st Battalion, 205th Regimental Training Institute sent a team of Stryker subject matter instructors to Chon Buri, Thailand, from May 6 to 17, 2024, for a subject matter exchange. This exchange marked the fifth time since 2022 that Washington and Thailand conducted a Stryker subject matter expert exchange (SMEE) through the State Partnership Program.

"The purpose of this visit was to execute a Stryker development exchange in Thailand for the Royal Thai Army's 112th Stryker Regiment and to further enhance the partnership between our organizations," Chief Warrant Officer Four Ricky Thomas, team lead for the exchange, said.

In May 2022, eight members of the Royal Thai Army traveled to Yakima Training Center to conduct an SMEE with the cadre from the Washington National Guard's Stryker leader's course. The in-depth course mixed classroom and field training on the platform, showcasing how a crew operates the vehicle. During the exchange, they covered topics such as weapon systems, driving the vehicle, and how the communications system works.

"The ten participants from the Royal Thai Army included eight graduates of previous Stryker Leader Course engagement," Thomas said.

The exchanges are focused on creating Stryker instructors within the Royal Thai Army. The knowledge and experience gained can then be passed down to others in the Royal Thai Army.

"The Royal Thai Army instructor candidates selected to participate in this exchange were very engaged, eager to learn and determined to succeed in the training. The soldiers gained a

lot of confidence throughout the course in their ability to provide instruction of the Stryker leader course material," Thomas said.

In addition to the material being taught, Thomas believes the relationship-building between the two partners has the most impact.

"The Royal Thai Army soldiers and the Washington Army National Guard team continue to enjoy training with each other to build relationships and share information," Thomas said. "Over the course of the previous four engagements, all personnel have become very close, and our team feels we have built some strong bonds in our friendships with the 112th. This engagement further cemented the closeness of our ties."

While the training was the focal point of the exchange, the teams enjoyed sharing meals, chatting about family, and took part in their traditional soccer match.

The next engagement is scheduled for the end of summer in Thailand.

"Our instructors really enjoy taking part in this exchange, and it shows in every aspect of the training we are providing during these engagements," Thomas said. - *Story by Joseph Siemandel*





341st Military Intelligence Battalion conducts Field Training Exercise At Yakima Training Center

Building on a smaller field Training exercise in January, the 341st Military Intelligence Battalion participated in a four-day field training exercise at the Yakima Training Center during its June drill weekend, June 6-9, 2024.

“We wanted to test our soldiers by combining their military intelligence jobs with basic soldiering skills in a more challenging environment than what we typically do in a home-station drill,” said LTC Nolan Rinehart, commander, 341st Military Intelligence Battalion.

The scenario, a conflict in the fictional country of South Torbia, allowed military intelligence professionals from the 341st MI Battalion, Delta Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion and the Army Reserves to work together, performing screenings, interrogations and source operations.

“We have to be able to get information from people that they might not be willing to share,” said Spc. Alesia Yushkevich, a human intelligence collector and Russian linguist, 341st Military Intelligence Battalion.

During the exercise, teams conducted multiple sources meets with more than 40 role players to create a common narrative they could provide to a combatant commander. Following each meeting, the team wrote a report to describe what they learned. Each report went up to the Operational Management Team for synchronization and deconfliction.

“I thought this was great for preparing us for our real-world scenario. I think it makes us better equipped to do the job we signed up to do,” said Yushkevich.

While deployed intelligence soldiers provide the Army with the information it needs to act, human intelligence collectors talk to sources in foreign languages and conduct interrogations. At home, intelligence experts gather information to help officials in the state that could help save lives during disasters or even prevent a national emergency.

Washington is home to a diverse population with hundreds of languages spoken. During the COVID-19 pandemic, linguists from the 341st provided critical translation capabilities for emergency messages about the virus.

“I couldn’t be prouder of the soldiers, NCOs, command teams, and staff of the 341st. I set some pretty high expectations for these citizen-soldiers and they stepped up to the task. I have the utmost confidence in the capabilities and readiness of our team.” Rinehart said.

- Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photo by Reyfield Betz



AIR NATIONAL GUARD OUTSTANDING NCO OF THE YEAR: MASTER SGT. HALEY RANKIN

Story and Photo by Kimberly Burke

Master Sgt. Haley Rankin, a weapons director for the Western Air Defense Sector's 225th Air Defense Squadron, Washington Air National Guard, was selected as the Air National Guard's 2024 Outstanding Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year. She is only the fifth WADS member to win the national level competition.

Rankin has over 11 years of military service, across both the active duty Air Force and Air National Guard. She joined the military in 2012 and spent most of her career overseas in Germany, Italy and the United Arab Emirates. While overseas, she deployed twice in support of Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation Resolute Support.

In 2020, she joined the Washington Air National Guard to continue her service as a weapons director at WADS while providing more stability to her growing family.

In her role as a weapons director, Rankin is responsible for initiating and overseeing the employment of Air Force fighters in support of Operation Noble Eagle (ONE) where she utilizes national radar and radio networks to ensure flight safety and the execution of air sovereignty over the western half of the United States. Operation Noble Eagle is the name given to all North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) aerospace warning, control, and defense missions in North America which deters, detects, and defeats potential threats to U.S. and Canadian airspace 24/7/365.

"Master Sgt. Rankin's selection as ANG NCO of the Year further affirms her exceptional leadership and professionalism," explained Lt. Col. Peter Hickman, 225th Air Defense Squadron commander. "In addition to being an outstanding battle management operator, she relentlessly invests in the entire team, pushing all of us to continuously improve and grow as leaders and professionals. We take great pride in her accomplishments and in the dedication of our entire team to cultivating and mentoring future leaders of her caliber."

Rankin stood out above her peers due to her involvement in Exercise Noble Skywave, backfilling the 169th Air Defense Squadron, providing air defense liaison duties protecting the U.S. President, and becoming a Victim Advocate.

As the sole air defense liaison between the Secret Service and 15 government agencies, she relayed imperative security information that helped guarantee the protection of the U.S. President and 3,500 foreign delegates during the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference in San Francisco.

She volunteered to backfill at the 169th ADS in Hawaii for other unit controllers to physically participate in Exercise Cope North in Guam. During her temporary duty assignment, she skillfully controlled over 30 fighter sorties that enabled training of five students managing agile combat employment activities in the Indo-Pacific region.

She educated 30 WADS operators on electromagnetic spectrum utilization to be ready to compete during the multi-national Noble Skywave high frequency radio competition. The exercise challenges competitors with voice and data contacts between domestic and international teams via HF sky-wave propagation. The WADS team established contact with 20 countries and finished in first place out of all NORAD sectors and in the top 12% overall out of 374 units competing.

According to Rankin, the capabilities of HF are so important and relevant because "it delivers global reach without the use of repeaters or satellites. If the satellites fail, cell towers go down, and the internet goes out, HF will still work. These abilities provide WADS with more flexibility during real-world contingency events."

In addition to Rankin's day-to-day air defense duties, she carved out time to complete the rigorous screening process and the 40-hour Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program to become a Victim Advocate. She has also completed a 10-week training course to certify as a suicide and crisis counselor for the Trevor Project, a national suicide hotline for troubled youth where she has already volunteered 66 hours mentoring 11 members experiencing suicidal ideation, deescalating situations, and preventing potential tragic suicide and homicidal ideations.

Her commitment to victim advocacy is due to her experiences on active duty. "I had troops who were victims of sexual assault both in and out of the military. I remember wishing I knew how to help them as they navigated the reporting and medical treatment processes," she explained.

For Rankin, winning this award is not about her, it is a testament that "receiving genuine feedback, any Airman is capable of making the changes needed to be an Outstanding Airman of the Year winner." She realizes now that she is capable of achieving much more than the self-imposed mental glass ceiling she placed on herself. She has set her goals much higher and wants to compete for a commissioning opportunity to become an air battle manager and continue to serve at WADS.





133D ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BAND HITS THE ROAD DURING "SUMMER TOUR"

The 133d Army National Guard Band is on the road for its annual "Summer Tour," providing musical entertainment and an education about the Washington National Guard.

"Performing for audiences around the state including soldiers, communities, veterans, friends and families is incredibly rewarding," said Warrant Officer 1 Matthew Wenman, commander of the 133d Army National Guard Band. "It is why we joined the Guard and the unit - to serve our community and country through music."

This summer the band visited a few familiar locations: Spokane, Moses Lake, and Lacey while incorporating stops in Rainier and Eatonville, sharing the gift of music with more Washingtonians.

"All of the audiences we have played for over this tour have been incredibly responsive, energetic, positive, and fun to play for. I think Moses Lake was a real highlight for us this year. There were probably a few thousand people in the audience and they were having a ton of fun,"

said Wenman. "At one point there was a crowd of people dancing in front of the stage while thousands of cell phone lights were swaying across the crowd. When an audience gets into it like that it feeds the energy of the band, which enhances the audience's experience even further, then feeds the band... it is this cool symbiotic relationship that elevates everyone's experience and is incredibly meaningful."

The 133d Army National Guard Band is a 40-member, diverse group of musicians and ensembles that serve one weekend each month and two weeks a year as traditional Guard members. Along with summer concerts, the unit provides musical support to military ceremonies, community festivals, gatherings and events, and educational outreach in schools of all grade levels, averaging 90 musical mission performances a year. The band also performs in high profile missions for the governor, Seattle Mariners, Seattle Seahawks and for radio stations. Wenman believes the success of the unit is truly a team effort.

"We've seen everyone step up and a lot of initiative from all levels in the formation. From my perspective it is inspiring and makes me even more grateful to be working with such a fantastic team," said Wenman.

Army Bands work to enhance public confidence and patriotism among the American people and perpetuate service identity, tradition, and morale. This is accomplished by engaging local, regional, national, and international audiences through world-class musical performances; rendering honors and providing musical support to military ceremonies; providing live music to Soldiers in deployed and austere environments; and to Soldiers, Families, and veterans on the home front.

"It is a privilege to be able to use your passion and skill to serve but it is extra special to be able to perform in uniform for your own community. As we travel around the state, we sometimes have people performing for the communities they live in which is a real gift," said Wenman.

In the next year the 133d will continue to grow its mission set and expand its reach to more communities in the state.

"We are looking forward to getting into the communities and to be more active in high schools across the state in addition to troop and ceremonial support that we always do. We'll be working with some local high schools for the holiday concert this December, deploying our Musical Performance Teams all over the state throughout the year, and likely doing a tour of communities on the Olympic Peninsula next summer at this time," said Wenman.

- Story and Photos by Joseph Siemandel



GUARD ACTIVATED TO FIGHT WILDFIRES, FEMA GRANTS APPROVED

A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the Washington Army National Guard was mobilized on July 24 to support Washington State Department of Natural Resources fire crews with dropping water on multiple fires in Eastern Washington.

Gov. Jay Inslee officially activated the Guard to support wildland firefighting efforts, as requested by DNR. The Washington Emergency Management Division helped coordinate the efforts and the state Emergency Operations Center continues to monitor the situation.

Meantime, the public assistance team at the Washington Emergency Management Division helped secure three Fire Management Assistance Grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The key to getting these grants is that the wildfire must have started but structures must not yet be on fire. On Friday, federal funds were made available to help with firefighting costs for the Retreat Fire burning in Yakima County, Washington.

Earlier this week, federal funds were made available to help with firefighting costs for the Swawilla Fire burning in on the lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and in Ferry and Okanogan counties as well as the West White Swan Fire burning within Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation tribal land and in Yakima County. In June, FEMA approved an FMAG grant to help with firefighting costs for the Slide Ranch Fire, also burning on Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation tribal land and in Yakima County.

This authorization makes FEMA funding available to pay 75 percent of eligible firefighting suppression costs under an approved grant for managing, mitigating, and controlling designated fires.

This marks the 10th year since 2012 that members of the Washington National Guard have activated to support wildland firefighting response efforts in Washington.


The request for help came from the state forester at Washington Department of Natural Resources. No requests for ground resources were made at this time, although Guard members have been training in case that becomes necessary,

The helicopter and crew come from 1st Battalion, 168th General Support Aviation, located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. As of Friday morning, the helicopter had dropped more than 50 buckets of water.

“Our National Guard members train for this mission every year and the chance to support our neighbors here in Washington during natural disasters is a staple of what makes the Guard so important,” said Major General Gent Welsh, the adjutant general. “Being prepared to activate is critical and our aviation crews are always ready to support.”

- Story by Steven Friederich

Learn how to defend your home from wildfires




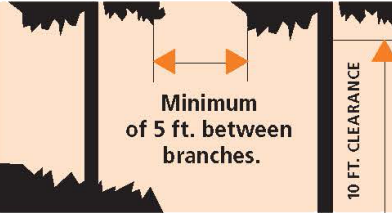
WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Peter Goldmark - Commissioner of Public Lands

Fire Prevention

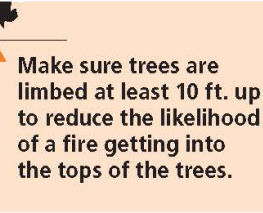
Defend Your Home from Wildfire

NO COST EVALUATION
* If you live in DNR's Northeast Region, 509-684-7474 or DNR's Southeast Region, 509-884-3472, DNR foresters can come out and assess your home at no cost.







Minimum of 5 ft. between branches.



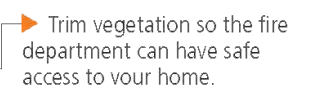
10 FT. CLEARANCE



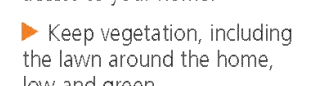
Make sure trees are limbed at least 10 ft. up to reduce the likelihood of a fire getting into the tops of the trees.




Trim vegetation so the fire department can have safe access to your home.



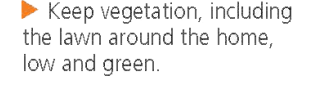
Keep vegetation, including the lawn around the home, low and green.



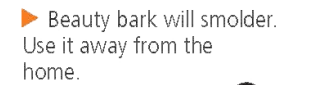
Beauty bark will smolder. Use it away from the home.




Make sure your home/structure has non-flammable roof and deck.



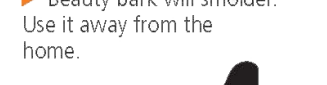
Eliminate fire fuels within 30 ft. of any structure.




Beauty bark will smolder. Use it away from the home.



30 FT. OR MORE



30 FT. OR MORE



dnr.wa.gov

TO REPORT A FIRE, PLEASE CALL 1-800-562-6010

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State Legislators take flight with Washington National Guard

Nearly 20 state lawmakers joined the Washington National Guard on July 18, 2024, to learn more about the organization and get a view of the state Capitol from the air while riding in a Blackhawk helicopter.

“Engaging with our legislators is key to our success as a Guard in our state,” said Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, the adjutant general, Washington. “Our Guard is only as strong as the investments that are made by our elected officials. These investments directly impact our readiness and strength and how we respond to disasters in the state.”

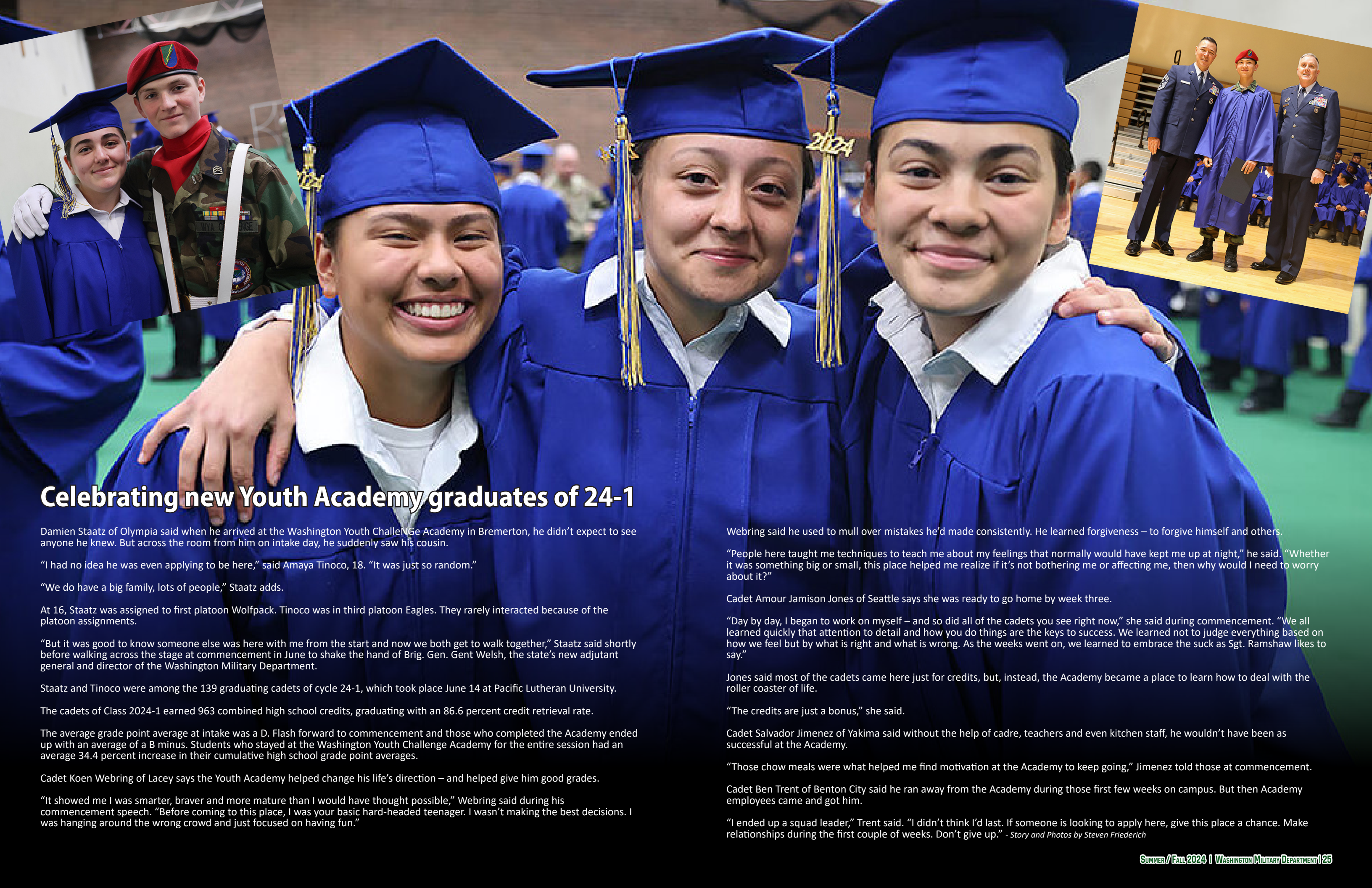
During the event, legislators from across the state visited the 252nd Cyber Operations Group headquarters to learn how the group is supporting the Washington Secretary of State’s office with hardening our elections system. Additionally, lawmakers spoke with members of the 10th Civil Support Team about the role it plays working with first responders and toured a KC-135 Stratotanker. The event concluded with legislators flying on a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter around South Puget Sound and learning about the mission of the crews and equipment that assist with wildland fire fighting efforts.

“These events bridge the gap and help inform members on what is happening in their Washington National Guard,” said Welsh.

Since 2020, the Washington National Guard has taken on some of the largest state missions in its history, to include more than 2,500 Guard members activated to support the COVID-19 response. Meanwhile, more than 2,000 Guard members participated in civil disturbance response missions, wildfire fighting, flood and snow-storm response activities and cyber missions.

“The state missions are a staple of the National Guard. We need to ensure that our Guard members are supported with benefits and training dollars to perform these missions,” said Welsh. “We will continue to find ways to conduct more of these engagements in the future and showcase how the National Guard is different from our active duty and reserve counterparts.”

- Story and Photo by Joseph Siemandel



Celebrating new Youth Academy graduates of 24-1

Damien Staatz of Olympia said when he arrived at the Washington Youth Challenge Academy in Bremerton, he didn't expect to see anyone he knew. But across the room from him on intake day, he suddenly saw his cousin.

"I had no idea he was even applying to be here," said Amaya Tinoco, 18. "It was just so random."

"We do have a big family, lots of people," Staatz adds.

At 16, Staatz was assigned to first platoon Wolfpack. Tinoco was in third platoon Eagles. They rarely interacted because of the platoon assignments.

"But it was good to know someone else was here with me from the start and now we both get to walk together," Staatz said shortly before walking across the stage at commencement in June to shake the hand of Brig. Gen. Gent Welsh, the state's new adjutant general and director of the Washington Military Department.

Staatz and Tinoco were among the 139 graduating cadets of cycle 24-1, which took place June 14 at Pacific Lutheran University.

The cadets of Class 2024-1 earned 963 combined high school credits, graduating with an 86.6 percent credit retrieval rate.

The average grade point average at intake was a D. Flash forward to commencement and those who completed the Academy ended up with an average of a B minus. Students who stayed at the Washington Youth Challenge Academy for the entire session had an average 34.4 percent increase in their cumulative high school grade point averages.

Cadet Koen Webring of Lacey says the Youth Academy helped change his life's direction – and helped give him good grades.

"It showed me I was smarter, braver and more mature than I would have thought possible," Webring said during his commencement speech. "Before coming to this place, I was your basic hard-headed teenager. I wasn't making the best decisions. I was hanging around the wrong crowd and just focused on having fun."

Webring said he used to mull over mistakes he'd made consistently. He learned forgiveness – to forgive himself and others.

"People here taught me techniques to teach me about my feelings that normally would have kept me up at night," he said. "Whether it was something big or small, this place helped me realize if it's not bothering me or affecting me, then why would I need to worry about it?"

Cadet Amour Jamison Jones of Seattle says she was ready to go home by week three.

"Day by day, I began to work on myself – and so did all of the cadets you see right now," she said during commencement. "We all learned quickly that attention to detail and how you do things are the keys to success. We learned not to judge everything based on how we feel but by what is right and what is wrong. As the weeks went on, we learned to embrace the suck as Sgt. Ramshaw likes to say."

Jones said most of the cadets came here just for credits, but, instead, the Academy became a place to learn how to deal with the roller coaster of life.

"The credits are just a bonus," she said.

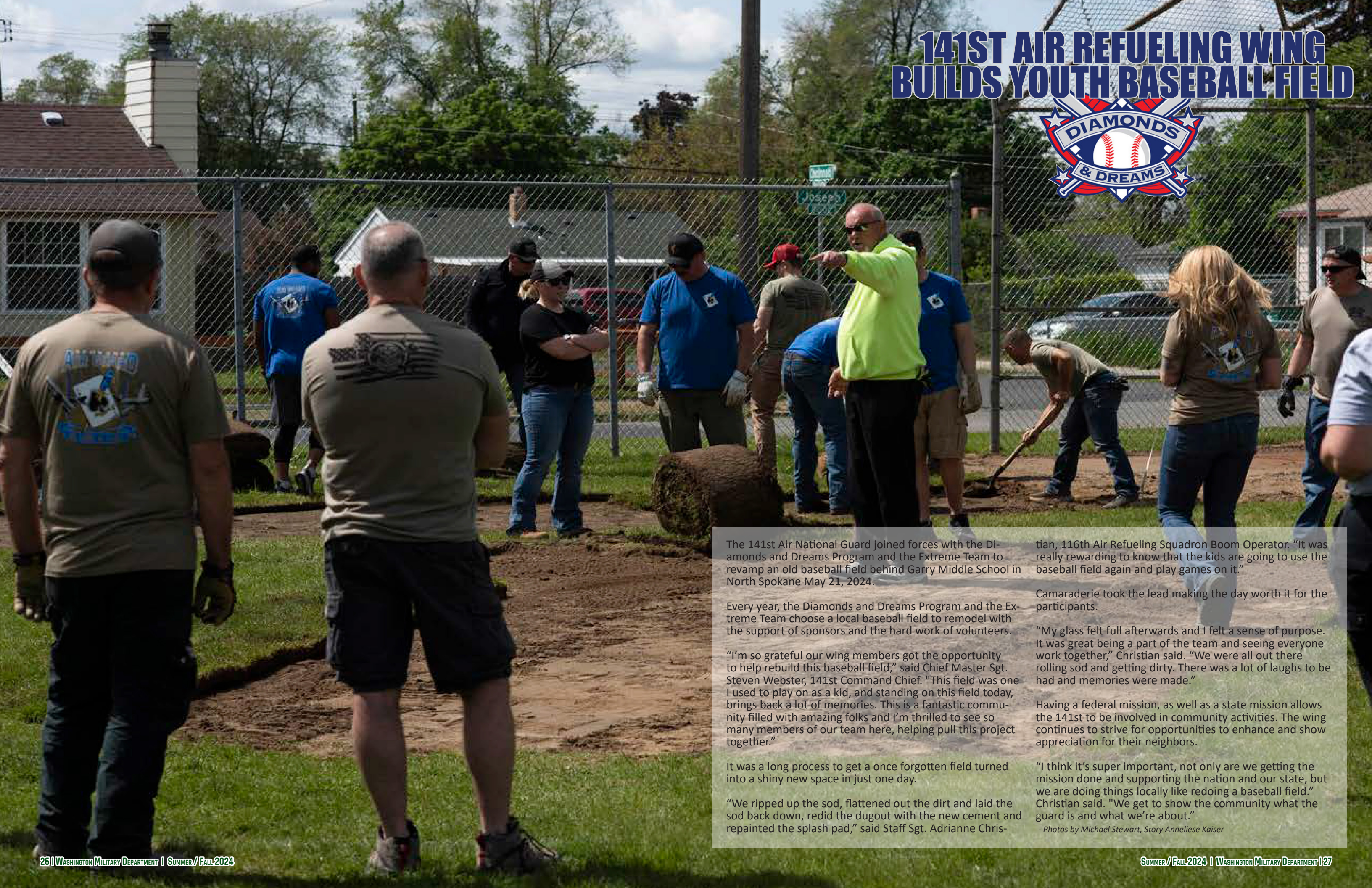
Cadet Salvador Jimenez of Yakima said without the help of cadre, teachers and even kitchen staff, he wouldn't have been as successful at the Academy.

"Those chow meals were what helped me find motivation at the Academy to keep going," Jimenez told those at commencement.

Cadet Ben Trent of Benton City said he ran away from the Academy during those first few weeks on campus. But then Academy employees came and got him.

"I ended up a squad leader," Trent said. "I didn't think I'd last. If someone is looking to apply here, give this place a chance. Make relationships during the first couple of weeks. Don't give up." - Story and Photos by Steven Friederich

141ST AIR REFUELING WING BUILDS YOUTH BASEBALL FIELD



The 141st Air National Guard joined forces with the Diamonds and Dreams Program and the Extreme Team to revamp an old baseball field behind Garry Middle School in North Spokane May 21, 2024.

Every year, the Diamonds and Dreams Program and the Extreme Team choose a local baseball field to remodel with the support of sponsors and the hard work of volunteers.

"I'm so grateful our wing members got the opportunity to help rebuild this baseball field," said Chief Master Sgt. Steven Webster, 141st Command Chief. "This field was one I used to play on as a kid, and standing on this field today, brings back a lot of memories. This is a fantastic community filled with amazing folks and I'm thrilled to see so many members of our team here, helping pull this project together."

It was a long process to get a once forgotten field turned into a shiny new space in just one day.

"We ripped up the sod, flattened out the dirt and laid the sod back down, redid the dugout with the new cement and repainted the splash pad," said Staff Sgt. Adrienne Chris-

tian, 116th Air Refueling Squadron Boom Operator. "It was really rewarding to know that the kids are going to use the baseball field again and play games on it."

Camaraderie took the lead making the day worth it for the participants.

"My glass felt full afterwards and I felt a sense of purpose. It was great being a part of the team and seeing everyone work together," Christian said. "We were all out there rolling sod and getting dirty. There was a lot of laughs to be had and memories were made."

Having a federal mission, as well as a state mission allows the 141st to be involved in community activities. The wing continues to strive for opportunities to enhance and show appreciation for their neighbors.

"I think it's super important, not only are we getting the mission done and supporting the nation and our state, but we are doing things locally like redoing a baseball field," Christian said. "We get to show the community what the guard is and what we're about."

- Photos by Michael Stewart, Story Anneliese Kaiser



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