

Connecticut Guardian



VOL.15 NO. 11

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

NOVEMBER 2014

Arrival of 8th Aircraft Completes Air Guard's Newly Assigned Fleet

MAJ. BRYON M. TURNER
103RD AIRLIFT WING, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BRADLEY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE - East Granby, Connecticut — The Airmen of the 103rd Airlift Wing reached a key moment in their mission-conversion efforts when the unit's eighth newly-assigned C-130H Hercules aircraft arrived at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Connecticut, Oct. 15.

The Flying Yankees began their ongoing conversion process from C-21 aircraft operations to the current C-130H mission in June of 2013. The first C-130H assigned to the unit arrived on Sept. 24, 2013, and now, just over a year later, the unit's fleet is whole.

"This milestone is incredibly important for the Flying Yankees because the longevity and proud history of the C-130 bodes so well for the future of the Connecticut Air National Guard," said Col. Frank Detorie, commander of the 103rd Airlift Wing.

For Master Sgt. Daniel Taylor, a sheet metal mechanic and small shop chief assigned to the 103rd Maintenance Group, the arrival of the unit's eighth assigned aircraft means something very important.

"Job security," said Taylor. "Having all eight of them

here—you have that feeling you're going to be here for a while, and with a new sense of pride in the aircraft and our mission."

The first seven aircraft are easily identifiable and unmistakably assigned to the Flying Yankees thanks to tail markings unique to the Connecticut Air National

"I'm just glad to be finishing up with the last C-130," said Mazzie. "It feels good to have all of our planes here with the unit's tail flash.

The wing's C-130H aircraft are adorned with the unit's traditional black and yellow thunderbolt along with the likeness of the late Capt. Joseph Wadsworth, the

legendary figure who hid the state's charter in an oak tree to protect it from British soldiers during colonial times. The artwork borrows elements from the wing's patch, as well as markings that once decorated some of the unit's past aircraft, paying homage to the wing's proud history.

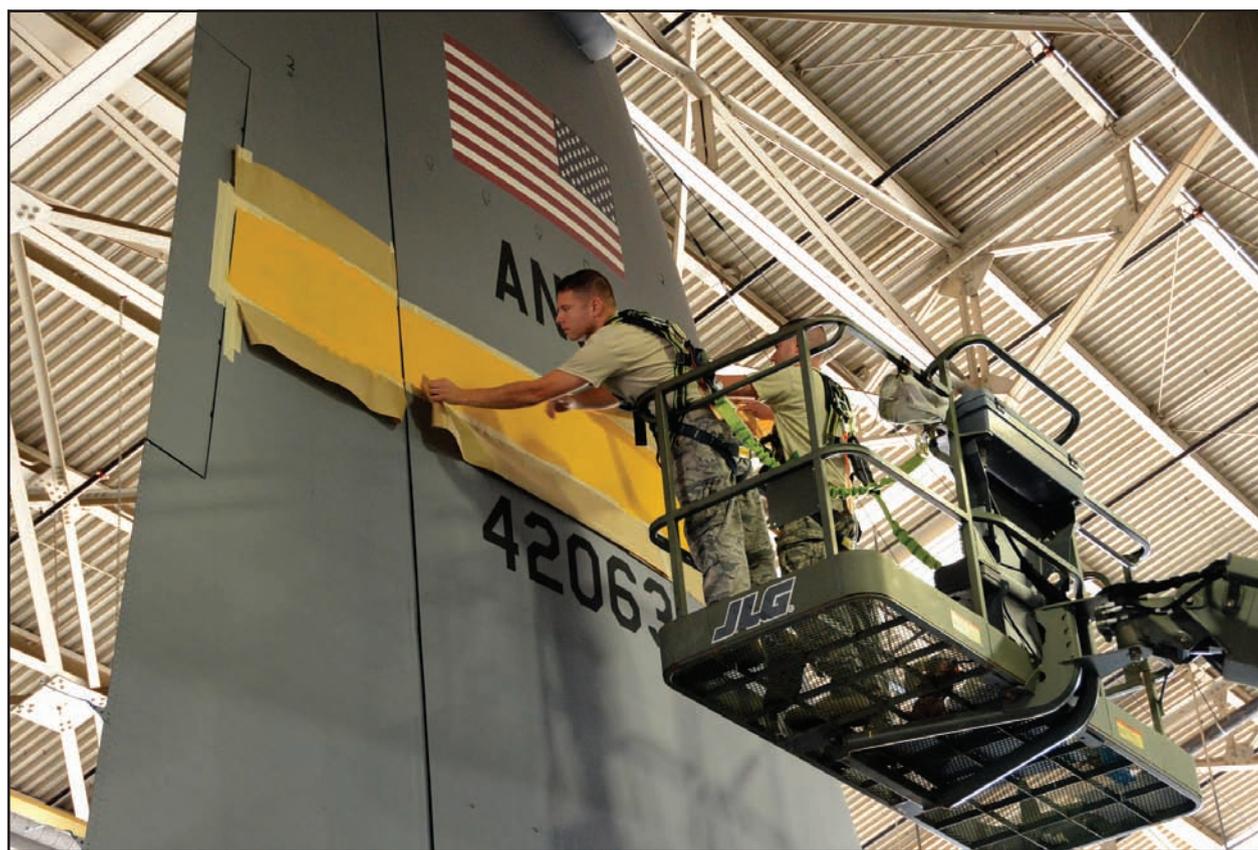
"We are now inextricably tied to the tactical airlift mission and our conversion to the venerable Hercules points to a very bright future at Bradley," said Detorie.

With a flight line full of iron, the Airmen of the 103rd Airlift Wing have their attention fixed on the future, with a focus on completing the aircraft conversion process.

"Now we can focus on our developing mission," said Martin.

The unit is projected to achieve initial

operational capability in 2016, at which time they will move beyond the conversion stage. In the meantime, the men and women of the Flying Yankees continue to focus on developing and sharpening their skills.



One year after the arrival of the first C-130H Hercules aircraft at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Conn., the eighth and final aircraft receives tail paint in the hangar, Oct. 17. The Flying Yankees' acceptance of the final aircraft assigned to the 103rd Airlift Wing on Oct. 15, marks an important milestone in the unit's conversion to the C-130H mission. (Photo by Master Sgt. Erin McNamara, 103rd AW Public Affairs)

Guard. This newly assigned eighth C-130H is still being customized by Master Sgt. Joseph Mazzie, and Tech. Sgt. Paul Martin, both structural maintainers assigned to the 103rd Maintenance Group.

Pentagon Spokesman Notes Operation United Assistance Progress

ARMY SGT. 1ST CLASS TYRONE C. MARSHALL JR.
DoD NEWS, DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16, 2014 - The U.S. military response to the outbreak of Ebola in Liberia continues to progress, with facilities expected to be fully operational next week, Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby said today.

Speaking during a State Department news conference, Kirby provided an update on Operation United Assistance.

"Our forces on the ground in Liberia continue to make progress in setting up infrastructure and facilities to support the international response," he said.

"Setup has been complete on the 25-bed hospital, and we expect it to be fully operational with U.S. Public Health Service medical workers taking responsibility for that unit next week, Kirby said. "Construction continues on the Ebola treatment facilities, with the first expected to be completed by the end of the month."

Mobile medical labs

In the interim, Kirby said, personnel from the U.S. Naval Medical Research Center continue to operate three mobile medical labs, which provide 24-hour turnaround results on samples, with more than 1,200 total samples having been processed to date. The admiral emphasized that no U.S. military personnel will be providing direct patient care to the local population.

"We're focused on four lines of effort, and only four lines effort: command and control, logistics support, training and engineering."

Additionally, Kirby said, an air bridge has been set up in Senegal to help logistics flow, because some areas have no roads, and many roads that do exist are inundated with mud. "We now have Ospreys that are helping speed the delivery of resources, supplies and troops to some of these very remote areas where these labs are being set up," he said.

Avoiding overburdening infrastructure

The admiral also noted the Defense Department recognizes the need not to overburden the already burdened infrastructure in Liberia.

"We've been asked why there aren't greater troop numbers in Liberia at a faster rate," he said, "but there's only so much impact that Liberia and the infrastructure can take from the U.S. military. We just can't get in there

lock, stock and barrel without thinking about the impact on their own infrastructure.

"So we have to do this carefully, in a measured, deliberate way," he continued. "But we believe that the kinds of capabilities that we're contributing in terms of ... logistics and training are exactly the kinds of things we're really good at doing in an expeditionary environment."

Life Lines

CTNG Behavioral Health Help Line - **1-855-800-0120**

Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline - **1-800-984-8523**

Emergency - **911**

www.armyfamiliesonline.org - **1-800-833-6622**

www.militaryonesource.com - **1-800-342-9647**

National Suicide Hotline - **1-800-SUICIDE**

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org - **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

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(Front Page American Flag photo by Buddy Altobello)

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The *Connecticut Guardian* is an authorized publication for and in the interest of, the personnel of the Connecticut National Guard, State Military Department, State Militia and their families. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the CTNG Hartford Public Affairs Office and is not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, and the Department of the Army or the Department of the Air Force. The *Connecticut Guardian* is published monthly in accordance with AR 360-1 and is printed through the Government Printing Office.

Deadline for submissions is noon on November 20 for the December Issue and December 18 for the January Issue. Circulation: 7,800

The Road Isn't Easy: New Soldiers Welcomed During Battle Handoff

STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Battle Handoff ceremonies celebrate the transition and introduction of Recruiting Sustainment Program phase 5 (gold-phase) Soldiers to their new National Guard units. After finishing BCT and IET, many gold-phase Soldiers have completed more than a full year of enlistment, and have met the RSP requirements necessary to join their units.

Dozens of the Connecticut Army National Guard's newest RSP graduates met their leaders at a Battle Handoff ceremony at Camp Niantic, Oct. 5. Many received awards, citations, handshakes and words of encouragement from Connecticut Army National Guard leaders, including Brig. Gen. Mark Russo, CTARNG land component commander and assistant adjutant general.

In his remarks to the graduating Soldiers and their families, Russo welcomed them to the Guard and ensured them that he would see them on the trail.

Russo affirmed he loved talking to Soldiers and their families, but wanted to be clear about expectations.

He said that the new Soldiers will no longer have drill sergeants telling them what to do and maintaining their schedules. He said the Soldiers' commitment to the Guard will take much self-motivation, and that the road is not easy.

"It's up to you to meet the Guard's standards," Russo said.

New infantryman, Pvt. Travis Lore from Danbury will join his assigned unit, A Co. 1-102nd Infantry, for training for the first time in November. He said he enlisted to experience adventure, and that he is looking forward to a military deployment.

Pfc. Daniel Sanchez from Rocky Hill is also one of A Co. 1-102nd Infantry's newest Soldiers. Sanchez said he came to the U.S. from Columbia in 1999 when he was 10 years old. He said he joined the Guard to give back to this country what it had given to his family.

Both Soldiers plan on taking advantage of

Connecticut's state school tuition waiver to complete their bachelor degrees.

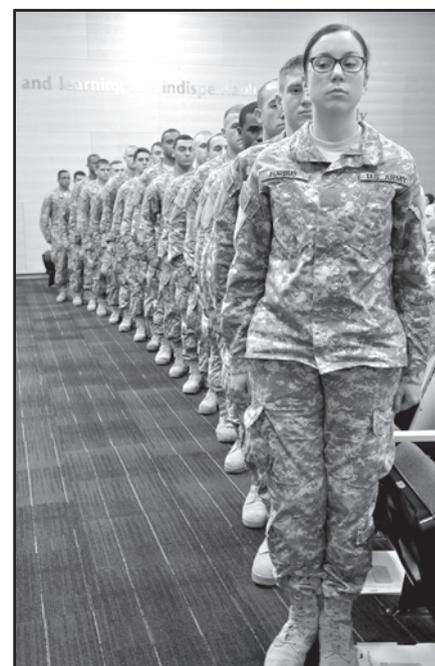
According to *army.mil*, since instituting the Recruiting Sustainment Program, the Army National Guard has achieved the lowest Soldier loss rate of the three Army components.



Pvt. Travis Lore and Pfc. Daniel Sanchez fill out forms for their new unit, A Co. 1-102 Inf. after a battle handoff ceremony at Camp Niantic, Oct. 5. Both Soldiers said they are looking forward to actively training with their new unit. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Benjamin Simon, JFHQ Public Affairs)



Brig. Gen. Mark A. Russo, CTARNG Assistant Adjutant General, addresses the CTARNG's newest Soldiers at a Battle Handoff ceremony at Camp Niantic, Oct. 5. Russo said the road is not easy and it's up to Soldiers to meet the Guard's standards. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ben Simon, JFHQ Public Affairs)



Soldiers prepare to meet their new unit commanders at a CTARNG Battle Handoff ceremony at Camp Niantic, Oct. 5. The Soldiers, recent graduates from Basic Training and IET, completed their Recruit Sustainment Program Training and will join their new CTARNG units for November drill. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ben Simon, JFHQ Public Affairs)

Finding Strength After

SGT. 1ST CLASS DEBBI NEWTON
STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NCO

It's been 10 years since Company C, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment deployed to Iraq as the fourth company of the 39th Infantry Brigade from the Arkansas Army National Guard. To some, it seems like yesterday. On any given day, their physical and emotional wounds are still raw. On any given day, their anger over the deaths of Sgt. Felix DelGreco and Spec. Robert Hoyt is as strong as it was when the enemy killed their fellow unit members. On any given day, their laughter and smiles over shared stories of their brothers-in-arms are as bright as the summer sun.

It hasn't been an easy 10 years for any of them, but they are survivors and they are finding their way through the memories, the heartache, the anger and the pain.

"We had an all-star team going in to Iraq," said Sgt. 1st Class Mark Stuart, now with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1109th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group. "When we found out about the deployment, we asked for volunteers. We needed 36 Soldiers and had more than 50 volunteer. Soldiers were chosen based on interviews that were conducted. Both DelGreco and Hoyt volunteered from Bravo Company."

Going into the mission, the infantrymen believed they were on a peacekeeping mission, but when they got to Kuwait, they heard that everything was blowing up in Iraq and their mission would be changing.

"We spent the first 24 hours in Iraq getting to our base," said Stuart. "We got there and there were mortars going off. One of the Arkansas guys was killed on the first day there. We had the next day off and that evening we were ordered to go and get those mortars."

The Soldiers spent the night on the line and were on their way back to base around 7:30 a.m. It was the start of their third day in country.

April 9, 2004

"It was a beautiful day weather-wise and then we drove right into it," said Stuart. "All Hell broke loose."

They were driving along a farm road with dikes on either side headed to a regular road, when an IED exploded.

"It felt like I'd been run over by a truck," Stuart said of the impact from the blast. "The gunner in the truck in front of us said he saw our truck's back end up in the air. We were on our front wheels. We turned around and saw the truck DelGreco was the gunner in facing us. There was this huge crater. The tires were blown out. Windows were broken. Someone was behind the wheel. There was a Soldier on the ground with a medic pointing to where the gunfire was. It was coming from behind me."

Stuart said he started firing in the direction of the gunfire and suddenly felt like he had been hit by a baseball bat. He blacked out and woke up to hear .50 caliber guns heading towards them. Reinforcements from the base were on their way. He found out later that an enemy round had hit his helmet. He still has that helmet.

"I remember thinking 'Yesterday they killed Bill Labadie (from Arkansas), today they killed DelGreco. Who will it be tomorrow?'" said Stuart. "It's all a numbers game. We will all be dead by a certain date."

Stuart said once the four-vehicle convoy had been hit by the IED, everything the 102nd Soldiers did was "very successful, perfectly executed," when talking about the security formation the vehicles went into.

Despite that, the Connecticut Soldiers never saw the enemy.

"They shot the shit out of us and they were gone," said Stuart. "It felt like forever, but probably, it was all said and done in a minute, maybe two."

Sgt. Felix DelGreco

DelGreco was a curious and bright young man according to Stuart. He kept photos of Iraqi children in his locker. He had balance in his life. He volunteered for the West Point security mission as part of Noble Eagle, he volunteered to go to Bosnia in 2001 and he volunteered for the mission to Iraq.

"Felix always carried a little green notebook - always," said Stuart. "He wrote down quotes from people. Things he heard them say, silly or profound. He had a ton of quotes."

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Eichner remembers DelGreco as a "funny kid."

"He wrote poetry, made up his own language and made weird faces," said Eichner. "He was a cook that transferred to the infantry. He had heart. I remember on one tough road march during training, not only did he make the time hack, but out of all the contenders, he was one of three to finish the thing."

Getting through the day

When the patrol got back to base, the Soldiers were numb and angry. They sat together and slowly the pieces of the puzzle about what had just happened came together. Nobody saw everything, but everybody saw something, said Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Ramos.

"I was so tired. I slept in my uniform in full battle rattle," said Ramos. "It was so early in the beginning of the deployment, such a whirlwind. I don't think I gave myself time to think about it."

Looking back over the past 10 years, Ramos doesn't think he has changed much. He says he is a stronger person and all-around more focused.

"I'm a more grown-up version of me now," he said.

"DelGreco was killed our third day in country and it was already our troop's second KIA," said Eichner. "We were doing the math and none of us thought we would

make it after that. Within the first week the base was pounded with mortars and rockets, we were in multiple ambushes, firefights and IED attacks, had friendly wounded and dead; I became numb and no longer feared death. It was inevitable. That is how I survived. We had jumped into one of the deadliest months in Iraq's history head first and it set the pace. DelGreco's sacrifice saved many of our lives."

"For that whole group of us, the shine came off the world that day," said Stuart. He says he now makes better decisions and is more responsible than he was before DelGreco's death.

"When DelGreco died, we all grew up," said Stuart.

December 11, 2004

On another beautiful, sunny day in Iraq, members of Company C were on a convoy mission escorting unexploded ordnance to and from the Taji/Baghdad area to Northern Iraq along the Turkish border.

"We had tractor trailers filled with weapons and explosives in between our gun trucks," said Eichner. "We were on a secondary road when a massive IED packed with ball bearings blasted Hoyt's HMMWV. The explosion shredded through the armor and blew Rob's door open and him right out it. The tractor trailer behind Hoyt's HMMWV also had the windshield blown out and as they swerved they ran over Rob's leg. The medics were working on Hoyt and got him stable, so we thought. It took quite some time for the birds to get there. His last words as he was loaded onto the MEDIVAC were, 'I love you guys'."

Hoyt did not make it.

The next day, members of the unit sat in a circle and talked about what they saw, as they did with DelGreco. Again, this served two purposes: it gave the Soldiers a chance to talk about what happened, and it gave them an opportunity to put all the pieces together to get the big picture.

"Walking out I felt better," said Ramos. "We realized what happened, just happened."

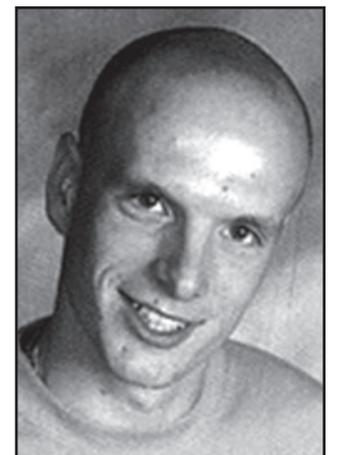
Spec. Robert Hoyt

Hoyt also volunteered for the Company C deployment.

"He was the kind of kid you told to dig a hole and he didn't stop until you told him to," said Stuart. "He was a good Soldier and a fun loving kid."

Eichner said Hoyt swapped leave with him by a few days so Eichner could make it home for a friend's wedding. He and Hoyt hung out together for a week of that leave.

"Hoyt was the silent killer," said Eichner. "He was all



Surviving War in Iraq

business and a model Soldier. He was quiet, but he knew how to have a good time.”

Hoyt was born on the 4th of July and was 21 when he died. Prior to joining the Connecticut Army National Guard, Hoyt had a dream of a music career, but surprised everyone when he enlisted.

“When we lost Hoyt it was a hard blow reminding us that the tour was far from over. I could never let my guard down, and took every mission as if it would be my last,” said Eichner.

Coming Home

“Coming home without Felix and Rob felt like we failed the mission,” said Eichner. “We were a small, tight group and we missed our brothers.”

Shortly after returning home, a large group of Soldiers from Charlie Company started meeting at the Rocky Hill VET Center. Some of the guys were struggling with everything that had happened and having a hard time adjusting to being home, and many others went to support their brothers. Eichner said it was kind of fun at times to go hang out and share stories.

Stuart said his transition home was tough. He was sent home early in the deployment due to an injury he suffered. Two other members of the unit were also home on medical and another one on leave when Hoyt was killed.

“It was worse to be home,” said Stuart. “I felt like a man without a country. I felt like I had no control. It was tough not being able to talk to anyone from the unit to find out what had happened. I had feelings of guilt like I could have done something to prevent it. I still do. It comes and it goes. You feel bad, but then you move on with the next thing you have to do that day.”

Stuart said he had a tough time while he was at a medical unit at Fort Hood, Texas. He and his wife of 20 years, Cathy, went through some very rough times together.

“She told me I needed to get help if I wanted our marriage to survive,” said Stuart. “The freezer door would slam and it would sound like an incoming round. Fireworks were tough. There was reckless, destructive behavior. Speeding was safety. The headshrinker you talk to there (Fort Hood) was very helpful. When I got back to Connecticut, I saw a guy at the sub base.

“Back then, everything was healed with medication,” he continued. “Drinking, over medicating, anger, reckless

or aggressive driving are common. My wife is very strong and independent. She is a huge supporter and assists Soldiers in need, whenever and where ever they need it.”

Stuart said it is important to get help if you need it. He said the military is getting better about not stigmatizing those who do get help and encourages people to seek assistance.

“People who needed help then and didn’t get it and are just train wrecks,” said Stuart. “Talking about it openly helps. It may not seem manly or cool, but having a professional pull something out of that you didn’t know was there is very healthy.”

Ramos also encourages Soldiers to seek the help they may need.

and those coming behind us.”

Remembering DelGreco and Hoyt

Every year, on the anniversary of DelGreco’s death, members of his unit visit his grave. Every year, on the anniversary of Hoyt’s death, members of his unit visit his grave. They share a drink with each other. They share stories of their fallen brothers; they catch up with each others’ lives. They remember. And they heal.

Their numbers fluctuate each year due to work, school, deployments and family life. Some members of Company C have moved out of state and come back when they can.

“It is important to us,” said Eichner. “Those two days changed our lives. It is nice to reminisce and share stories from the deployment. We hear the same stories from the same days from each other’s perspectives and only we know what those days were like. Seeing each other around the gravesites telling these stories reminds us of the support we still have for each other.”

DelGreco and Hoyt’s sisters, Alexa DelGreco and Amber Hoyt, have become very important to this closely knit band of brothers.

The DelGreco family visits Felix’s gravesite each year, but not usually at the same time as the Soldiers. Amber Hoyt and her family try to be at Rob’s grave site at the same time as his military brothers. She makes arrangements for all of them to go out for lunch together afterwards.

“Alexa and Amber are very involved in the fabric of our group,” said Stuart.

“I look forward to those two days,” said Eichner. “They are no longer days to mourn but two days of the year I can look upon as holidays, two days to celebrate the lives of two great friends, two American warriors lost in battle that I am proud to help keep their legacy alive.”

Stuart, Eichner, Ramos and the rest of Company C have been through a lot together and have come out of it strong. The trio of senior NCOs said it is important to talk openly about their experiences.

“We are in a position where we can talk about it,” said Stuart. “We need to encourage people to seek assistance when they need it.”

Editor’s Note: For information on resources that are available in Connecticut, see “Not Alone - Help is There for Those in Need” on page 6.



Those who deployed to Iraq in 2004 with Company C, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry, gather each year at Sgt. Felix DelGreco’s gravesite to reminisce, share stories and continue the healing process. DelGreco was killed April 9, 2004, three days after arriving in Iraq. The Soldiers and former Soldiers also gather on Dec. 11 at Spec. Robert Hoyt’s gravesite to honor the other Connecticut Guardsman who was killed on their deployment. (Photo courtesy Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Ramos, Company D, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment)

“Our group of guys is a good example of getting help,” said Ramos. “You don’t have to act like it didn’t affect you because it did affect you.”

But he also cautions against using bad experiences as an excuse to behave badly.

“Some Soldiers think when they come back their mission is done,” he said. “They feel entitled. They need to remember the seven Army values and live by them. The mission doesn’t stop. Having survived, having seen battle, it’s now time to share what you have learned. We have to be here to help our fellow Soldiers

Not Alone: Help is There for Those in Need

SGT. 1ST CLASS DEBBI NEWTON
STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NCO

“We have come a long way in reducing the stigma associated with seeking help for behavioral health concerns,” said Maj. Javier Alvarado. “Stepping forward doesn’t mean a military career is over. We will work towards getting the Soldier back to work with no restrictions. Commanders only want to know when their Soldier is ready to come back to work. They don’t want to know the details.”

Behavioral health officer for the Connecticut Army National Guard, Alvarado has been actively involved in the behavioral health of Soldiers since 2000 when he was first assigned to the 118th Medical Battalion. Five years later, he was attached to the Connecticut Medical Detachment, where he continues to work with Soldiers today.

His staff includes three licensed clinical social workers, a psychologist, a behavioral health technician and two civilian behavioral health specialists.

His main focuses are identifying those who are at risk for suicide, getting them the help they need and providing the tools leaders, peers, subordinates and family members need to recognize those at risk.

“Less than half the suicides the Connecticut National Guard have seen are Soldiers or Airmen who have deployed,” said Alvarado.

“The demographics are white males under the age of 25 and older white males.”

There are many risk factors that increase the chance that someone may look to suicide as a way to solve their problems: mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and PTSD; substance abuse such as alcohol and prescription drug overuse; and other stressors such as relationship problems, employment and financial concerns.

“If you know someone who has committed suicide,

you are more likely to see that as an option yourself,” he said. “That is why postvention is so important. We get out to units as quickly as possible to offer counseling to those in need and to help people find ways to deal with the suicide.”

Alvarado said it is important for noncommissioned officers to know their people, to have a connection with them. Knowing a person and knowing their situations can help identify those in need of behavioral health services and can save lives.

“Sometimes, just someone asking how you are doing may make the difference,” he said. “You have to have that human connection. People will share if they know you will listen.”

There are many resources in Connecticut that Alvarado and his team can get a Soldier to. The Connecticut National Guard maintains an effective military/civilian connection that is strongly supported by the adjutant general and personnel directorate.

Having that support has enabled the Connecticut Guard behavioral health team to reach out to, and partner with, civilian agencies that can provide services for those in need.

“The TAG has given us the leeway to form partnerships in the community that support our Soldiers,” said Alvarado.

“We have been able to produce brochures in partnership with community agencies that identify many of the programs that are available. There are a lot of states that are nowhere near Connecticut in terms of resources.”

Once a Soldier has asked for help, or been identified as needing assistance, the behavioral health team will assess the need, find out where the Soldier lives and who they live with and identify the resources close by.

Those resources could include focused individual counseling, education classes on such things as financial

management or behavior modification treatment provided as an out-patient or in a residential setting.

“Some programs only deal with one behavior such as alcohol abuse, so we need to know what issues the Soldier is dealing with and which programs will provide the tools needed,” said Alvarado.

“We have 400 clinicians in Connecticut that can step in and provide immediate counseling; we even have the resources to provide gas cards or transportation to and from treatment. There are VA satellite offices throughout the state. We will do whatever we need to do to support our Soldiers.”

Alvarado said it is very often a family member that will notice at-risk behavior before anyone else, but everyone needs to be able to ask someone if they are thinking about suicide and to know who to call for immediate help.

The behavioral health team consults with commanders to identify issues early, intervene and provide the services necessary.

“We will respond anytime, anywhere,” said Alvarado. “If a Soldier has been arrested, he or she will be directed to behavioral health for support, but not as a punitive action. Was the arrest the result of a behavioral health issue? If so, we can assist in getting the Soldier the help he or she may need.”

Alvarado encourages leaders and commanders to know their people. In an age of texting and social media, the human contact approach is still the best.

“Drive to your Soldiers’ homes if you think something is not right,” he said. “Call them. Make sure your Soldier gets the help he or she needs and deserves. We work together as part of a team.”

If you or someone you know needs to talk to a behavioral health specialist, call the toll-free Connecticut National Guard Behavioral Health Helpline at 855-800-0120. The helpline is available 24 hours a day.

RRB Change of Command Ceremony Welcomes Wilkinson

STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Outgoing 6th Recruiting and Retention Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Michael J. Falk, when referring to his successful tenure as RRB commander, said his job was to put peanut butter on the bread, but not to spread it around.

The mood at a change of command ceremony at Camp Niantic, Oct. 5, welcoming incoming 6th RRB commander, Maj. Matthew D. Wilkinson, was upbeat and cheerful.

During his five years as RRB commander, Falk oversaw its conversion from a detachment to a fully operational recruitment battalion and helped to raise the overall personnel strength of the Connecticut Army National Guard by 350 Soldiers.

Wilkinson said he would maintain the standards Falk had established within the RRB and look for new ways to attract qualified candidates into the ranks.

Wilkinson, who joined the military in 1985, most recently served as executive officer to the Maj. Gen. Thaddeus J. Martin, Connecticut’s adjutant general.

Falk received his commission in 1989. He will serve as the new TAG executive officer and is currently attending the U.S. Army War College.

Both men said they are looking forward to their new positions, and thanked their families and peers for their years of support.

Incoming RRB commander, Maj. Matthew D. Wilkinson addresses the audience in attendance during a change of command ceremony at Camp Niantic, Oct. 5. Wilkinson said he will maintain the high standards that Falk established for the 6th RRB. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ Public Affairs)



3-126 to go Wheels Up in FY2016

STAFF SGT. JERRY BOFFEN & STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Connecticut Army National Guard is getting a new medical evacuation unit.

One UH-60 M Black Hawk medical evacuation helicopter will soon be delivered to the Connecticut Army Aviation Support Facility from the New Hampshire Army National Guard. Two more UH-60 M's will follow later in 2015.

The new 3-126 Aviation Medical Detachment – not even officially activated yet — already has three Soldiers currently attending the 68W Health Care Specialist School course and two Soldiers waiting to attend the Army Flight Medic Course.

“We have been working to get folks on board early and trained so that when the unit is stood up we can hit the ground running,” said Col. Scott Panagrosso, Connecticut State Army Aviation Officer.

If their manning is filled and their equipment is ready, the new 3-126 is expected to be up and running as early as Oct. 1, 2015.

The unit's mission will entail providing aviation evacuation support for state emergencies and maintaining readiness for federal call-ups.

“[The unit] is part of a new movement National Guard-wide to provide medevac-style assets to every state,” Panagrosso said. “This was a result of lessons learned in OIF and OEF and realizing that the medevac capabilities in existence weren't enough for 1-hour transport of Soldiers to hospitals or medical treatment facilities.”

Sgt. Maj. Anthony Savino, AASF installation sergeant major, said everyone is looking forward to the 3-126 getting off the ground.

He said it's been a long process and a challenge, but the reward of having a medevac unit in Connecticut will be worth all the effort.

“Think, nine-line medevac,” he said.

Although the Connecticut National Guard has responded to state emergencies with air support in the past, the crews aboard were not able to provide direct medical support, Savino said.

The 3-126 will now provide this capability.

“The best way to look at it,” Panagrosso said, “is that today we can move injured personnel. Tomorrow we'll be able to move and treat personnel en route.”

According to the United States Army School of Aviation medicine, the mission of U.S. Army Flight Medics is to provide in-flight medical care to the injured and ill aboard air ambulances in combat or peacetime operations.

Staff Sgt. John Krause, Sgt. Danielle Marque, and Sgt. Sam Dybdhal are currently attending the 68W Health Care Specialist School. They will join Sgt. Ian Bergham and Staff Sgt. Al Townsend at the Flight Medic Course before starting their assignments with the 3-126 in 2015.

The new 3-126 Detachment will also consist of maintenance and support sections. Savino said they intend to fill those positions in the near future.

Additionally, the National Guard Bureau is scheduled

to host new equipment training on the UH-60 M during the first half of next year at the Western ARNG Aviation Training Site in Arizona. Connecticut plans on sending several personnel such as pilots and mechanics to this

training, said Panagrosso.

He said they also intend to train with their sister states, Massachusetts and Vermont, who already have existing medevac units, to keep their proficiencies up.



AASF is scheduled to receive three Black Hawk helicopters to support the new 3-126 Aviation Detachment. The detachment's mission will be to support state emergencies and respond to federal call-ups. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ Public Affairs)



A Medevac crew from Task Force Wolfpack, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, Fort Bragg, practices hoist lowering from a HH-60 Black Hawk, May 9, 2012. The Connecticut Army National Guard is slated to stand up a similar Medevac unit in 2016. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Donna Davis, 40th Public Affairs Detachment)

Helping Service Members Find Employment Passion for Lorraine Baltimore

SGT. 1ST CLASS DEBBI NEWTON
STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NCO

Lorraine Baltimore met a woman at a human resources professionals meeting that was involved in the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and a spark was ignited. She investigated ESGR more, discovered a place to use her talents and became a volunteer. That spark has led her to the position she holds today – employment coordinator for Veterans and Service members.

“The original focus was on the Guard and Reserve,” said Baltimore. “Most of the people I work with are in the Guard, but we also work with Reservists and Veterans. The Guard and Reserve are really starting to know I exist and the active components are learning little by little.”

That chance encounter during the HR meeting and her subsequent research led Baltimore to an understanding of what ESGR is and what human resources professionals could do to partner with the military. She spent two years as an employer outreach volunteer with ESGR before being recommended by then-ESGR chairman Wayne Travers for the position she currently holds as employment coordinator, a position she has held for two years.

Baltimore was recruiting mostly in the healthcare profession, concentrating on employee relations within hospitals and the healthcare system. She had her own consulting business, had spent 15 years in the field and had no connection to the military prior to her work with ESGR.

“It was something that built up inside me after I met that woman,” Baltimore said. “It seemed to be the right thing to do, the perfect melding of HR and service. It was the right kind of match and I knew I would be helpful. Helping Veterans and Service members find employment has now become my passion.”

One of the Soldiers Baltimore has helped find a job for is Staff Sgt. Jose Santiago of the 250th Engineer Company. Santiago was hired in the summer of 2013 on an ADOS tour working for the Connecticut National Guard. Knowing the job was not permanent, Santiago began his job search by attending job fairs where he met Baltimore.

“She helped me write my resume and cover letter, reviewed my job applications and gave me her professional opinion,” said Santiago. “She helped me sign up on the Hero2Hired website which I used here and there while looking for a job.”

Santiago said going to the job fairs and the help he received from Baltimore are responsible for the job with US Foods that he found a year ago. He is now waiting to start his new job with the Connecticut Department of Transportation as a bridge repair specialist, a job he also credits to Baltimore.

“She helped me word my military experience into civilian terms,” he said. “I showed her videos of what we do in the 250th to help her understand the job. I would not have the job at DOT without her advice.”

Baltimore shares office space with ESGR specialists Josh Mead and Ben Beaudry in the Career Center at the

William A. O’Neill Armory in Hartford. There, they assist Service members in finding jobs and provide the services necessary to help prepare for the job search.

Resume writing, career counseling, finding appropriate resources, connecting with employers and preparing for interviews are among the services offered. They conduct briefings at Yellow Ribbon Reintegration events, SRPs and RSRPs and offer their services during unit periodic health assessments. Baltimore said she also provides employer briefings and will brief individual employers as needed.

In the two years since the employment coordinator position was established, Baltimore said a little more than 200 Veterans and Service members have been hired, some directly and some indirectly through the resources offered.

“Some people come to us for advice and then go out on their own to find jobs,” said Baltimore. “Others are directly hired based on services we provided. It is almost split equally. Plus there are the untrackables, the unknowns. Those that have attended our briefings and used what they learned there in their job searches, but that have not come to us for assistance.”

Baltimore urges people looking for jobs to register with Hero2Hired through the Veterans Employment Center on the E-Benefits website. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden’s Joining Forces employment initiative, the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Defense and Education, the Small Business Administration and the Office of Personnel Management have all collaborated to design and develop the VEC to incorporate the best features of existing online employment tools into one location.

“You need to be registered in DEERS and use your CAC to log into the site,” said Baltimore. “It is primarily for Service members and family members, but also for employers. If anyone has trouble getting on the site, we can help smooth the way.”

Baltimore’s assistance doesn’t end with helping people register on Hero2Hired, or preparing job applications.

“She doesn’t walk away when you find a job,” said Santiago. “Her priority is always with those who don’t have jobs, but she has continued working with me to help me further my career goals. I may have to wait at times while she works with others, but she is always there. She has even met me off work hours. She wants to help Soldiers who need jobs.”

Baltimore’s only connection to the military before volunteering with ESGR, were a couple of family members who served, but she said she didn’t fully understand what that service entailed.

“I have come to intimately understand the sacrifices people make to do what they do and it has really impacted me,” said a visibly emotional Baltimore. “As one gets older, one develops a greater appreciation for things. My work has given me a true appreciation and understanding. I do have a soft spot in my heart for our Service members.”

Hero2Hired Program Transitions Capabilities to New, Centralized Job Resources Website

WASHINGTON - First Lady Michelle Obama recently announced the launch of the Veterans Employment Center (VEC) as a significant milestone of the Obama Administration’s efforts to consolidate the federal government’s web-based veteran hiring tools. The VEC, housed on the Department of Veterans Affairs eBenefits home page (www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs), provides a one-stop shop for veterans seeking employment.

In support of the administration’s efforts, Family and Employer Programs and Policy (FEPP), within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, has transitioned the online tools of Hero2Hired (H2H) from the H2H.jobs website (www.h2h.jobs) to the VEC, joining a variety of online systems under one umbrella.

“The transition to the Veterans Employment Center supports the best interests of our service members and families over the long term, and our H2H Employment Coordinators and volunteers will help ensure a smooth transition for job seekers and employers,” said Marie Balocki, Acting Deputy Director of FEPP.

H2H Employment Coordinators will assist job seekers and employers with VEC enrollment and continue to provide one-on-one resume development, interviewing skills and local employment resources.

“The heart and success of Hero2Hired has always been the personal touch provided by the 56 H2H Employment Coordinators,” said Balocki. “The transition to the Veterans Employment Center will not impact the excellent customer service they provide to service members and families.”

Throughout and beyond this transition, the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor will remain committed to addressing the unemployment of Reserve Component members, veterans and families. As part of the overall effort, FEPP will keep pushing for the unique needs of Reserve Component members and families and continual enhancements to the VEC user experience.

The H2H.jobs website will remain online to provide a link to the VEC, contact information for the H2H Employment Coordinators and links to H2H strategic partners. H2H Employment Coordinators are located in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

103rd Wing Airmen Receive Signs of Support from Community

SENIOR AIRMAN JENNIFER PIERCE
103RD AIRLIFT WING, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BRADLEY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE - East Granby, Connecticut — As Guardsmen leave Bradley Air National Guard Base, they see two signs that are prominently displayed on the property across the street. One sign's message is "Aim High...Fly, Fight, Win," and the other sign includes an American flag and the message, "CT Residents Thank You For Your Service."

The signs belong to Fillmore Express Inc., a small business located at 71 Nicholson Road. The signs have had a positive impact for the Airmen assigned to the base, instilling a sense of local community support for their mission.

As a show of gratitude, the Fillmore employees and their family members were invited to participate in a base tour here, Oct. 4.

"We've been neighbors forever and there's a lot of

stuff going on overseas," said Scott Fillmore, operations manager for Fillmore Express Inc.

"I just thought it was necessary to put the signs up," said Fillmore. "I asked Chief Master Sgt. Patrick Wheeler what the Air Force motto was and what the base colors were, so I figured we could make signs working with that. Ultimately, I just wanted to say thank you in a simple way so everybody on the base could be aware that we support them."

Fillmore Express Inc. is a local trucking company that delivers refrigerated food to the New York, New Jersey, and Boston areas typically delivering foods to supermarkets and grocery store chains. It's a small company with 12 employees, including truck drivers and office staff.

"My father started the company 45 years ago, and now it's a family business," Fillmore said. "Where our location is now right across the street from the base has been interesting for us. We all always look over and try to

catch a glimpse of the planes, so having this opportunity to actually be here and see the planes is awesome. I've never been this close to a military plane."

The base tour included a visit to the hangar and a tour of a C-130H Hercules aircraft. Fillmore, along with his employees and family members, were able to sit in the cockpit and walk through the aircraft while hearing about the Hercules' mission and capabilities.

Col. Frederick Miclon, vice commander of the 103rd Airlift Wing, participated in the C-130H portion of the tour and presented Fillmore with a 103rd Airlift Wing challenge coin, thanking him for his support to the Bradley Air National Guard Base and its Airmen.

As the tour concluded, Fillmore and the rest of his tour group expressed their excitement about having been on base.

"We are here for you all," said Fillmore. "We are here to help out if you ever need any help from us and we're always looking out for you."



Chief Master Sgt. Patrick Wheeler, assigned to the 103rd Maintenance Squadron, and Tech. Sgt. Tufic Paone, loadmaster with the 103rd Operations Group, help conduct a tour given to Fillmore Express Inc. employees and their family members on a C-130H Hercules aircraft at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Connecticut, Oct. 4. (Photo by Senior Airman Jennifer Pierce, 103rd AW Public Affairs)

See Your Tax Assessor ASAP

STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Looking to save a few dollars? You might want to call or visit your local tax assessor soon.

According to Connecticut General Statute, Title 12, Chapter 203, Section 12/81-12/93, all Veterans, and members of the Connecticut National Guard who are residents of the state may be eligible to receive Connecticut property tax exemptions and reductions.

Section 12-81 (53): One motor vehicle belonging to every currently serving Connecticut service member is eligible for tax exemption. This exemption includes National Guard members and Reservists.

Section 12-81 (19): Connecticut Service members and Veterans are eligible for additional property tax reductions (amounts vary by individual town and city).

Section 12-81 (20): Veterans with VA service connected disability ratings are eligible for additional property tax reductions. Surviving spouses, minor children and surviving parents of deceased Veterans are also eligible for property tax reductions.

Joint Operations Center Operations Sergeant, Master Sgt. Stuart Topliff, who is also the tax assessor for the town of Rocky Hill, Connecticut, said it's the

responsibility of individual Veterans and service members to proactively apply for these exemptions.

Applications for tax exemptions and reductions are available from your local assessor's office and must be filed *each* year. Exemption eligibility does not automatically carry over year to year.

Eligible service members and Veterans should submit their annual exemption applications to their local assessor's office between Oct. 1 and July 1 each year.

Disabled Veterans and service members, with proof of VA disability ratings, have until March to file with their towns.

Fortunately, if property taxes have already been paid for the tax year, Topliff said Veterans and service members are entitled to apply for refunds but generally no later than Dec. 31 of the year that the tax payment was due.

So set yourself a reminder for the fall of each year to visit your local tax assessor and submit your applications – and save yourself a few bucks.

Visit www.cga.ct.gov for more information on this law and others. Master Sgt. Topliff encourages Soldiers, Airmen, Veterans and town officials with questions or who need assistance to contact him at 860-258-2722, stopliff@rockyhillct.gov, or stuart.w.topliff.mil@mail.mil.

DD 214 with Electronic Signatures now Accepted at Town Halls

STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

According to the Connecticut Office of the Public Records Administrator, Veterans can now officially file DD 214's containing electronic certified signatures at their town halls.

Public Memorandum 102, *Filing of Military Discharge Documents*, was released on Oct. 1. Prior to this notice, Connecticut required that town halls only accept DD 214s containing physical signatures, or legal notarization.

Veterans who file their DD 214's with their town halls are eligible to receive decreased property tax rates, subject to their town regulations.

Connecticut Public Records Administrator, LeAnn R. Power, said she is pleased that this legal finding will simplify the military record filing process for Veterans. She encourages anyone with questions to contact her: at 860-757-6540.

Licensure, Certification Reimbursement for ARNG Soldiers

STATE EDUCATION OFFICE

Are you starting or interested in a new career?

The Army National Guard offers free testing via a reimbursement process for hundreds of nationally and State accredited exams and licensures. A few of these test and certifications include the United States Medical Licensing Examination, Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination, Commercial Driver License, Certified Defense Financial Manager, Project Management Professional, National Nurse Aide Assessment Program, or Physician Assistant National Certifying Exams.

If you have taken these exams, along with many other nationally accredited exams, you can get reimbursed. Contact your State's Education Office to receive the proper forms and steps you need to start the process for your reimbursement.

Reimbursement Process

1. Soldier verifies that the licensure/certification exam is on the list of eligible exams on the Army COOL website www.cool.army.mil/search/CredSearchAlpha.

2. Soldier takes the exam and receives a passing score.

3. Soldier requests GoArmyEd account, if one is not already established.

4. Soldier provides the following documents to the State Education Office.

a. A copy of the score report.

b. Proof of payment for registration and exam fee. Students who are requesting reimbursement of preparatory courses and study materials must also supply proof of payment for these as well.

i. Proof of payment must show:

1. What was purchased,
2. The cost of the purchase, and
3. Transaction id, or comparable, showing the payment was processed.

c. Completed reimbursement request form dated Oct. 1, 2013 or later.

d. Completed SF1199A if the Soldier does not currently have a Vendor ID Number. The SF1199A must be currently dated and signed by the Soldier. The Soldier's SSN will be entered in Block C. All bank account information requested on the form must be completed; however, the bank does not need to sign the form.

e. Current ASR/AMEDD students must also provide a copy of their orders assigning them as students. Current PA students must provide a copy of their 70B orders. In addition to the orders, recent graduates must also provide a copy of the graduation certificate and diploma showing the date of graduation.

Want to earn some quick college credit?

The Army National Guard offers free college credit equivalency exams via CLEP & DSST as well as several entrance exams. For more information, contact Mrs. Mirza Henderson (Education Service Specialist) at 860-524-4820 or your National Testing Center.

Visit the DANTES website for more information and a list of National Testing Centers. Below is an example of various Test/Exams available to you.

Available at National Test Centers:

- CLEP, DSST (No upfront charge)
- PRAXIS, GRE, GMAT, SAT, GED (Reimbursable)
- More Information available at www.dantes.doded.mil

Available at Army Education Centers:

- SAT, ACT (College admission exams)
- AFCT (Armed Forces Classification Test)
- DLAB/DLPT (Defense Language Aptitude Battery and Proficiency Test), SIFT (Selection Instrument for Flight Trng)
- Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

ARNG Certification/Licensure Reimbursement Request Form	
<small>Reimbursement is not authorized without a copy of the "Official Score Report", proof of payment for all costs claimed, current GoArmyEd account, and any additional required documentation (see SOP)</small>	
Name (Last, First, M.I.):	<input type="text"/>
Rank:	DOB: <input type="text"/> SSN: <input type="text"/>
Address:	Phone: <input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Guard State Assigned To: <input type="text"/>
Vendor ID Number: <input type="text"/>	<small>If Soldier currently has no Vendor ID Number, she must fill out an SF 1199A form for submission with this application.</small>
Name of exam:	<input type="text"/>
Date of exam:	Test site (city, state): <input type="text"/>
Preparatory Coursework: \$ <input type="text"/>	Total Cost: \$ <input type="text"/>
Study Materials: \$ <input type="text"/>	
Registration Fee: \$ <input type="text"/>	
Exam Fee: \$ <input type="text"/>	
Examinee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that I must submit my application for exams taken in FY12 or 13 to my state education office NLT financial year cut off. • I certify that I have not previously received reimbursement for this exam. • I further certify that my current "Geneva Conventions Identification Card" did not expire before I took the exam for which I seek reimbursement. • I certify that I have a GoArmyEd account. • AMEDD/PAP reimbursement request only: I have provided proof of current AMEDD/PAP student or graduate status as required by the SOP. 	
Signature: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/>
Education Services Officer/Test Control Officer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have verified that the above Service Member is a current ARNG Soldier. • I have reviewed the application and documents to ensure compliance with the requirements in the SOP. • I have filled out the SF 1034 per the sample provided and will submit the fillable form electronically without scanning. • I have verified that the Soldier has a GoArmyEd account. 	
Printed Name: <input type="text"/>	Signature: <input type="text"/>
Title: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/> Duty Phone: <input type="text"/>
Printed Name: <input type="text"/>	Signature of NGB Approving Authority: <input type="text"/>
Title: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/> Duty Phone: <input type="text"/>
<small>Original: Final signed copy along with score report and proof of payment submitted to National Guard Bureau at purpose of reimbursement. Provide a copy to the Soldier. Keep a copy at the local State Education Office.</small>	

Flying Yankees Support Joint Paratrooper Training

SENIOR AIRMAN EMMANUEL SANTIAGO
103RD AIRLIFT WING, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BRADLEY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE - East Granby, Connecticut — Airmen from the 103rd Airlift Wing supported multiple joint Army air transportation training missions on Sept. 5 and Oct. 8.

The first JAATT mission supported by the Connecticut Air National Guard took place in the skies above Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia, where members of the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force received hands-on paratrooper training while aboard a C-130H Hercules aircraft assigned to the 103rd Airlift Wing.

There were approximately 600 trainees and two aircraft rotating constantly to get them in the sky and dropped, said Lt. Col. William Daniels, a pilot assigned to the 118th Airlift Squadron.

The Flying Yankees supported an additional JAATT mission the following month when a C-130H assigned to the 103rd Airlift Wing lifted 20 U.S. Army paratroopers alongside another Connecticut C-130H containing heavy equipment. The heavy equipment was a simulated tactical re-fueling station that held blivets full of water rather than actual fuel, and the necessary equipment to ensure the load would safely land on the ground.

The equipment was initially dropped and closely followed by the paratroopers. In actual operations, once both are on the ground, the paratroopers would set up the station, allowing helicopters to stop and refuel in these designated forward-operating areas.

Each C-130H is operated with a crew of officers and enlisted Airmen that worked together to ensure a smooth operation. Once approaching the drop zone, the pilots signal the crew to initiate the drop process. The goal is to hit the initial target and have one continuous line of paratroopers follow.

A number of variables must be considered in order to complete a successful air drop and a seasoned team is critical to that success. Teamwork is developed through practice and training.

“This training allows us to grow as a team and brings us one step closer to becoming an operational unit and bringing the fight to the enemy,” said Daniels.

The successful execution of this new mission capability marks another stepping-stone for the Flying Yankees as their mission conversion continues.



A C-130H Hercules aircraft assigned to the 103rd Airlift Wing is loaded with a simulated tactical re-fueling station at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., Oct 8, 2014. The load, equipped with special parachutes and protective gear, was released from the aircraft and landed onto a designated drop zone ahead of paratroopers as part of a joint Army air transportation training mission. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Dan Daniels, 103rd AW)



U.S. Army paratroopers standby while approaching their designated drop zone aboard a C-130H Hercules aircraft assigned to the 103rd Airlift Wing Oct. 8, 2014, in the skies above Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. This is the second opportunity for the Flying Yankees to successfully aid in the preparation and execution of paratrooper air drops during joint Army air transportation training missions with their newly-assigned aircraft. (Photo courtesy of Tech. Sgt. Tufic Paone, 103rd AW)

Resilience Center

New Gaming Technology Uses Virtual Humans to Help Veterans and Service Members Learn to Support One Another

KOGNITO PRESS RELEASE

A new online and mobile app was released Oct. 15 to help U.S. Veterans and service members learn what to say and do when a peer is struggling with post-deployment stresses and adjustment to civilian life. Through interactive role-plays with 3D virtual humans the user prepares to have real-life conversations that will motivate a friend to access help if needed, build resilience and lead a healthier life. The app is available for free online at JoinTogetherStrong.com and at iTunes and Google Play Store. A version in Spanish will be released in November.

Together Strong was developed by the Veterans Affairs of NY/NJ Healthcare Network and Kognito and received extensive input from Veterans and military personnel. Dozens of military, Veterans and nonprofit groups in the NY/NJ area and nationally will be performing outreach through social media, local press and Internet groups. The goal is to get hundreds of thousands of Veterans and Soldiers to download and use the app.

"We are thrilled to make Together Strong available for our Veterans and service members," said Ann Feder, LCSW, Mental Health Programs Manager at the Veterans Affairs NY/NJ Healthcare Network. "It's engaging, easy to use, and the conversations are very real. We wanted

Veterans to have access to this tool because we know peer support works."

Kognito—a 10-year-old Manhattan-based company—creates immersive learning experiences that combine principles of neuroscience with gaming technologies to address a broad range of health, behavioral health, and social topics, from chronic disease and childhood obesity, to emotional wellbeing. Several empirical studies have shown that Kognito simulations achieve real and lasting changes in attitude, skills and behaviors. The virtual humans in Together Strong are coded to reflect individual personalities, memories and emotions that make their responses highly realistic. This highly interactive simulation provides hands-on practice and personalized feedback; it's not a web page.

"A conversation can be a powerful tool in making a difference in someone's life," said Ron Goldman, Kognito's co-founder and CEO. "Our virtual environments offer a safe place to practice in privacy, allowing the user to go at his or her own pace, try different approaches, learn skills and develop confidence to effectively manage similar conversations in real life."

Together Strong addresses a range of challenges faced by those who have served. In addition to much-publicized high rates of PTSD, traumatic brain injury and suicide, the post-deployment experience is often one of isolation,

lack of purpose, stigma, difficulties relating to nonmilitary people, academic failure after years away from school, problems with relationships and keeping a job.

According to the Pew Research Center, 61 percent of Veterans report having difficulty with re-entry, and 48 percent said that their service had a negative impact on their marriage. One in five Gulf War II-era Veterans ages 18 to 24 were unemployed in 2012 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics); and only 23 percent to 40 percent of those who screened positive for a mental health disorder went on to receive professional help (New England Journal of Medicine).

"Together Strong builds on Kognito's research-proven Family of Heroes, which was designed for military families," said Kognito co-founder and Director of Research Glenn Albright, Ph.D. "A randomized controlled study of Family of Heroes found a 46 percent increase in the number of military family members who spoke with their Veterans about accessing help after they had completed the program. Compared to the control group, twice as many Veterans (22 percent vs. 11 percent) of those approached by their family actually followed through and sought help showing a real and meaningful change in health behaviors resulting from this simulation."

Mental Health: Child Mental Health Month

YANIA PADILLA, MS
SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM MANAGER

Nearly five million children in the United States live with a serious form of mental illness. There are a myriad of factors that can impact a child's mental health status, both positively and negatively. A child's mental health is the most important aspect of a child's social and cognitive development. Providing children with an environment that demonstrates love, compassion, trust, and understanding will greatly impact a child so that they can build on these stepping stones to have a productive lifestyle. Many children do not receive that type of lifestyle though. Some children have to deal with a childhood that is filled with angst, resentment, hatred, distrust and constant negativity. They have a difficult time coping with their emotions. These children will usually make excellent candidates for mental health programs. It is a difficult process for any person, let alone a child, to overcome such adversity but being proactive and doing all that you can for the child will at least help their mental health in some positive fashion.

Some children may also be born with mental health issues. These issues are a product of nature rather than nurture so the child may have a more difficult time dealing

with his or her emotional state. Many children just naturally feel depressed or have anxiety issues. When these issues are not dealt with in the proper fashion, the children tend to have lower self-esteem and they struggle in the educational environment.

Children with mental health issues will have a difficult time acclimating to different situations. Studies have shown that these children, if left untreated by a mental health professional, will likely grow up and repeat these same behaviors with their children. These children tend to have a lower self-worth, negative feelings, perform poorly in school and later become involved in unhealthy lifestyle decisions. However, when these children are properly treated they can learn how to live a more promising life. They can overcome many of the issues that affect them without their consent. These children can live happy and productive lives that are filled with love, harmony, and a great mental health status.

If your child is experiencing mental health issues, the Military Support Program (MSP) can provide free services and referrals to National Guard members and their families. Please contact them at (866)251-2913. In addition, Military One Source is another tool to learn about mental health resources. They can be contacted at (800)342-9647.



NATIONAL GUARD
A RESILIENT AND READY FORCE

PHYSICAL • EMOTIONAL • SOCIAL • FAMILY • SPIRITUAL

Resilience is the ability to grow and thrive in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity.

Master Resilience Trainers (MRTs) are the core of the ARNG resilience training program and serve in an M-day or full-time capacity based on the needs of the state. These Soldiers attend a 10 day MRT training course and are authorized the 8R additional skill identifier.

Master Resilience Trainers

- Live and teach the skills they have been taught
- Provide resilience training during NCODP / OPD and Sergeants' Time
- Serve as the Commander's principal advisor on Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and resilience
- Assist the unit Training NCO ensuring resilience training is incorporated and documented at least quarterly into the unit training calendar
- Assist Commander in providing resilience training for family members
- Train other leaders on incorporating resilience skills and techniques into professional and developmental counseling

If becoming an MRT is a job for you, notify your chain of command or contact your State Resilience Coordinator for more information and eligibility requirements.

When you complete your annual requirement to take the GAT, encourage your spouse to take it too. You will be amazed at what you both learn.

Find us on



<https://www.militarybook.com/groups/amgmrt>



<https://g1.army.pentagon.mil>

Find out more information at <http://csf.army.mil/>

Fighter? Soldier? Who is Sgt. 1st Class Brian American?

STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON,
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Sgt. 1st Class Brian American is not extremely tall and his muscles do not bulge through his uniform. In ACUs, American blends easily with his surroundings and fellow Soldiers. He is unassuming and inconspicuous. In conversation, he is easygoing and humble.

One would not guess that American has been the subject of countless myths and urban legends in the Connecticut Army National Guard for over a decade.

He earned his E7 in three years.

He has eight black belts.

He was recruited for the French Foreign Legion

And so on...

He kindly rebuffs these rumors. He makes clear that he is a regular guy who does his best to help Soldiers as the current Connecticut Army National Guard IDT (Inactive Duty Training) manager in the state's operations and training directorate (G3).

American also does his best to help the men, women and children who join the Brazilian jiu-jitsu gym that he owns and operates: Team Link Connecticut Martial Arts Center in Enfield, Connecticut.

But yes, he does have a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

American, who joined the Active Army in 1997, and Connecticut Army National Guard in 2004, said he was experienced in *striking* martial arts growing up, but did not immerse himself in jiu-jitsu until he broke his shoulder and could no longer strike.

In 2004 he found (at that time, relatively unknown) Brazilian jiu-jitsu instructor Marco Alvan in the phonebook. His true martial arts training began shortly thereafter.

"As men we think we know how to wrestle naturally. This isn't true," he said.

American said he was humbled beyond comparison in his first few jiu-jitsu training matches, and became further intrigued.

He said he quickly learned that an understanding of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu required an understanding of leverage.

"Jiu-Jitsu is the application of physics to fighting. You have to understand the simple machines, screws, wedges and levers, to understand grappling," said American.

He said he tries his best to instill this not-so-common information about jiu-jitsu to his students.

His gym's high retention rate says much about the confidence and trust his jiu-jitsu students have for his management and training style.

A number of them served with him in Afghanistan.

American deployed with the 1-102nd Infantry Battalion in 2006, and again in 2010. He spent 2010 as a platoon sergeant at a remote combat outpost, COP Najil, in Afghanistan's notorious, Ali Shang Valley.

He said during rare periods of off-time, his Soldiers would request to train and 'roll.' He was happy to teach them as time permitted.

"It's an outlet for Soldiers," American said. "When we train, there are no egos. It's fun. It's great for building camaraderie," he said.

He said reinforcing a similar team and family atmosphere in his martial arts gym has encouraged his students' success.

Team Link Connecticut Martial Arts Center has achieved 14 consecutive NAGA (North American Grappling Association) championships, and has won 21 overall. Team Link is ranked the number one BJJ school

on the East Coast, and has also won numerous children's and teen championships.

Their students' ages range from 7 to 68.

American has also won numerous awards, honors and championships but he does not mention these.

He prefers mentioning the free self-defense seminars available at his gym.

"We've had great turnouts," he said.

During the seminars, he teaches that grappling is much more efficient for self-defense than striking.

"Grappling is easier to remember under duress. It gives individuals better chances of getting out of bad positions," he said.

American said he is happy to teach people about self-defense in his training seminars, whether or not they join Team Link.

He said meeting new people gives him the opportunity to continuously learn, and he always welcomes new training opportunities in the Army or gym.

He trains wearing a blindfold,

He turned down multiple promotions to first sergeant.

He's going to the Olympics.

And so on...

He also rebuffs these rumors.

Although he doesn't verbalize it, the constant unassuming look in American's eyes says he is only as good as the Soldiers he leads, and only as well-trained as his fellow jiu-jitsu teammates.

He strives to remain technically and tactically proficient.

Competence is his watchword.

He places Soldiers needs above his own.

That's him.



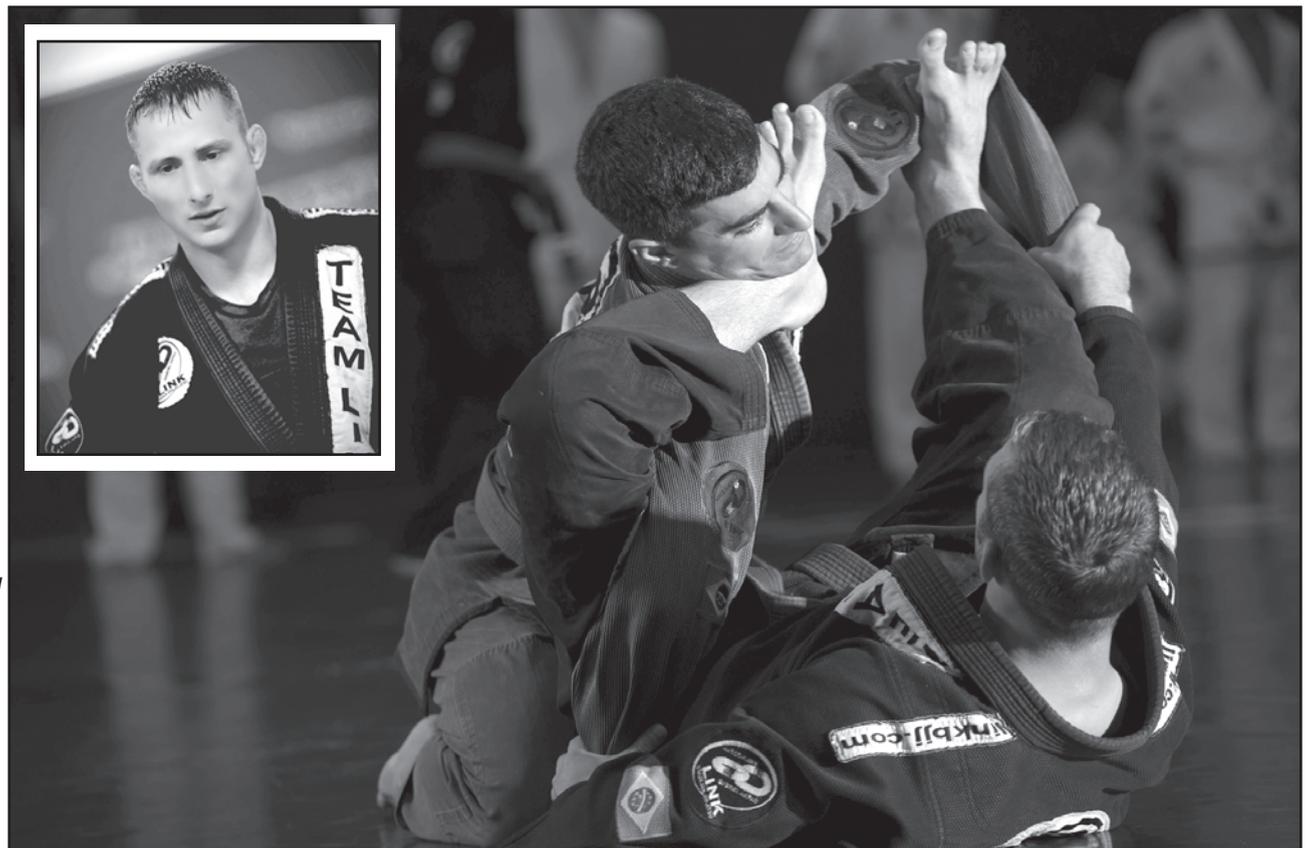
(Above) Sgt. 1st Class Brian American splits his time between coaching at the Team Link Connecticut Martial Arts Center and serving as the CTARNG Inactive Duty Training Manager.



(Inset) Sgt. 1st Class Brian American catches his breath between event matches, April, 2013. American switched from studying striking martial arts to jiu-jitsu in 2004, after a shoulder injury.

(Right) Sgt. 1st Class Brian American (bottom) grapples with an opponent at a Brazilian jiu-jitsu match in 2012. American said an understanding of physics and leverage is necessary to understand jiu-jitsu.

(Photos courtesy Sgt. 1st Class Brian American)



AASF So Fam Ope



Brennan and Addison Lock sit with their father, Capt. Evan Lock, in the cockpit of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during family day activities at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Lock, Conn. on Sept. 28. Capt. Evan Lock is a member of the 169th Aviation Regiment, Connecticut Army National Guard. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ-CT)



Ariabella Overstrom, 20 months old, runs away from her mother, [Name], Derryberry, on the flight line during family day activities at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Lock, Conn. on Sept. 28. Ariabella's father, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeffry Overstrom, is a member of the [Name] Aviation Regiment, Connecticut Army National Guard. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ-CT)



Family and friends of members of Connecticut Army National Guard's C130-H aircraft during a family day open house held at the [Name] JFHQ-CT)

Soldiers Host Family Day in House



Fabrina
y
bella's
e 169th
Staff Sgt.



Gianna Lagrega, 11 months old, sits in the cockpit of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during family day activities at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Lock, Conn. on Sept. 28. Gianna's father is Capt. Richard Lagrega, Commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 169th Aviation Regiment, Connecticut Army National Guard. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ-CT)



ard aviation Soldiers get the opportunity to check out one of the Connecticut Air National
e Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Locks, Sept. 28. (Phot by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen,



Soldiers and family members brace themselves for the joy of jumping in a patriotically-colored inflatable bounce house at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Locks, Conn., on Sept. 28. The day also included food, entertainment, a dunk tank and tours of the various aircraft located at the facility. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ-CT)



Soldiers and family members gather around to check out a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during family day fun at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Locks, Conn., on Sept. 28. The day included food, bounce houses, a dunk tank and tours of the various aircraft located at the facility. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Boffen, JFHQ-CT)

242nd CMT Mission Winds Down as OEF Shift towards Support Role

SGT. BRENDAN McLAUGHLIN
242nd CMT UPAR

As October draws to a close, the nine Soldiers of the 242nd Construction Management Team (CMT) Engineer Detachment prepared for redeployment back to Connecticut, but are still working hard on all assigned missions.

The unit's successful nine-month tour began after landing in Afghanistan in March. Assigned to the 130th Theater Engineer Brigade at the New Kabul Compound, they quickly adapted to their new home and began providing management and oversight of several construction and deconstruction engineer missions. While the 130th BDE prepared for a transfer of authority with the Second Engineering Brigade, the 242 CMT also became responsible for assisting in base closures throughout their assigned area of operations.

Sgt. First Class Tye Frazer managed the database tracking all movement, construction and deconstruction of each engineering mission throughout the area of operations and Capt. Blake Robbins managed the base realignment and closure synchronization matrix and

database.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mike Young and his engineering technicians took over the survey and design missions of the 130th. The group designed radar base mounts on buildings at several forward operating bases and provided design, layout and plumbing schematics of several water well installations. Plans were designed in AutoCAD by Sgt. Brendan McLaughlin and Spec. Ricardo Reyes. McLaughlin also worked alongside Staff Sgt Robert Cromer for a month to manage the construction quality assurance and control of a key airfield.

The 242's construction management skillset was critical during the 130TEB's transition with the 2D EN BDE. The unit moved to Bagram Air Field in June and began to manage the consolidation and downsizing of BAF to help prepare the base for Operation Resolute Support, the post-2014 NATO mission in Afghanistan. This tremendous undertaking required the unit to identify all temporary structures required to be torn down. Temporary structures included all wood structures, B-Huts and tents that had been built over the last decade.

To date, the unit has tracked, managed and engineered the destruction of more than 1,853 wooden structures with another 200 planned for removal. The entire team worked tirelessly to provide reconnaissance of the sites, schedule meetings with district mayors and occupants, managed several working groups and oversaw the completion of all paperwork required for the final deconstruction.

"I am extremely proud of the hard work and accomplishment of all the unit's members," said Col. John Whitford, 242nd CMT commanding officer. "We have definitely demonstrated the Guard's creativity and flexibility in accomplishing any mission that we are assigned."

The leadership of Sgt. Maj. David Moorehead and Whitford, coupled with the clerical support provided by Staff Sgt. Jed Couture, proved invaluable throughout the entire operation.

Although members of the unit cannot wait to return to family and friends in Connecticut, the mission in Afghanistan has been and continues to be a rewarding challenge.

40 Years of Army Aviation Support Facility Staff, History



In 1974, two years after the Connecticut Army National Guard moved to the Army Aviation Support Facility from Brainard Field in Hartford, a photo of the full time staff was taken on the flight line (above left). Now, 40 years later, the 2014 staff stood on the same spot for a new photo. Most, if not all of the faces have changed, but if you ask Sgt. Maj. Anthony Savino, Facilities Manager, the people are one of the things that has remained the same within the walls of the AASF, "the people show up at 0645, work on aircraft, fly aircraft, fuel aircraft, run flight operations, provide parts, support the Units and do it well." While the people and their operations have remained a constant, the aircraft, the missions, the technology and the walls in which they work have undergone major change. During the span of 40 years, the AASF has housed Soldiers belonging to more than 10 units. Those Soldiers have maintained and flown over 15 types of rotary and fixed wing aircraft, performed overseas missions supporting both Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom and have stood ready to support missions here in Connecticut. The people of the AASF maintained operations and performed missions even as the buildings that housed them saw significant change. The crew in the 1974 photo played a key role in maintaining operations after the major destruction caused by a tornado that ripped through the area in 1979, and crews in the 2014 photo saw the AASF through the construction of the north hangar in 1999, and most recently, the addition of the Windsor Locks Readiness Center in 2012. "The Facility is a special place to work," said Savino. "Preparing aircraft for flights along with launching and recovering on a weekly, monthly, annual and decade basis is something to be proud of." The photo tradition will not end here according to Savino who, as the AASF Historian, plans to pass on the custom, "The 1974 picture is an important part of AASF history...I will be the old guy at age 87 when they do the next 40 year picture." (Photo to left courtesy Sgt. Maj. Anthony Savino, photo to right by Ms. Allison Joanis, State Public Affairs Office)



CHIEF MASTER SGT.
EDWARD GOULD

Enlisted Update

Take the Time to Know and Recognize Top Performers

Welcome to the November edition of your Connecticut Guardian. I would like to spend a few minutes talking about recognition of those superior performers in the Connecticut Air National Guard and Connecticut Army National Guard. It is the responsibility of all leaders, at all levels, enlisted and commissioned, to ensure we do everything we can to recognize those Airmen and Soldiers that consistently go above and beyond compared to their peers.

The Air National Guard has recently re-focused on recognizing those Airmen that contribute most to accomplishing the mission of their units and the overall mission of the Air National Guard. It is the duty of first-line supervisors to know their people. Know where your Airman or Soldier is in their training. Know if they are working to better themselves through civilian formal education. Know if your Airmen or Soldiers are accomplishing their professional military education in a manner that makes them stand out among their peers. What professional military organizations do your Airmen and Soldiers belong to? Do they hold key, or leadership positions in those organizations? Has your Airman or Soldier graduated from some type of training as a distinguished graduate?

What type of community activities are your Airmen and Soldiers involved with? Are they active with their local church, do they hold leadership positions with their church or other faith based organizations? Do they volunteer their time to tutor or mentor young adults? Do they donate their time to coach youth sports teams?

In today's age of text messages, instant messaging, Instagram, snapchat, Facebook and other types of social and electronic media, nothing takes the place of some quality face-to-face time with your Airman or

Soldier. In just a few minutes you could easily get the answers to some of the above questions. Experienced and savvy supervisors know that you can tell a lot about someone based on their body language, facial expressions and other non-verbal cues. According to information found at timemanagementninja.com, there are five distinct advantages of face-to-face meetings. They include the benefits of interpreting body language; a face-to-face meeting ensures engagement, clarifies meaning, drives participation and is more efficient when you consider the impact of your face-to-face time. Your Airmen and Soldiers deserve your undivided attention and deserve to receive recognition when they have excelled.

At this time of year we are often focused on annual awards such as Airman, Soldier and NCO of the year. The reality is that the Air National Guard, in addition to the annual Outstanding Airmen of the Year, has fifteen other annual awards that your superior performers can be submitted for. Army Guard units should be identifying their top Soldier and NCO now for the Best Warrior Competition in March and recognizing other top performers throughout the year with military award recommendations, certificates of appreciation, challenge coins or letters of recognition.

We all know that with more and more demands on our time, combined with constrained resources, we can often lose focus on what may really be important. I encourage everyone reading this article to think about the superior performers you know and ask when was the last time they were appropriately recognized? I challenge you to make sure that those outstanding Airmen or Soldiers get the recognition they have worked so hard for and very much deserve. You will be surprised how some simple but sincere recognition will benefit your unit esprit de corps many times over.

Please have a meaningful and enjoyable Thanksgiving with your families and friends and I will talk to you again soon in 2015!

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Governor's Horse and Foot Guards

Militiaman of the Year for 1st Company, GFG Named

HARTFORD, Conn. – Cpl. Fred Macsata of Enfield, a member of First Company, Governor's Foot Guard, received the Militiaman of the Year on Oct. 19 at the combined militia drill held at the First Company, Governor's Horse Guard reservation in Avon. The honor was presented to Macsata for his outstanding work in the 1GFG during the past year. Macsata fulfills all required duties and performs additional duties with the color guard. He gives willingly of his time and has earned the respect of his fellow 1GFG members and officers.

In civilian life, Macsata is retired but served in the Air Force and Air Force Reserve as a fireman and then worked as a civilian fireman on military bases. He has been a member of the 1GFG for two years, and is assigned to the band as a drummer.



Cpl. Fred Macsata of the First Company, Governor's Foot Guard, receives the Militiaman of the Year trophy and commendation certificate from Maj. Christopher Cain and Col. Russell Bonaccorso at the combined militia drill held at the First Company Governor's Horse Guard Reservation in Avon. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Mark Boudreau, 1GFG)



Celebrating Founder's Day

Members of the First Company, Governor's Foot Guard, under the command of Maj. Christopher Cain, participate in the Founder's Day service at the Center Congregational Church in Hartford on Oct. 12. (Photo courtesy of Janet Dexter)

Busy Summer for 2nd Horse

It has so far been a busy autumn season for the Second Company Governor's Horse Guard. The Troop had a chance to represent the State of Connecticut at the Big E in Springfield, Massachusetts and host a horse show on their scenic grounds in Newtown. The Second Company Governor's Horse Guard also proudly participated in celebrating Rochambeau Day in Hartford, Connecticut with the other militia units. The event not only marks the 243rd Anniversary of Command for the First Company Governor's Foot Guard, but also commemorates the meeting between General George Washington and Comte de Rochambeau at the Old State House in 1780. The Second Horse also held an Annual Open House for the community to get to know the Troopers and Horses of the 2GHG and get a feel for what being a Trooper is all about. From left: Maj. Gordon Johnson, Capt. James Marrinan, 2nd Lt. Ken Fay, 1st Sgt. William Goessinger and Pvt. Mark Burns. (Photo courtesy Second Company Governor's Horse Guard)



Legal: Office of Complex Investigations

Specialized Investigation for Sexual Assault Inquiries

CAPT. KYLE B. WILKINSON
CTARNG OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE

The Office of Complex Investigations was recently created by the National Guard Bureau to train and support special investigators who pursue allegations of sexual assault in the National Guard.

These teams, comprised of Guard members from various states, are assigned when requested to look into allegations of sexual assault and submit their investigative reports to the requesting adjutant general.

Typical teams consist of judge advocates, officers and non-commissioned officers with a background in law enforcement.

The joint program is comprised of members of both the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard. As a result of the training they receive, special investigators are well-versed in common difficulties encountered when investigating sexual assaults, such as the consent defense and alcohol or drug facilitated sexual assaults.

Special investigators are trained to be attuned to the

sensitive nature of these investigations and of the necessity to balance the rights of victims and the severity of the charges, which could have a devastating impact on someone who is falsely accused.

Special investigators are leaders with an understanding of how the complex legal nature of National Guard service impacts investigations. Investigators are trained to identify the respective statuses of victims, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses at the time of an incident. An individual's status (be it civilian, Title 32 M-Day, Title 10 ADOS, Title 10 AGR, Title 32 AGR, Title 32 ADOS, dual status federal military technician, non-dual status federal military technician or state active duty) can crucially impact an investigation, its process and its outcome.

The status may determine, among other things, what criminal or disciplinary code an alleged perpetrator is subject to and which services a victim is eligible for.

Investigators also receive valuable training on the latest investigative and interviewing techniques, such as a

forensic experiential trauma interview. This technique takes into account the trauma victim's experience and moves away from the typical "5 Ws" (who, what, when, where and why) interviewing technique. By empowering victims to tell their own story in their own words, investigators using FETI are able to gather more context, useful information and crucial details of the alleged assault to help bring any perpetrators to justice.

The Office of Complex Investigations provides valuable training and support to ensure teams of special investigators are able to provide balanced and thorough investigations of alleged sexual assaults so that justice can be done. This resource is another example of the National Guard's strong commitment to eradicating incidents of sexual assault throughout the force.

Unit commanders needing assistance and victims of sexual assault are encouraged to contact Connecticut National Guard SARC, Maj. Katherine Maines by phone at 860-883-4798 (mobile) 860-613-7611 (desk) or by email at katherine.a.maines.mil@mail.mil.



169th REGT (RTI)



CONNECTICUT OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL HALL OF FAME

The 169th Regiment Regional Training Institute is establishing the Connecticut Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame

Induction criteria:

- Graduate of the CT State OCS program
- Federally recognized O6 or higher

Retirees are eligible

May be awarded posthumously

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ATTN: Training Officer
38 Smith Street, RTI Bldg
Niantic, CT 06357

Need additional information? Contact Capt. Lord at 860-691-4236



1st Battalion (OCS/WOCS), 169th Regiment (RTI) **Officer Candidate School**

OCS & WOCS OPEN HOUSE

Information Brief

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Report Time: 0900
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Uniform: ACU's with PC or Business
Casual (Civilians Only)

Staff and Cadre will be on hand to answer questions and support administrative requirements.



Please RSVP through your chain of command and to:
CPT David Lord david.m.lord.mil@mail.mil
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Healthy Lifestyles

ARNG's Suicide Prevention Program

STAND-TO!

The Army National Guard (ARNG) has taken a proactive approach to providing holistic care to service members and their families. Suicide prevention involves engaging leadership at all levels, providing intervention training to first line leaders and linking Soldiers with resources.

Calendar year 2013 recorded the highest numbers of suicide to date. The ARNG lost 120 Soldiers to suicide, which is approximately the number of Soldiers in an infantry company. To combat this devastating loss, the Army Guard is pursuing multiple programs at the national and state levels.

What has the Army National Guard done?

The ARNG has provided suicide prevention program managers in each state, territory and the District of Columbia to lead suicide prevention efforts.

Many states have partnered with their local Health and Human Services agencies to provide free or low-cost behavioral health services to service members and their families. The ARNG recently signed a national memorandum of understanding with Give an Hour, a network of local providers who offer free clinical services to the military. The ARNG is further expanding behavioral health resources by allocating additional directors of Psychological Health in the states and territories.

Several ARNG initiatives, such as the Maryland National Guard's Partners in Care, have been so successful that they have been adopted by the

Department of Defense. Vets4Warriors, a DOD peer support hotline, began as a New Jersey National Guard initiative. Due to the overwhelming demand from service members of all components, Office of the Secretary of Defense adopted the programs as a resource for all branches of service.

What continued efforts does the Army National Guard have planned for the future?

In October, the ARNG will launch Ready 54, a smart phone app which provides users with quick access to crisis assistance, a geolocated resource directory, battle buddy reminders, and notifications from leadership. The ARNG has also implemented a robust training schedule to train 10 percent of its end strength in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and Ask, Care, Escort - Suicide Intervention training (ACE-SI) by 2016. The ARNG recognizes that each suicide is a tragic loss, and conducts a thorough evaluation after deaths to discover contributing factors and conducts research to identify ways ahead.

Why is this important to the Army?

Many components and members of the U.S. Army are similarly geographically dispersed, such as U.S. Army Cadet Command, Army Materiel Command, and the Army Reserves, and can also benefit from the ARNG's initiatives. The strides taken by the Army National Guard in linking community resources continue to be adopted Army- and DOD-wide.

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The All-New Joint Ready 54 App is Coming Soon!

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Features Include:

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Visit www.Ready54.org for more information.

Veterans Services and Where to Find Them

Veterans of the United States armed forces may be eligible for a broad range of programs and services provided by the VA.

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions, and certain benefits require service during wartime. If you are new to the VA, the Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors booklet will help you get started.

http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/

Health Care

VA's health care offers a variety of services,

information, and benefits. As the nation's largest integrated health care system, VA operates more than 1,400 sites of care, including hospitals, community clinics, community living centers, domiciliaries, readjustment counseling centers, and various other facilities.

Benefits & Services

VA administers a variety of benefits and services that provide financial and other forms of assistance to Veterans, their dependents, and survivors. Major benefits include Veterans' compensation, Veterans' pension, survivors' benefits, rehabilitation and employment assistance, education assistance, home loan guaranties, and life insurance coverage.

Burial and Memorials

Burial and memorial benefits are available for eligible service members, Veterans, reservists, National Guard members, and eligible family members. Service include interment, headstones and markers, and Presidential memorial certificates. VA operates 128 national cemeteries in the United States and Puerto Rico, together with oversight and management of 33 Soldiers' lots, confederate cemeteries, and monument sites.

Veterans Benefits Fact Sheets

<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/factsheets/#BM1>

Diversity: New Position, New Challenge - An Introduction

MAJ. VALERIE SEERY
JFHQ HUMAN RESOURCES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICER (HR/EO)

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Maj. Valerie Seery, the new State Human Resources Equal Opportunity (HR/EO) Officer. Both Lt. Col. Michael DiCristofaro and Master Sgt. Dwight Frederick retired in September and I want to thank them for all the hard work they have done keeping this program going. I also want to thank Maj. Kristina Garuti for her help in getting me off to a good start.

I do not yet have HR/EO experience so I enrolled myself in the required training and should be trained up and certified within the next year. My background is primarily in logistics and leadership. I have served many assignments over the past 27 years to include JFHQ HHD commander, USPF0 logistics officer, 143rd ASG HHD commander, 143rd ASG services and support officer and several platoon leader assignments at the 712th Maintenance Company as well as enlisted time in the active Army in the 44th Medical Brigade at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I am a traditional M-DAY Soldier, and I work full-time at the Hartford Armory as the property coordinator for the State Military Department.

Most "full-timers" know me because I am frequently out at your armories doing state property business and you submit your facility reports to me. Many "part-

timers" know me just because I have been around so long!

I am really excited to have been picked for this job. I have always enjoyed meeting and working with all kinds of people. I believe passionately that everyone deserves the same opportunities especially in employment.

One of the things that I like best about the military, and that makes me proud to be a Soldier, is that the military is and always has been a leader in civil rights. For example, look back in history especially to the Civil War and WWII. The military enlisted African American male Soldiers during the Civil War before civilian companies did. In WWII the military trained, equipped and deployed "Tuskegee Airmen" who were the first African American pilots. These fine men were flying for the military long before civilian companies started hiring African American pilots. In WWII women were allowed to join the war effort long before civilian businesses hired them for equivalent jobs. In fact, the need for women in the factories to make aircraft and other equipment for the military helped to break down those barriers in civilian employment that were there previously.

In recent history, more and more minorities and women are taking on leadership roles in all branches of the military. The military, including the Connecticut National Guard, is tracking demographics and rank closely and the

purpose of our State Equal Opportunity Program is to ensure all races, genders and ethnicities get a fair shot at promotions and leadership positions. As a female Soldier, this is especially near and dear to my heart so this is not just a job, it's personal.

I want you all to meet and know your company level Equal Opportunity Leaders (EOLs). If they can't answer your questions or concerns, go next to your MACOM level Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA). I will do everything I can to ensure they are trained and responsive to your needs. I look forward to this exciting new assignment and being able to help keep the Connecticut National Guard a great place to work!

Feel free to contact me at valerie.l.seery.mil@mail.mil or (860) 985-5102 if I can research any questions for you or help in any way.

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 [YouTube.com/HandsOnlyCPR](https://www.youtube.com/HandsOnlyCPR)

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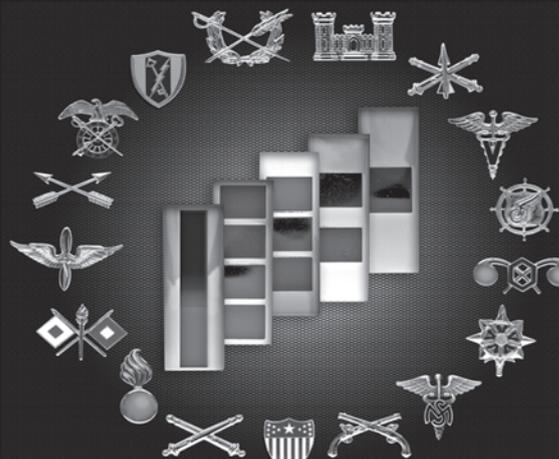
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National Guard Association of Connecticut (NGACT)

NGACT Looking for Your Input on 2015 Legislative Agenda

DEBBI NEWTON
NGACT LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN

Each year, the National Guard Association of Connecticut submits its legislative priorities to the Veterans Affairs Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. The committee reviews those issues brought to them and determines which issues it will raise as committee bills in the current legislative session. Individual legislators may also pick up some of the issues and propose their own bills for various committees of the CGA to consider.

NGACT wants to know what you, Connecticut Army and Air National Guard members, Retirees, Veterans and Families, feel are important issues that need to be brought before the CGA in 2015. We are looking *only* for issues that can be addressed at the state level during this upcoming legislative session that begins in January. NGACT considers and tracks issues that need national level attention throughout the year.

NGACT is currently working on the following state legislative issues: an income tax credit for 50 percent of the cost of a gun safe or gun lock; state income tax exemption of \$2,000 for currently serving members of the military, including Connecticut National Guardsmen, and a \$1,000 state income tax exemption for honorably discharged Veterans, including Connecticut National Guardsmen (this would be an either or exemption - no one could receive both simultaneously); increasing to 100 percent the military retired pay exemption from state income tax; a student fees waiver for Connecticut National Guard members attending state colleges, universities and community colleges; exempting state active duty pay (for times of state emergency) from state income tax; increasing state active duty payments to a \$125 per day minimum for all Soldier and Airmen; exempting from state income tax all active duty military pay for Connecticut National Guard and Reserve members who live in Connecticut; low/no cost small business loans for Veterans; waiving motor vehicle operators' license and registration fees for members of the Connecticut National Guard; free admission to state parks; and a waiver of tuition and student fees at Charter Oak State College for members of the Connecticut National Guard.

None of these issues have yet been raised or proposed as bills for the 2015 CGA session.

Past state NGACT legislative successes include, but are not limited to: Connecticut National Guard and Veteran tuition waivers for state colleges and universities for undergraduate and graduate degrees; tuition waivers for state colleges and universities for qualified survivors of Veterans; licensure and certification credits for military training; member of Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; Military Family Relief Fund financial assistance for families of qualified members; Military Support Program - human services for members and their families; Military Family and Medical

Leave Act - permits an employee unpaid family and medical leave to care for an immediate family member or next of kin who is a member of the armed forces with serious illness or injury received in the line of duty; Armed Forces property tax interest forgiveness - qualified municipal waiver of accrued interest owed on property tax by mobilized members of the armed forces; Servicemember's motor vehicle property tax exemption - one vehicle tax exempt; 50 percent of military pension exempt from state income tax; Wartime Service Bonuses for qualified mobilizations of members of the Connecticut National Guard - \$50 a month (maximum \$1,200); state active duty death benefit paid to beneficiary of member killed in line of duty; burial in state Veteran's cemetery for qualified members and Veterans; motor vehicle registration exemption for qualified Veterans; motor vehicle registration fee exemptions for members of the armed forces; exemption from license and examination fees for members of the armed forces; option to list Veteran status on state driver's license or identity card;

and special license plates for Veterans and members of the Connecticut National Guard among many other benefits offered by the State of Connecticut.

NGACT is now asking for your ideas for new state legislation that would benefit Connecticut Army and Air National Guard members, Veterans, Retirees and their Families.

You do not need to have a completely written piece of legislation - an idea, a sentence or a short paragraph is all we need to get started. A NGACT representative will contact you if more information is needed. Please send any ideas you have, no matter how big or small, to the NGACT legislative committee chairman at legislativeguard@gmail.com. Suggestions for new legislation need to be submitted no later than Nov. 21 to be considered for inclusion in the 2015 NGACT legislative package.

For more information on the Connecticut General Assembly, visit www.cga.ct.gov. For more information on NGACT, visit www.ngact.org

NGACT on Social Media

Visit NGACT on the Web at www.ngact.org



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Save the NGACT Date

November 4
Election Day

November 19
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
NGACT Office, Hartford Armory
5:30 p.m. Open to all

December 17
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
NGACT Office, Hartford Armory
5:30 p.m. Open to all

January 7
Connecticut General Assembly
Opening Day of Session

January 14
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
NGACT Office, Hartford Armory
5:30 p.m. Open to All

February 18
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
NGACT Office, Hartford Armory
5:30 p.m. Open to All

March 18
NGACT Executive Board Meeting
NGACT Office, Hartford Armory
5:30 p.m. Open to All

Plan - Prepare - Execute: Finalizing the Tactical Plan

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY LT. COL. PAUL THOMPSON
STATE TRAINING OFFICER

Editor's Note: This is the seventh in a multi-part series on training.

The Unit Training Plan is the unit's over-arching plan to attain key collective task proficiency in the time allotted to train (planning horizon). Commanders, leaders and training managers plan-prepare-execute and assess each training event as the UTP progresses. Each training event is planned and coordinated in detail prior to execution. This is done during company-level training meetings using the "T-Month" construct.

This process has to start early enough in the planning cycle to ensure all required resources are present and accounted for as training begins. Unless this is done, training proficiencies the commander envisions will not happen.

Each unit has to have a deep understanding of the local and installation-level resources available. This also includes understanding training resource cycles and

conferences to ensure the unit can influence these cycles early enough to get the resources needed to train. The following is a breakdown of select major "T-Month" activities to use as a guide for units to follow in the development of training events. Keep in mind that each major training event would fall into the T-Month concept at different points in time on the training calendar.

Month T-5 - Complete tactical plan and supporting products. After the administrative order is published, the resources are locked-in, and the training schedule is set – the remaining pieces of the plan can be completed. This includes finalizing the tactical plan for friendly and any involved opposing forces (e.g. missions, tasks to specific units and coordinating instructions for BLUFOR and OPFOR forces), the exercise control plan, the evaluation plan and a leader certification plan. It is important to complete a thorough tactical order (operations order) as early as possible to ensure it drives the training to meet the training objectives. This includes both a BLUFOR tactical order and an OPFOR tactical

order, if applicable, to ensure all training aids are synchronized and focused. This can become very complex if multiple training support enablers are used, possibly from different major commands or even Army components. If a component of the training includes command post operations and mission tracking utilizing simulation support, ensure sufficient planning time is allotted to get required exercise data and messages uploaded into simulation programs. Assistance with simulation programs and capabilities can often be obtained from regional training installations.

Next month will feature Month T-4, conduct certifications and complete prerequisite training.



Education: Leadership Through Learning

MIRZA HENDERSON
EDUCATION SERVICES SPECIALIST

Here is some information updates about educational benefits, programs and opportunities that Guard members and eligible family members may have earned through military service. If you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact the Connecticut National Guard Education office at (860) 524-4820 or visit the staff in the Hartford Armory.

SAT/ACT Testing: Testing will take place on Nov. 11 as follows: ACT 9:00 a.m. and SAT 2:00 p.m. in the Community Learning Center, Room 102, William A. O'Neill Armory, 360 Broad Street, Hartford. Please e-mail Mirza Henderson to register: mirza.y.henderson2.civ@mail.mil, 860-524-4820. Service members can get study materials for the ACT/SAT/LSAT paid for through <http://www.eknowledge.com/military>.

Legacy Federal Tuition Assistance: As all recipients of federal tuition assistance know, completing the processing Legacy FTA administrative and recoupment actions is a priority for FY15. Verify your GoArmyEd account and forward a copy of your transcripts to verify missing grades to mirza.y.henderson2.civ@mail.mil to avoid recoupment.

Army National Guard Soldiers: The Army National Guard offers free testing via a reimbursement process for hundreds of nationally and state accredited exams and licensures. Contact our office to receive the proper forms and steps you need to start the process for your reimbursement! To verify the list of available exams on the Army COOL website visit <https://www.cool.army.mil/search/CredSearchAlpha.htm>.

College Credits Alternatives

Earning TECEP® College Credit: TECEP® exams are similar to final exams for college courses. Most have multiple-choice questions and some have short-answer or essay questions. They are graded on a credit/no credit basis and by passing you receive credit for the course. Visit <http://www.tesc.edu/degree-completion/Earning-TECEP-credit.cfm> for more information.

Joint Services Transcript: Learn more about the Joint Services Transcript, certified by the American Council on Education which replaces traditional transcripts. Please visit the Joint Services Transcript Website at <https://jst.doded.mil>.

Scholarship and Financial Aid Program Opportunities

Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts: The Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts program provides up to \$4,000 of financial assistance for military spouses. Call toll free 1.800.342.9647 or visit <https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa> to find out more information.

Fry Scholarship: The Department of Veterans Affairs started accepting new applications by mail for the Fry Scholarship for surviving spouses on Nov. 3. Previously, only the children of those who have died in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001 were eligible for this benefit. The Fry Scholarship will allow eligible spouses to receive up to 36 months of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100-percent payment tier. Surviving spouses may choose between the Fry Scholarship and the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program. More information is available at: myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/Federal_Benefits_Page/Fry_Scholarship. or <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2647>

The Gates Millennium Scholars Program -

www.gmsp.org: The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program selects 1,000 talented students each year to receive a good-through-graduation scholarship to use at any college or university of their choice. The 2015 GMS online application is open until Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2015 11:59 p.m. EST deadline. For the complete list of eligibility criteria, please visit the website.

Boren Awards Scholarships: For International Studies - www.borenawards.org: Boren Scholarships provide up to \$30,000 to U.S. undergraduate/graduate students to study abroad in areas of the world that are critical to U.S. interests and underrepresented in study abroad, including Africa, Asia, Central & Eastern Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The final deadline is Feb. 4, 2015 but each school sets an earlier campus deadline.

Harvard University Extension: If attending Harvard University was a dream, you can now consider your dreams a possible reality. Pursue a Harvard part-time degree through a combination of online and on-campus courses in their undergraduate and graduate programs. Federal Tuition Assistance Funds can be used to pay for tuition. Do you believe your child meets the requirements to attend Harvard University, but you can't afford it? Harvard University admissions and financial aid for undergraduate education is available for families with limited income: Please visit this site for more information: <https://college.harvard.edu/financial-aid/how-aid-works>.

(Editor's note: The information provided in this article was for the purpose of general information and assistance. The CTNG does not serve as a marketing agent or representative for any of the scholarships or institutions mentioned.)

Off the Bookshelf : The Great Gatsby

STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN SIMON
JFHQ PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

A Connecticut politician was recently referred to as a “Gatsby-like figure,” in a recent *Irish Independent* news article. Mia Farrow was typecast as a perennial Daisy Buchanan in the second half of the 20th century, even prior to playing the role in the 1974 film. Taylor Swift was recently costumed like Farrow’s portrayal of Buchanan on a cover of *People Magazine*. The plot of the television show, *Mad Men*, follows the synopsis of *The Great Gatsby*.

References to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1925 novel are numerous in television, politics and in the media. They can be interpreted in multiple ways. The list goes on and on.

What is this book that is referenced so often and is included in thousands of American literature class curriculums?

The Great Gatsby is a novel that is not worth reading. The characters are relatively depthless, the plot is trite and archetypal and its conclusion is easily predicted.

However, *The Great Gatsby* has a monopoly on the time period between the two twentieth century world wars—and its ability to have such a monopoly is perhaps only rivaled by *Huckleberry Finn* and *Gone With The Wind* in their respective time periods.

Fitzgerald’s novel is about two veterans of the First World War who find themselves in a shared incestuous circle of wealthy young men and women.

Nick Carraway, from the Midwest, is shy and unsure of himself.

Jay Gatsby is a PG version of Caligula. Originally from a poor family in North Dakota, Gatsby becomes rich by investing in bootlegging alcohol.

Both Nick and Jay are in love with the young and beautiful Daisy Buchanan. Daisy, however, is married to her cousin Tom Buchanan.

Everyone fights over Daisy.

The husband of Tom Buchanan’s mistress, George, kills Jay Gatsby.

The shy Midwestern Nick, returns to the Midwest, crestfallen.

The end.

What’s worth remembering about it?

The Great Gatsby has become an incarnate representation of the American jazz age: the literary nick-of-time between 1920 and the 1930s.

Popular images and tropes from that period, articulated within the novel, have survived those years: the prohibition era speakeasy parties, the short bob hair styles and the perpetual bright blinking lights of New York City have all been ingrained in our consciousnesses as being from a ‘more golden’ and ‘innocent’ era of lost Americana.

These are all remnants of *The Great Gatsby*.

Even the idea of their having been such thing as an ‘innocent’ America may have originated with this novel’s plot line: the shy Nick Carraway sojourns into the Roman Empire-esque New York, where he is corrupted by young fortune inheritors, their rich friends and debutante *Lolitas*.

Everyone takes part in self-pitying and self-destructive behaviors.

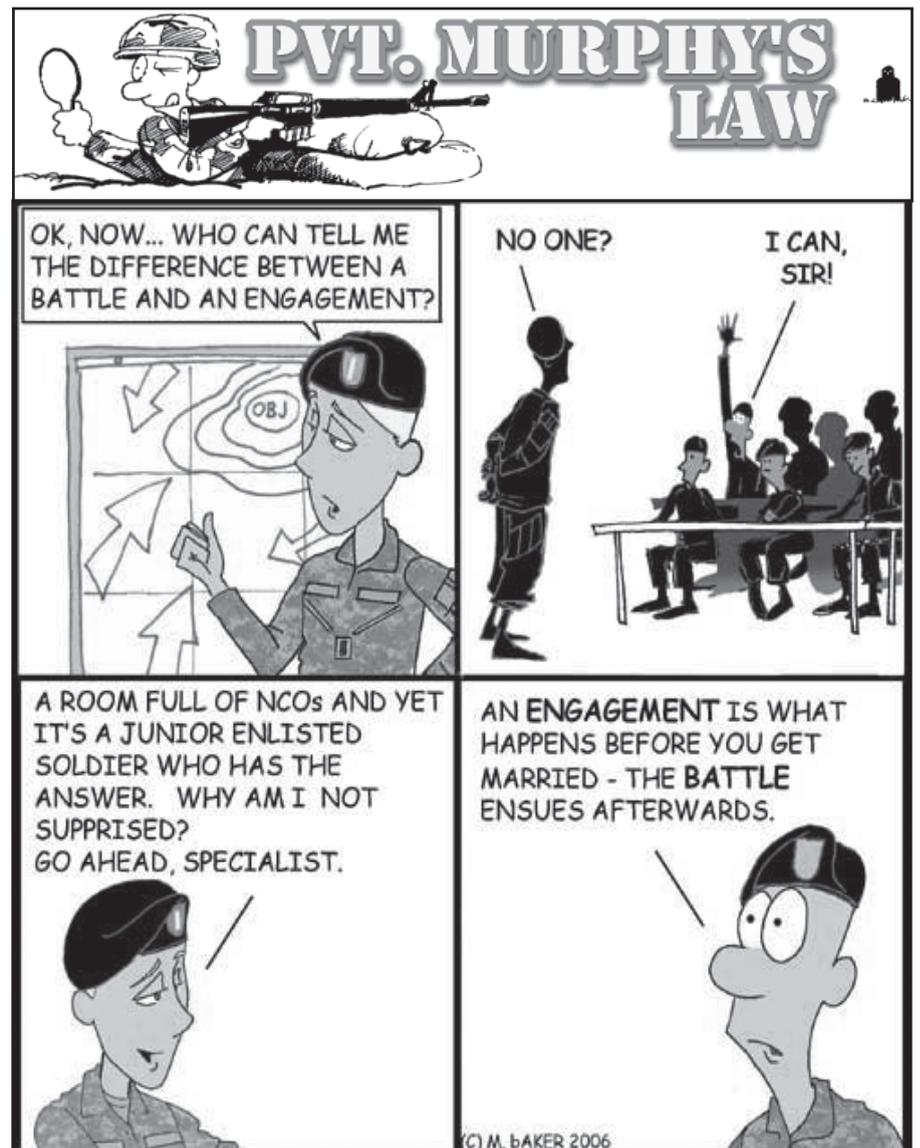
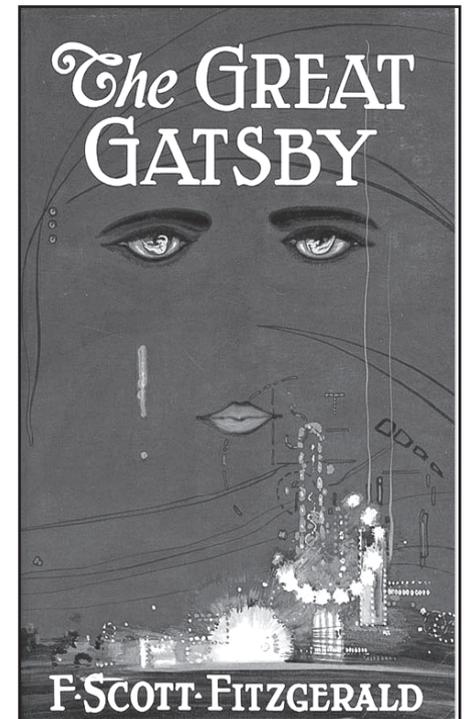
And in the end, everyone is punished by tangible religious consequences. Innocence is lost.

But the *Great Gatsby* contains music, dancing, fancy classic cars, pretty girls and a sense of American industrialism reaching its zenith.

And Fitzgerald made other archetypal comparisons very visible: country and city, good boys and bad, war and home. These contrasts made *The Great Gatsby* a popular and long-lasting novel.

As long as it maintains its niche in time (a time period which contrasts deeply to the periods surrounding it) references to it will continue to be numerous.

And there will always be “Gatsby like figures” in the news. References to better novels, however, would be more flattering.



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*Text your location for the nearest SARC

Retiree's Voice: Random Topics for Retirees

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER FOUR (RET.) JOHN GODBURN
RETIREE AFFAIRS COLUMNIST

My article for this month is a collection of random topics, legislative updates and hopefully, helpful information for Retirees.

As I write this article in mid-October, some of the legislation and topics covered in this article are pending legislative or agency approval, but may well be approved by the time this article is published.

Bigger Hike for Retirees than Soldiers is Possible

Military and government retirees, disabled veterans and Social Security recipients could receive a 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment effective Dec. 1, 2014. This is slightly larger than the 1.5 percent increase received last year.

The amount is calculated based on changes to the Consumer Price Index, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' measure of the cost of goods and services. At this time, the size of the Jan. 1, 2015 military pay raise is not yet known, but President Obama has told Congress that he intends to cap the raise for Soldiers and government civilians at 1 percent.

The House of Representatives has approved a 1.8 percent military pay raise in its version of the Annual Defense Bill, but the Senate Armed Services Committee has so far backed the Obama Administration. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-FL, has introduced an amendment to the Senate

bill that would also provide a 1.8 percent pay raise. If this amendment were to pass, it is possible Congress could overrule the President. Stay tuned ...

New Effort to Reduce VA Disability Claims Backlog

The Veterans Affairs Department is preparing to have a standardized form for Veterans and survivors to use when filing benefits claims, beginning in 2015. The VA's hope is that this form will speed the claims process by clarifying what, exactly, the applicant is seeking and what documentation is needed. As it currently stands, no form is required to file a claim. A Veteran or survivor can simply submit a written statement, on any piece of paper, to start the claims process.

The VA hopes that by using a standard form it will help to improve claims processing time and reduce the significant backlog of cases. As it currently stands, about 48 percent of claims have been pending for 125 days or longer. This year it has taken the VA 229 days on average to complete compensation and pension claims.

VA Expands Health Network

In response to the recent VA health care crisis, the VA will now provide primary care through its recently established nationwide Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) network. Veterans' access to PC3 (purchased care) services is based on referrals from the VA when a local VA facility does not provide the needed services, or

cannot see a Veteran in a reasonable amount of time. The intent of this new program is to help local VA medical centers reduce wait times and provide more flexibility in the referral system.

Arrears of Pay

An Arrears of Pay (AOP) is a one-time payment made to beneficiaries of deceased Retired Soldiers. It includes the pro-rated amount of your final month's retired pay, as well as any other monies you are owed at the time of your death.

Retirees, because your entitlement to retired pay ends on the date of your death, it is very important that your survivors promptly notify Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) of your death. When your death is reported, DFAS will reclaim your final month's retired pay, and audit your account. DFAS will then compute the final amount owed to your estate and send it to your AOP beneficiary. Any delay in reporting your death could result in an overpayment of retired pay that will be collected from your bank, your estate or your survivors.

Retirees, don't let AOP be another source of stress to your survivors at the time of your death. Be sure they understand what to expect and what they have to do. Retirees, to designate or verify an AOP beneficiary and update your contact information, log into your *myPay* account or call DFAS at 1-800-321-1080.

Retirement Service Officer Notes: Retirement Briefings

SGT. 1ST CLASS REBECCA AVERY
RETIREMENT PROGRAM MANAGER

This month I would like to tell you what the mandatory retirement briefing is all about. Ultimately this is your opportunity to learn valuable information about the military retirement benefits you have earned and what important decisions you and your family need to make to ensure the retirement options you choose will effectively meet your needs.

Who: Retirement Briefings are available for Soldiers who are in any of the four stages of retirement: 1) Receiving their Notice of Eligibility (NOE) at either 20 years or 15 years of service; 2) Retiring from the National Guard and entering the "gray area" of retirement; 3) A Retiree who is turning the age of 60 and needs help with their retired pay packet; or 4) A Soldier who at any time wishes to receive a briefing because they need a refresher or never received a briefing at the previously mentioned milestones in their career.

What: At the briefing the following providers and JFHQ staff make presentations to the retirees: TRICARE Medical, Virginia Hanke; TRICARE Dental, Doug Shobel or web audio; Transition Assistance Advisor, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Dan McHale; Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve, Joshua Mead and Ted Graziani; State Sponsored Life Insurance representative; Social Security Administration, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Gary Ottenbreit; Small Business Administration, Frank Alvarado; State

Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Carragher; Retirement Point Administration Manager, Sgt. Kayla Nieves, and Retirement Services Officer, Sgt. 1st Class Rebekah Avery.

Where: Retirement briefings are held at the Hartford Armory, 360 Broad Street in Hartford.

Why: Briefings are conducted to help each Soldier and spouse transition to the Retired Reserves with as much information, tools and resources as possible. Retirement briefings open an avenue of communication between the Soldiers and key retirement services staff to get questions answered and issues resolved, such as instructions from the retirement point administration manager about how to correct information on retired point account statements. Retirement briefings are also helpful to let spouses know that the CTARNG retirement services office is available if they have questions or in the event they lose their Soldier and need assistance for an annuity claim.

At the briefing, Soldiers who have achieved their 20 years of qualifying service are given their notices of eligibility and guidance as to the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RC-SBP) options. They are instructed on how to choose their retirement options in a timely manner to avoid an automatic election.

Soldiers who are entering or are in the "gray area" of retirement are provided a prepared retired pay application containing all the necessary forms and instructions on how to fill out their retired pay application when they turn age 60 or earlier if eligible for the Early Retire Pay

benefit based on deployments after January 2008. All data concerning the ERP is annotated and logged onto their retired point account statement and a letter from the DSCPER is published as per National Guard Bureau guidance.

The Soldiers who are turning age 60 or those who are applying for pay early due to ERP are provided a completed packet prepared by the retirement services officer all ready for signature. After completion, a copy of this packet is forwarded to the historical department for record keeping, and the original is mailed to Human Resources Command. All Retirees are presented with a flag, lapel pin and decals reading "Retired Army" for their window or car.

When: Briefings are held on the Sundays of the Joint Forces Headquarters drill weekend from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Light refreshments are provided by donation. There is a one hour lunch break. Lunch is not provided but there is a microwave available and some fast food restaurants within walking distance. Briefings are not scheduled during the months of June, September and December due to annual trainings, Family Day, and annual briefings.

The briefing dates for 2015 are: Jan. 4, Feb. 8, March 8, April 5, May 3, July 12, Aug. 2, Oct. 4 and Nov. 7.

Would you like to sign-up for your retirement briefing? All Retirees are welcome. Contact Sgt. 1st Class Rebekah Avery at (860) 524-4813 or rebekah.j.avery.mil@mail.mil.



"WE STAND FOR LIFE"

The Army Suicide Prevention Office is not a crisis center and does not provide counseling services. If you are feeling distressed or hopeless, thinking about death or wanting to die, or, if you are concerned about someone who may be suicidal, please contact Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

IT'S YOUR CALL

Confidential help for Active Duty/Guard/Reserve Soldiers and their Families

1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Military CrisisLine

*** Confidential chat at MilitaryCrisisLine.net or text to 838235 ***

www.preventsuicide.army.mil

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs




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Family
Family safe is Family Strong

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Wear your personal protective equipment.

It may **SAVE YOUR LIFE!**

- 1 COMFORT.** Uncomfortable gear can distract you from riding. Properly fitted protective gear will help you stay comfortable when encountering various riding conditions.
- 2 PROTECTION.** In the event of a crash, protective gear can help prevent or reduce injuries.

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG

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<https://safety.army.mil>

WEAPONS SAFETY THINK



- Treat every weapon as if it's loaded.**
- Handle every weapon with care.**
- Identify the target before you fire.**
- Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.**
- Keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.**

In FY 2007 six Soldiers died in off-duty privately owned weapons handling accidents; alcohol was a factor in the majority of them.

ARMY STRONG

U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS SAFETY CENTER
<https://crc.army.mil>

OWN the EDGE
Leading on the Edge

Connecticut National Guard Promotions Army

To Private 2

Porras, Stephanie
Baldassario, Jacob C.
Abbott, Ralph W.
Blesso, Nathan J.
Drane, James D.
Fulco, Brandon R.
L'heureux, Nicole D.
Lore, Travis
Graham, Ethen J.

To Private First Class

Engelhard, Jason D.
Henry, Charles U.

Reyes, Joshua J.
Troiano, Carlo S.
Risley, Lucas M.
Gartley, Jamie L.
Sepulveda, Felix J.
Humphrey, Isaiah C.
Agyemang, Benjamin B.

To Specialist

Barrella, Peter J.
Norwood, Blair A.
Krug, David C.
Houle, Joshua J.
Vigil, Carlos E. Jr.
Mendez, Manuel J.

Blodgett, Sarah
Sullivan, Davon R.
Spears, Alex J.

To Sergeant

Duga, Benjamin J.
Mahoney, Samantha L.
Wedge, Paul E.
Pierce, Richard J.
Cornell, Stephanie M.
Lamphere, James D.
Austin, Danielle E.

To Staff Sergeant

Holt, Charles C.
Jones, Lasonya K.

To Sergeant First Class

Cortes, Irving
Thorstenson, Gary J. Jr.

To Captain

Kilian, John P.

Air

To Airman

Knightly, Jordan J.
Bouchard, Shelby R.

To Senior Airman

Jones, Craig A. Jr.
Mazzola, Melissa G.
Talbot, Michael R.
Perez, Stephanie A.

To Staff Sergeant

Petzold, Dennis
Gillis, Dylan C.
Whiting, James R.
Starrett, Jennifer R.
Minitier, Michael P.
Saucier, Michelle M.
Ayala, Joel

To Technical Sergeant

Diaz Garcia, Carlos M.
Cummings, Danielle A.

To Master Sergeant

Mazzie, Joseph D.

Connecticut National Guard HELPLINE

In an effort to support the needs of our service members and their families, the Connecticut National Guard now has a 24-hour HELPLINE.

If you or someone you know is struggling with the stressors of life, please contact us at
1-855-800-0120.

Your call will be answered by a behavioral health professional. You will receive information and referrals to community resources to support you and your family.

HELPLINE
1-855-800-0120

Coming Events

November

November 2

Veterans Day Parade, Hartford

November 4

Election Day

November 6

Officer Dining-In

November 11

Veterans Day

November 19

NGACT Executive Board Meeting

November 20

Guardian Deadline for December

November 27

Thanksgiving

December

December 7

Pearl Harbor Day

December 17

Hanukkah

December 17

NGACT Executive Board Meeting

December 18

Guardian Deadline for January

December 19

Operation ELF
6:00 - 8:30 P.M.

December 25

Christmas

December 26

Kwanzaa

December 31

New Year's Eve

January

January 1

New Year's Day

January 19

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Deadline for the December Issue of the Guardian is November 20
Deadline for the January Issue of the Guardian is December 18

THE 102D ARMY BAND



WANTS YOU



TO AUDITION!

The 102d Army Band is looking for experienced musicians between the ages of 17 and 35 to audition now!

IMMEDIATE openings for:

**French Horn • Clarinet • Guitar
Bass Guitar • Trombone • Saxophone**

All other band instruments will also be considered!

Get the chance to perform at Community and Guard events, honor ceremonies, concerts, sporting events and much more!

Contact a local recruiter or 102nd Army Band RNCO Staff Sgt. Tomasz Durnik tomasz.d.durnik.mil@mail.mil or (860)375-1801.

Find us on FACEBOOK! [facebook.com/102dArmyBand](https://www.facebook.com/102dArmyBand)

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Connecticut FAMILY Guardian



VOL. 15 NO. 11

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

NOVEMBER 2014

CT Youth Council Offers Many Opportunities

MICHELLE McCARTY
CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

With November being the Month of the Military Family, I wanted to highlight one of our Connecticut Youth Council members on her success in singing the National Anthem at the Golden Kielbasa Veterans Open golf tournament on Oct. 2 at the Tunxis Plantation Country Club in Farmington.

Twelve-year-old Megan McDaniel, the daughter of Capt. Jeffrey McDaniel of the 192nd Engineer Battalion and U.S. Army Veteran Dawn McDaniel, sang her heart out and did a fantastic job representing her family, the Connecticut National Guard and the Connecticut Youth Council. In addition to being a very good student, Megan is a trampoline gymnast and sings in the choir at her East Hampton Middle School. Great job, Megan!

The Golden Kielbasa Open has grown since 2009 to become one of the largest charity golf tournaments dedicated to assisting Central Connecticut veterans and their families, this year helping to support the work of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), House of Heroes Connecticut and Friends of Fisher House Connecticut.

Being a part of the Connecticut Youth Council opens doors to many opportunities for youth to grow and develop their many talents such as the one above. If you have a child aged 11 or older, please consider having them join the CYC. The possibilities are endless and include earning volunteer hours, planning activities that benefit military children in our state, representing our state at regional or national trainings and developing important life skills that will help them in their future endeavors.

The CYC usually meets the first and third Monday of each month with the first monthly meeting held at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Middletown and the second at the Gov. William A. O'Neill Armory in Hartford beginning at 6:30 p.m.

This month the CYC will play a large role in celebrating the Month of the Military Family at a movie night scheduled for Nov. 14 at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Middletown. Council members came up with their own menu for the concession stand to help raise money to bring fun programs to military youth in the state. This will also be a great opportunity for everyone to meet the members of the council and find out about joining the team.

If you would like more information, please feel free to contact the Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator, Michelle McCarty at 860-548-3254 or michelle.m.mccarty4.ctr@mail.mil. And please don't forget to follow us on social media at www.facebook.com/CTCYP and @CTNG_CYP on Instagram.



Above: Megan McDaniel performs the National Anthem at the Golden Kielbasa Veterans Open tournament Oct. 2 in Farmington. Right: The 12-year-old received a bouquet of flowers from the organization after she finished her stirring rendition. (Photos courtesy Michelle McCarty, Child & Youth Program Coordinator)



CATHERINE GALASSO

Enjoy Today... God is Working on Tomorrow

Not long ago, I heard a story about a little girl who was sitting on her father's lap in their living room while he was reading the sports page of the newspaper.

The talkative child began to tell her father how much she wanted him to build her a treehouse. She spoke faster and faster, as she described in full detail the design of the house she imagined and the features the treehouse should have.

Then, she enthusiastically affirmed, "I already picked out the perfect location in our backyard."

Although the father was somewhat distracted, he nodded his head and agreed to build the treehouse of her dreams. "I promise," he declared. Then, he continued reading the paper.

The little girl rose to her feet. Her head was still swimming with details for her soon-to-be treehouse.

A week went by, and the father forgot all about his promise until one night he walked into his daughter's room. There, all of her dolls, several stacks of doll's clothes and some coloring books and crayons were meticulously packed in small suitcases.

"What's going on?" the father asked. "Why is everything packed?"

The little girl turned her sweet face to him. She looked hopeful and replied, "I got them ready to move into my new treehouse."

In the silence that followed, the father crossed his arms over his chest. "I know you will be building it..." she giggled. And, the blue-eyed girl whispered, "... because you promised you would."

She believed her father. And that promise was good enough for her.

Gazing out the back window at the large oak tree in their yard, a quiet joy came over the father. Then, he said to his beloved daughter, "Yes. Alright."

Indeed, the father kept his promise. And God, your Father, will always keep His promises to you.

Yet, sometimes, it can be easy to get discouraged, resentful and even bitter, as we encounter the challenges of life. In the midst of our despair, we could begin to lag behind and start to think that there is no hope for our dreams to come true.

But don't give up too quickly or too soon. God is not done with you yet. He has chosen you for great things. And He is accomplishing more in you and through you now than you could ever think or imagine.

So continue to stand on God's promises and soon He will unveil the best plan for your future.

No matter what life throws your way, what God has promised, He will fulfill. What God covenants, He will complete. So enjoy today... God is working on tomorrow. "God who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23).

So make your words and prayers promise-centered, by affirming your belief that God will act on your behalf.

· Maybe you are struggling with worries, fears or concerns. Turn away from doubts and confess repeatedly, 'God promises, in all these things I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves me...' (Romans 8:37).

· Perhaps, you're upset because of missed opportunities in the past. Renew your hope by confirming

daily, 'God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully.' (Romans 8:28).

· All the odds might be against your success. Thank God for the victory to come and continually state, 'God promises that He will not withhold any good thing from those who live righteously.' (Psalms 84:11).

· By the looks of it, you could be in an impossible situation. Believe that God can turn around the circumstance and throughout the day declare, 'God promises that with Him, all things are possible.' (Luke 18:27).

If God promised it, He will deliver it. So take heart, for God can provide for your needs in ways that you least expect or through people that you may not even know.

Recently, I received a remarkable email from a gentleman who told how early one morning he was outside walking his dogs. He stopped to pick up a piece of newspaper that was scattered on the ground.

Nonchalantly, he looked at the paper and an article caught his eye. It was my newspaper column.

"I love it and the message," he described, "but it's ripped up a bit, and I can't read it all. Would you be kind enough to send me a more legible copy?" the gentleman requested.

When I read his note to me, I smiled and believed that God put those words before him for a reason. Immediately, I emailed him the column that I had written weeks ago that was titled: 'You are about to step into blessings that you've never had before.'

The column was filled with God's amazing promises.

Soon after, the gentleman replied and thanked me for sending him the column, "Today, I have a meeting with my urologist, and I'm a little nervous..." he explained. I answered back and wrote that I would keep him in my prayers.

Later that day, I checked on him via email, and he responded: "Hi Catherine: By the grace of God, my doctor said, "No cancer. I was just preparing dinner for my wife and myself and thought, 'Oh, I need to thank Catherine,' and here you are."

He continued, "Miracles are for real. I believe I was brought to you by God, and to pick up some newspaper from the tennis courts where I walk my dogs. Thank you for your prayers today, you will be in mine."

Like this gentleman, God knows what you need when you need it. There is no limit to His power. And so, my encouragement to you is to be at peace, seek Him and then watch for God's blessings at every turn. Miracles are in your future.

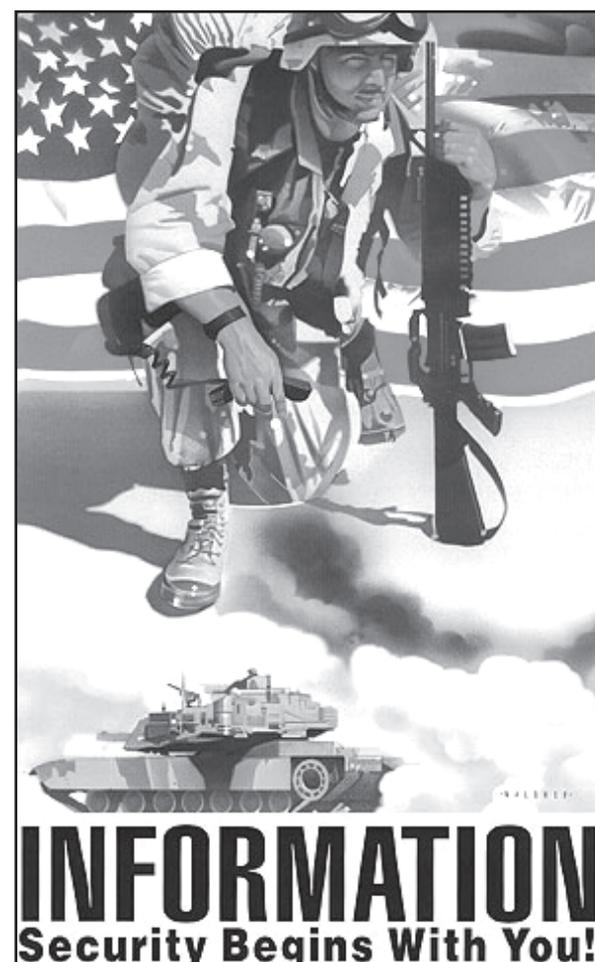
Unexpected opportunities are going to come your way. Your prayers will be answered. You'll be in the right place at the right time and suddenly things will fall into place.

It's just a matter of time. So enjoy today...God is working on tomorrow.

Write to Catherine Galasso-Vigorito, nationally syndicated columnist and author, in care of Connecticut Guardian, 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-3795 or e-mail her at cgv@anewyouworldwide.com.

Visit her website at www.anewyouworldwide.com

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army.mil/BLOG
ARMY | LIVE - The Official U.S. Army Blog

v vimeo.com/USARMY
The Official U.S. Army Vimeo

slideshare.net/USARMYSOCIALMEDIA
U.S. Army Social Media Resources

socialmedia.DEFENSE.GOV
Dept. of Defense Social Media Hub

Office of the Chief of Public Affairs
Online & Social Media Division

Annual Operation ELF, Adopt-a-Family Program Launches to Support Military Families

COL. JOHN T. WILTSE
STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman joined forces again with the Connecticut National Guard to kick-off the 13th Annual Operation ELF (“embracing lonely families”) program to assist military families in need throughout the year including families of Soldiers and Airmen who will be deployed during the holidays.

Operation ELF was established in 2002 to provide support to the state’s military families to help deal with

the stresses of separation due to deployment, and to ease financial hardships as a result of their call to active duty. Over the years Operation ELF has been expanded to serve as an annual assistance and gift drive to enable the CTNG Family Program to support military families whenever they are in need.

“We are very grateful for the Governor and Lt. Governor’s tireless support of our members and their families and all military service members from Connecticut,” said Maj. Gen. Thaddeus J. Martin, adjutant general and commander of the Connecticut

National Guard. “We continue to be humbled by the generosity of the Connecticut people in supporting the families of our Soldiers and Airmen not just around the holidays but throughout the year.”

With fewer deployed Soldiers and Airmen this holiday season, organizers of Operation ELF are focused on raising flexible gifts of financial assistance and services that can help lift up families in need, rather than on holiday toys alone.

You can support a service member by supporting their family with the donation of a gift card to a local grocery, department store or home supply store, gas station or pharmacy. These cards will be given to families so that they can choose what they need most. Cards of any denomination are most welcomed and appreciated. Donations of fuel oil, snow removal services and other home maintenance services can also be made to the Connecticut National Guard Family Program.

Operation ELF financial donations to assist families with such varied needs as utility bills and children’s clothing can be made through the Connecticut National Guard Foundation, Inc. (visit www.ctngfoundation.org).

A limited number of unwrapped toys and school supplies for children of all age groups are being sought to help support the

Operation Elf holiday party for deployed families with children to be held on Friday evening, Dec. 19 at the Hartford Armory. Volunteers are needed to help prepare and staff the Operation Elf party. Please contact Linda Rolstone at (860) 524-4963 if you would like to volunteer.

One of the major components of Operation ELF is the Adopt-A-Family Program. Adopt-A-Family offers the opportunity for individuals, businesses and other families to “adopt” a Connecticut military family in substantial need during the holiday season and beyond. The program is 100 percent confidential and the adopting donor is never given any personal information on the family in need. Rather, a summary of the family’s demographics and wish list needs are provided. Additionally, no service member’s chain of command is ever notified of their participation in the program.

The sole purpose of Adopt-A-Family is to provide the most essential goods or services a family may need. Desired donations for adopted families include new winter clothing (coats, scarves, gloves, boots), food, assistance with essential household expenses (utilities, heat) and limited presents for children. Adopt-A-Family is not designed to provide luxury items such as game systems, electronics, jewelry, etc.

All members of Connecticut’s extended military “family” are eligible to be adopted or to adopt including all Guard, Reserve and active component families. If you would like to adopt a family or if you would like to be adopted, please call the Operation ELF hotline at 1-800-858-2677.

General donations for Operation ELF may be dropped off at the following facilities until Friday Dec. 12 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.: Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby; Middletown Armed Forces Reserve Center; New London Armory; Danbury Armed Forces Reserve Center; Hartford Amory; and the Windsor Locks Readiness Center.

Gift cards may be delivered to any one of the drop-off locations or mailed to the Connecticut National Guard Office of Family Programs, Gov. William A. O’Neill Armory, 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-3706.

Additional questions about supporting or being assisted by Operation ELF can be directed to the CTNG Family Program staff at 1-800-858-2677.

Family Finances: Preparing for the Holidays

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY JESSICA KOEHLER
FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER SPECIALIST

With the Holidays fast approaching and ads screaming at us from all angles about the “must have” items, let’s take a time-out and talk about how to give presents, enjoy the holidays and not have looming credit card debt staring at you for the rest of the year. There are many things that we can do to reduce the amount of money we are spending each year. Below are just a few tips to help get you started.

* The first thing to do is to actually set a realistic budget and stick to it. Make a budget in tune with how much you have saved, or how much you can pay off in two months. Be sure to include everything from gifts and entertaining to postage and decorating. The little things add up very quickly.

* Make a list for each person you anticipate buying gifts for, and don’t forget gifts like the hostess gift for parties you attend, co-workers, teachers or that Secret Santa exchange you participate in each year. When you have a complete list you can then stick to your budget goals easier. Once you make the list, keep it handy, have it in your phone, carry it in your planner or your iPad, and when you buy a gift make sure you mark it off on your list. Often times we will see a perfect gift for someone, buy it on impulse and then forget about it later on. Don’t buy for the same person twice. Stay on budget.

* Do your homework! If you know that Sally wants those really expensive headphones, search websites and paper ads. Black Friday and Cyber Monday may claim to have the best deals, but they don’t always. Check with your local store. Many will price match so you are not driving all over town. When buying online, don’t forget about shipping and handling and delivery dates and watch for shopping days when these additional costs may be offered free or reduced.

* Get a head start. It is much easier to make smart choices with your money when you are not waiting until the last minute to shop. Procrastination only promotes overspending and buyer’s remorse. Getting a head start allows you to take your time and make smart choices.

* Make a payoff plan. Setting your budget will give you time to plan your payoff. If you know that you have \$300.00 dollars saved and your total budget is \$500.00, make a plan to pay off that extra money. Make a plan that fits with your budget.

Most importantly, enjoy the holidays! Think about your most cherished memories and gifts throughout the years; often these memories are not filled with the gifts you received, but spending time with your loved ones. Remember to take the time to really enjoy the season and not get wrapped up in getting the “perfect” gift.

How to Train Your Dragon 2!

Happy Month of the Military Family! We would like to invite you to celebrate this special month with a Family movie night!

RSVPs are REQUIRED please visit the link below:
<http://ctng-momf-movienight.eventbrite.com>

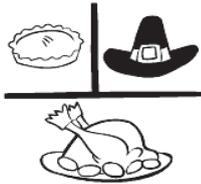
Date: Friday, November 14th
Time: 6:00 PM
(movie will begin promptly at 6:30 PM)

Location: Armed Forces Reserve Center
375 Smith Street, Middletown CT

Password: momfmovie

Featuring the CT Youth Council Concession Stand with hot dogs, fries, chicken nuggets, popcorn etc. for purchase!
(Proceeds to benefit military youth activities)



Thanksgiving Feast Word Scramble

The Turkey & his pals tried to stop the feast by scrambling up all the items on the menu—unscramble and save the day!

STAEF

YMILAF

GGITHNAKSVIN

GRPILSMI

KEYRTU

FFUTNIGS

LLSOR

NOCR

RRBECNRAIES

PPUMNIK EPI

QUSSAH

SHAMDE POTTAOSE

Answers:

Rolls
Feast
Family
Thanksgiving
Pilgrims
Turkey
Stuffing
Mashed Potatoes
Squash
Pumpkin Pie
Cranberries

KID'S CREATIVE CORNER

A monthly feature of fun and educational activities for the children of the Connecticut National Guard by the Members of the Connecticut Youth Council (CYC)

Service Member and Family Support Center Locations

Waterbury Armory

64 Field Street
Waterbury, CT 06702
(203) 574-2406
By Appointment

Norwich Armory

38 Stott Avenue
Norwich, CT 06360
(800) 858-2677
By Appointment

Windsor Locks Readiness Center

85-300 Light Lane
Windsor Locks, CT 06096
(860) 292-4602
M, T, W, TH, F
Troy Walcott, Michael Cortes

Veterans' Memorial

Armed Forces Reserve Center

90 Wooster Heights Road
Danbury, CT 06810
(203) 205-5050
M*, T, W, TH, F
Nancy Cummings

103rd Airlift Wing

100 Nicholson Road
East Granby, CT 06026
(860) 292-2730
M*, T, W, TH, F
Rick Uliano, Donna Rivera

103rd Air Control Squadron

206 Boston Post Road
Orange, CT 06447
(203) 795-2961
M*, F*

New London Armory

249 Bayonet Street
New London, CT 06320
(800) 858-2677

Camp Niantic

39 Smith Street
Niantic, CT 06357
(800) 858-2677
By Appointment

William A. O'Neill Armory

360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105
(800) 858-2677
M, T, W, TH, F

Kim Hoffman, Donna Rivera, Michelle McCarty,
SSG Melody Baber, Andrea Lathrop, Mitch Foreman,
Rita O'Donnell, Jessica Koehler, Megan Macsata,
Joshua Hamre, Linda Rolstone, Kim Dumas,
SSG John Cummings, SGT Shivers, Chris Rouleau,
Cindy Hould, Vicky Scully-Oakes, Ernie Lacore

Volunteers are always needed in each facility and for most events. Those wishing to help can contact the Connecticut National Guard Service Member and Family Support Center at **(800) 858-2677**.

Family members or loved ones of a Service Member with questions, concerns, or in need of assistance should contact us immediately**. Please visit us on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/CTNGFamilies.

**The Service Member and Family Support Center is NOT an emergency call center.

Support is available 24/7 by calling (800) 858-2677

*Centers are open part-time on a regular, weekly schedule. Please call ahead to confirm times or to make an appointment.