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PLAINS GUARDIAN

VOLUME 60 No. 2 *Serving the Kansas Army and Air National Guard, Kansas Emergency Management, Kansas Homeland Security and Civil Air Patrol* APRIL 2016

Fighting fire with flight

Kansas National Guard aids in Anderson Creek fire fight

By Sgt. Zach Sheely
Public Affairs Office

The Kansas National Guard, along with scores of career and volunteer firefighters, fought the Anderson Creek fire with four UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. With the added help of an advantageous snowstorm that dropped nearly three inches of snow on the burn zone the morning of March 27, the fire was fully contained.

The blaze scorched approximately 400,000 acres of rural Oklahoma and Kansas land, with approximately 273,000 acres affected in Barber County located in south central Kansas, making it the largest wildfire in Kansas history, according to the Kansas Forest Service.

“We were fortunate enough to have the National Guard aircraft mobilize to help out here on the Anderson Creek fire – Kansas side,” said Mark Masters, fire operations director, Kansas Forest Service Incident Management Team.

The rugged terrain made it difficult for ground-based fire crews to access all of the areas affected, and that’s why the Kansas National Guard aviation assets were needed.

“This terrain is pretty challenging,” said Kansas Governor Sam Brownback. “Much of Kansas is flat, but here you’ve got canyons and a lot of our fire trucks can’t get into these areas. The troops have done this in other states so they get to use that experience here in Kansas.”

Four Black Hawk helicopters were deployed March 26 with approximately 20 Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment; Company C, 1st Battalion, 211th General Support Aviation Battalion; and Company G, 1st Battalion, 235th GSAB, to assist with aerial fire suppression and reconnaissance. The morning of their arrival the fire was approximately 15 percent contained, according to Gaten Wood, agency administrator for Barber County.



A Kansas Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter drops more than 600 gallons of water from a Bambi bucket on a hot spot of the Anderson Creek Fire in south central Kansas March 26. The fire burned approximately 345,000 acres in the state, making it the largest wildfire in Kansas history. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

“The ground crews are stating that we knocked the teeth in on this fire and beat it down pretty good,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Hood, KSARNG, who served as the flight control manager. “The civilian agencies in this part of the country do not have any aviation

assets, so it’s all ground. “When you get fires this big, all the ground guys can do is try to contain it. With the aircraft and the Bambi bucket, we can put a lot of water where these guys can’t get. We can do
(Continued on Page 11)

Maj. Gen. Victor Braden takes command of 35th Infantry Division

Maj. Gen. Victor J. Braden, deputy commanding general of the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, received command of the 35th Infantry Division in a change of command ceremony March 6 at

Fort Leavenworth’s Lewis and Clark Center. “I am honored to be selected for command and I look forward to leading the 35th Infantry Division in this complex and challenging world,” said Braden. “It’s been an honor to lead the dedicated Soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division during the past 29 months,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Navrkal, outgoing commander of

the division. “The citizen-soldiers of the 35th have never wavered in their commitment to being ready if our state and nation called and it’s been equally heartening to witness the unwavering support we receive from our families and employers. “I know Major General Braden is the right person to lead this fine organization well into the future and wish him my best

as he takes command.” The 35th Infantry Division is one of eight divisions in the Army National Guard. In addition to Kansas, it has subordinate major commands in Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina. Braden has more than 30 years of military service with commands at the company, battalion and brigade level and three combat tours in the Persian Gulf, Bosnia and Afghanistan.

He is the recipient of the Bronze Star Medal with oak leaf cluster, Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, Army Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters, Army Achievement Medal with four oak leaf clusters and numerous other awards and decorations. In his civilian career, Braden is the deputy Kansas attorney general in charge of the Criminal Litigation Division, prosecuting homicide, child predator, illicit drug manufacturing and distribution, and public corruption cases throughout the state. Navrkal has been commander of the 35th Infantry Division since September 2013. Prior to becoming commanding general for the division, Navrkal was assistant adjutant general - Army for the Nebraska National Guard with a dual-hat assignment as deputy commanding general for Operations with First Army, Division West. Navrkal’s awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star, Medal Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters and many other awards.



Maj. Gen. Victor J. Braden (right) receives the guidon of the 35th Infantry Division from Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Newton, the division’s senior noncommissioned officer, signifying his new role as commander of the 35th during a change of command ceremony held at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on March 6. Watching the exchange are outgoing commander Maj. Gen. Michael Navrkal, and Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, the adjutant general (background). (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Hanson, 35th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office)

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The wonderful thing about Tigger...

Constant companion helps Airman cope with difficult past

By Airman 1st Class Emily E. Amyotte
190th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Senior Airman Taylor Wheeler stood tall and proud in front of her colleagues as Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, Kansas adjutant general, approached to bestow an award to her. All the while, Tigger slowly inched his way between the two.

Tigger, Wheeler’s service dog, could sense his partner was nervous and wanted to inform the general of this. Maintaining his professionalism, first he pawed and licked at the general’s shoe, but he went unacknowledged, except by the audience, who smiled and stifled their laughter.

Being the persistent friend he is, Tigger gently nibbled on the polished shoe. After the nibble, Tafanelli moved on and the ceremony was over. To Tigger, he had successfully protected his master.

Spending her entire childhood with mentally and physically abusive parents, Wheeler grew up believing that this was the normal family atmosphere and that all children were experiencing the same things as her. She knew that if she took the abuse, it would protect her siblings.

For the longest time, she would shoulder her past by herself. Years later, her fiancé Derek was able to help her start the healing process to overcome her past.

“I got so used to life the way it was that when my fiancé finally found out, he did everything he could to help,” said Wheeler, fuels system journeyman with the 190th Air Refueling Wing. “I think the fact that I finally admitted it to myself and basically let everyone become aware of it is when I broke down and lost it. I got so used to bottling everything up and never feeling, ever. That’s when it all finally came out I didn’t know how to handle life anymore.”

Wheeler began meeting with the base psychologist, who suggested she find others who could relate with her and help her cope. In 2015, she met with Master Sgt. Lyle Babcock, human resources analyst, Kansas Army National Guard, who introduced her to the Warrior’s Best Friend Foundation (warriorbestfriend.org), an organization that partners military



Senior Airman Taylor Wheeler gives a treat to Tigger, her service dog. Tigger’s companionship helps Wheeler cope with Post Traumatic Stress she suffers from an abusive childhood. (Photo by Master Sgt. Allen Pickert, 184th Intelligence Wing Public Affairs)

members with support dogs. That’s when she met Tigger. “I was terrified when I first went there,” Wheeler said. “I thought this dog is going to hate me, they’re going to hate me. I’m not going to do well. But, it actually went really well the first time I saw him. I thought, man, that’s a huge

dog. It scared me a little bit, but he’s such a little marshmallow and it’s amazing.”

It took some time for Tigger and Wheeler to become the duo they are today, but Wheeler says it could not have been a better outcome.

“At any moment he’ll have all this energy,” Wheeler said. “This is good because he’ll be able to keep up with me. But there are times where the depression part of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder will kick in and if I lift a finger that will be a lucky moment for me. And he’s constantly there for that. He can tell if I’m having a bad day because he’ll try and distract me no matter what.

“Since I’ve had him, I’ve done a complete 180. I’m a happier person. I’m a lot more outgoing. I feel like a better person. Yeah, he frustrates me sometimes like I probably frustrate him, but I wouldn’t trade him for anything.”

After adjusting to all the changes, Tigger adapted to his partner and now loves his job. He is glued to her side and has become a permanent part of the Wheeler household.

Wheeler, Derek, and her two-year-old daughter, Natalie, all benefit from having Tigger as part of the family. Wheeler says he is as much of a support system for the entire family as he is for her.

Wheeler’s four-legged partner will stay with her and her family, both at home and at the 190th, for the remainder of his time. Wheeler says Tigger brings joy to everyone he meets.

“It’s crazy how you see peoples’ moods just flip any time they see him,” Wheeler said. “And people pass by the office and say hi to Tigger. He seems to not only be helping me, but helping anyone.”

Tigger has touched Wheeler’s life in a way that nothing else has and she is grateful for what he has been able to provide for her, she said.

“It was like a godsend, like a slap in the face that everything was going to be okay. And thinking about life without him, I couldn’t imagine it.”

State’s military forces honored during Armed Forces Appreciation Day

By Steve Larson
Public Affairs Office

The Soldiers and Airmen of the Kansas National Guard were honored along with members of other Kansas military forces Feb. 23 during Kansas Armed Forces Appreciation Day at the Kansas Statehouse.

“The men and women of the state’s armed forces are always ready to serve and protect the people of Kansas,” said Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, the adjutant general. “We appreciate our state leaders taking the time to acknowledge their service and importance to our state and nation. This is also a wonderful opportunity for the public to meet with some of our Guardsmen and other military personnel to learn more about what we do for them and what they can do to support us.”

Gov. Sam Brownback met with military leaders from the Kansas National Guard, Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth and McConnell Air Force Base. Brownback also signed a proclamation designating the day

as Armed Forces Appreciation Day in Kansas.

Military chaplains opened the Senate and House of Representative sessions and both houses marked the occasion to honor the state’s military service members.

Kansas Guardsmen and military vehicles were at the Capitol from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to answer questions about the Guard and its mission. The Guardsmen taking part included Soldiers from Joint Forces Headquarters, the 130th Field Artillery Brigade, 635th Regional Support Group, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, 235th Regiment, personnel from the 73rd Civil Support Team, and Airmen from the 184th Intelligence Wing and 190th Air Refueling Wing.

Static displays on the Capitol grounds included a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System vehicle, Humvee, and a Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

Staff Sgt. Jesse Smith, Advanced Turbine Engine Army Maintenance, aka ATEAM,

(Continued on Page 3)



Staff Sgt. Jesse Smith, Advanced Turbine Engine Army Maintenance, shares information about the AGT 1500 turbine engine his unit rebuilds for the U.S. Army. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)



Senior Airman Colton Porter (left) and Staff Sgt. Chad Broome, 190th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group, explain their unit’s mission to a statehouse visitor during Armed Forces Appreciation Day, Feb. 23. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)



Staff Sgt. Jessy Lake, operations noncommissioned officer with the 35th Military Police Company, explains the workings of an armored security vehicle used by his unit. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)

Buckley receives command of Joint Forces Headquarters

Maj. Jon Christiansen turned over command of Joint Forces Headquarters Kansas to Maj. Brent Buckley during a change of command ceremony March 5 in Nickell Armory, Topeka.

Maj. Brent M. Buckley enlisted in the Montana Army National Guard in 1996 and moved to Kansas shortly after, where he served in an infantry regiment at the enlisted and noncommissioned officer levels. He received his commission as an infantry officer in 2004 through the Kansas National Guard and began his commissioned officer career as a platoon leader in the 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, Wichita.

After his initial assignment, he served as the battalion supply officer in the same battalion. He commanded Company C, 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, and Company E, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment. Additionally he served as assistant operations officer, 2-137th CAB; operations officer, 2-137th CAB; brigade safety officer, 69th Troop Command Task Force; and state equal opportunity advisor, Joint Forces Headquarters.

Buckley was put on active duty shortly after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, and was deployed to Germany as an infantry squad leader. He deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, in 2005 and was activated for Hurricane Gustav as company commander in 2008. In 2010 he was deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa, as a company commander. He also acted as a staff mentor with the U.S. State Department’s Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program in Gako and Kigali, Rwanda and also served as the operations officer for the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment.

Buckley’s military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Iraq Campaign Medal with two campaign

stars, Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal (3rd Award), National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge and other awards.

He earned a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Engineering from Montana Tech in 1994. His military education includes Primary Leadership and Development Course, Phase I and Phase II Basic Non-commissioned Officer’s Course, Combat Lifesaver Course, National Guard Scout/Sniper School, Infantry Officer Basic Course, Mechanized Leader Course, Maneuver Captain Career Course Phase I, Maneuver Captain Career Course Phase II, Intermediate Level Education Phase I, and Equal Opportunity Advisor Course.

Maj. Jon F. Christiansen commissioned through ROTC in 1995 and received a Regular Army commission as a field artillery officer.

Christensen’s previous active duty assignments include evaluator for ROTC Advance Camp, fire direction officer, firing platoon leader, service battery executive officer, and brigade fire control officer.

Christiansen left active duty and joined the Illinois Army National Guard in 1999 and transferred to the Kansas Army National Guard in 2003. In 2006, he deployed to Iraq with the 130th Field Artillery Brigade as the brigade force protection officer in charge for Victory Base Complex in Baghdad.

Returning from deployment Christiansen was assigned as battalion operations officer for 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery and participated in multinational exercise Cooperative Exercise Longbow in Armenia before being assigned as a fire support officer for 35th Infantry Division. Christiansen has served as commander for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Joint Forces Headquarters since September 2012.

Armed Forces Appreciation Day

(Continued from Page 2)

stood beside a flat-bed trailer near the Capitol south steps, proudly displaying an example of the AGT 1500 gas turbine engine his unit repairs for the U.S. Army.

“It puts out 1,500 horsepower and 3,700 foot-pounds of force, coupled behind an Allison automatic transmission, which is a four-speed transmission and has three reverse gears,” said Smith. “They come out of the Abrams tank. They send us the power pack or just the engine or just the transmission and that’s what we rebuild there.”

Smith said the ATEAM rebuilds the engines to National Maintenance Work Requirement standards.

“It basically makes them new,” said Smith. “It completely refreshes and rebuilds the engine, restores all the power and makes everything pretty much like new again. We save the government a lot of money. We try to reuse as many parts as we can.”

Out on 10th Street, Sgt. 1st Class Jason Jones, Company A, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, watched over the Bradley Fighting Vehicle used by his company.

“It is the main vehicle the infantry uses to get the dismounted Soldiers into the fight,” said Jones. “It’s an armored personnel carrier. It has a crew of three, which is the driver, gunner and the Bradley commander and it carries up to seven Soldiers.”

Jones said events like Armed Forces Appreciation Day are important to community/military relations.

“It also brings our presence into the com-

munity,” said Jones. “We’re here so the public can see exactly what taxpayers pay for, what kind of assets we have nationally on force protection and as a combat power we provide.”

Jones said, in addition to the Bradleys, the battalion also fields the M1A2 Abrams tank, adding that the next two years will particularly eventful for the battalion.

“We going through what is called a MIBT (multi-echelon integrated brigade training),” said Jones. “We’re doing a combined exercise down in Fort Hood, Texas, in July. There will also be air assault units and three other battalions like the 2-137th.”

Jones said the battalion will conduct a similar exercise next year at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California.

The Air National Guard also made its presence known during the event. Staff Sgt. Chad Broome and Senior Airman Colton Porter, 190th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group, were inside the Statehouse to share information about their unit.

“Here in Topeka, we’re the hub for our EMEDS, the Expeditionary Medical Support unit,” said Porter. “So, if any natural disasters happen we can go out there and set up a mobile medical hospital.”

Porter said that of the three Air National Guard EMED sites, the 190th is the largest.

“It’s important for us to be here because the public needs to know what we are capable of,” said Broome, “what we have in the state of Kansas.”

“We’re here for the people of Kansas,” said Porter.

Arab Shrine donates circus tickets to Kansas National Guard

In a show of support for the Soldiers and Airmen of the Kansas National Guard and their families, the Topeka Arab Shrine donated approximately 2,000 children’s tickets to the 2016 Shrine Circus to the Kansas National Guard.

Col. Roger Murdock, chief of the joint staff, accepted the tickets on behalf of the Kansas National Guard Jan. 28 in a brief ceremony at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard in Topeka.

“The Arab Shrine Circus always presents a wonderful, family-oriented show,” said Murdock. “I know all the men and women

of the Kansas National Guard sincerely appreciate this generous donation.”

“This is another way that the Arab Shriners are able to give back to the military families of Northeast Kansas for their service and dedication throughout the year,” said Roger Farthing, Arab Shrine public relations director. “The Arab Shrine Circus provides a family-oriented experience featuring wonderful acts, clowns, animals and a few surprises aimed at providing something for the entire family.”

The annual Arab Shrine Circus was Feb. 18-21 at the Kansas Expocentre.



Col. Roger Murdock, chief of the joint staff, Kansas National Guard, accepts a donation of tickets to the Arab Shrine Circus from Jim Whitehead, potentate of the Topeka Arab Shrine, Jan. 28 at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard. The tickets were given to children of Kansas National Guard families. (Photo by Capt. Matt Lucht, Public Affairs Office)

Squadron members go on the air to talk about Civil Air Patrol

**By CAP Maj. Michael H. Mathewson
Topeka Eagle Composite Squadron**

To spread the word about the Civil Air Patrol and the organization’s 75th anniversary Capt. Timothy Thornton and 2nd Lt. Kathryn Mazos of the Topeka Eagle Composite Squadron appeared on a local morning radio program, Talk About Topeka, on Feb. 1.

During the seven minute interview with the program’s host Chris Schultz, Thornton and Mazos explained the three pillars of the Civil Air Patrol, Emergency Services, Aerospace Education and Cadet Programs. They also spoke about the upcoming 75th anniversary of the founding of Civil Air Patrol on Dec. 1, 1941.

“It was a great chance to reach out to a

wide audience about what Civil Air Patrol is about,” said Thornton.

“It was another great opportunity that I would not have experienced without being a member of the Civil Air Patrol,” said Mazos.

Thornton and Mazos shared how they started as Civil Air Patrol cadets, then moved on into the senior program. They also told about events and activities that keep them active in the organization. Mazos had the opportunity to speak directly about the cadet program and the advantages that it offers young people between 12 and 18.

The radio interview was aired on KMAJ 1440 AM. A televised version aired on channel 25 and 10. Podcasts of the interview may be found at www.talkabouttopeka.com.



Civil Air Patrol Capt. Timothy Thornton, (left) and 2nd Lt. Kathryn Mazos chat with Talk About Topeka host Chris Schultz at the Talk About Topeka studio Feb. 1. Thornton and Mazos talked to host Schultz on the three pillars of the Civil Air Patrol and its 75th anniversary. (Photo by Maj. Michael H. Mathewson, commander, CAP Topeka Eagle Composite Squadron)

Integration, cooperation and collaboration

By Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli
The Adjutant General

For many Kansas residents, the spring of 2016 may well be remembered as the season of wildfires. In late March, the Anderson Creek Fire scorched approximately 400,000 acres of rural Oklahoma and Kansas land. Residents of Barber and Comanche counties were most affected, with approximately 273,000 acres burned. The Kansas Forest Service calls it the largest wildfire in Kansas history.



Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli

There have been numerous other grass and brush fires, causing considerable damage to property and threatening lives. The extremely dry conditions and high winds this spring have combined to make the threat a real and continuing danger for much of the state. Fortunately, there have been no reports of serious injuries from any of the fires.

The Kansas Division of Emergency Management has kept a close watch on these incidents, monitoring the reports from the local authorities and assisting with coordination of resources when the locals have requested it.

In the Anderson Creek fire, Kansas National Guard assistance was also requested, and we responded with four Black Hawk helicopters equipped with Bambi buckets and approximately 20 Kansas Army National Guard Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regi-

ment. (See story/photos, pg. 1)

The crews spent two days, Easter weekend, flying missions that put approximately 68,000 of gallons of water on the fire, reaching areas that land-based vehicles were having a hard time getting to. That weekend was a turning point in bringing the fire under control.

The first line of defense in any emergency situation is the local agencies – the police, fire departments, and other emergency personnel. As a state agency, we work closely with local officials in assessing the risks and helping coordinate the response.

The cooperation and assistance of the Kansas National Guard was just one aspect of a multi-faceted approach to emergency management. The first line of defense in any emergency situation is the local agencies – the police, fire departments, and other emergency personnel. As a state agency, we work closely with local officials in assessing the risks and helping coordinate the response.

If a local agency needs assistance, their first request is generally to a nearby communities, with whom they likely have mutual aid agreements. We see tremendous examples of the cooperation of local agencies in almost every emergency situation that occurs in our state. We certainly saw it

in the Anderson Creek fire, with scores of professional and volunteer firefighters and other emergency personnel pitching in to contain the fire.

That’s the type of integration, cooperation and collaboration it takes to respond to any disaster, manmade or natural. We have plenty of experience here in Kansas and we do it as well as anyone.

Another layer of Kansas cooperation is the typical outpouring of support and assistance from the citizens of our state. Again, with the Anderson Creek fire, we saw that overwhelming response begin even before the fires had been extinguished. From all corners of our state and from friends in sur-

rounding states we saw truckloads of donated hay, fencing supplies and monetary donations come pouring in to assist residents of south central Kansas. Such donations are still needed and other Kansans affected by other, smaller wildfires are also in need of our help.

Of course, wildfires are just one natural disaster that can occur in Kansas. This is the time of year to prepare yourself and your family to survive a severe storm. Devise a plan and talk through that plan with your family. Prepare an emergency kit for your home and car. For how-to’s on these and many other preparedness tips, check out www.ksready.gov.

Warrior to Warrior

Keep focus on priority areas

By Command Chief Master Sgt. James Brown
Command Senior Enlisted Leader

Your enlisted office of the Command Senior Enlisted Leader has completed its transfer to our new Joint Forces Headquarters located on Forbes Field. Sgt. 1st Class Charles Cunningham has been selected to fill the role of executive assistant to the CSEL and has successfully transitioned into his new position.

As the Kansas National Guard moves forward as an organization, the adjutant general has identified four focal points in which we will strive daily to meet and exceed: readiness, customer care, communication and partnerships.



Command Chief Master Sgt James Brown

...the adjutant general has identified four focal points in which we will strive daily to meet and exceed: readiness, customer care, communication and partnerships.

to improve two-way communication.

#4 Partnerships: Without a doubt, the partnerships we invest in today will pay huge dividends in years to come.

The goal of my office is to operate with proficiency and transparency. Soldiers and Airmen need to know what their senior leaders are doing to take care of them and their families. I am committed, along with the Land Component command sergeant major and the state command chief master sergeant, to provide the very best leadership to our Soldiers and our Airmen.

Below is a sampling of interest items our office will be tracking for the Kansas Army National Guard in 2016. In the next issue, we’ll look at the Air Guard side.

- Recruiting/Retention**
- Ensure retention interviews begin 365 days out and are documented at 365, 270, 180, 90, 60 and 30 days out within units.
 - Monthly updates with Recruiting and Retention command sergeant major to identify trends.
 - Monthly updates with brigade command sergeants major to identify Soldier retention trends.
 - Ensure Soldiers in recruit training are monitored and visited.
 - Strengthen sponsorship program within units.
- Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report**
- Current status of overdue NCOERs
- (Continued on Page 13)**

Warrant Officers must lead and learn

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Smith
Command Chief Warrant Officer

Phase II of the Warrant Officer Candidate School in Salina began in April.

The KSRTI conducted a “zero” phase class in March to help the candidates prepare for the Phase II class. The main focus of the zero phase was to verify that the candidates can pass the Army Physical Fitness Test and the candidates can practice addressing and reporting to teaching, advising and counseling officers. This zero phase gave the candidates a taste of what to expect for the next six months of Phase II and Phase III at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

If you are currently enrolled in a distance learning course and waiting to attend the residence course, I ask that you complete the DL course as soon as you can. If you have not enrolled in your next level of Professional Military Education course and have met the prerequisites, please enroll. Classes are beginning to fill up already for training year 2017. Except for the Warrant Officer Senior Service Education Course, enrolling into a PME course is first come, first served basis nationwide. You are competing for open seats, so don’t wait!

The Warrant Officer has served since July 9, 1918, and has evolved from one specialty – the mine planter – to approximately 60 specialties throughout nearly every branch in the Army. Today we are leaders, systems integrators and subject matter experts all rolled into one. No matter what role you are filling, whether a Black Hawk pilot conducting a low-level air assault mission with night-vision



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Smith

goggles or a maintenance officer overseeing the work of 50 mechanics ensuring a convoy rolls, you know that to be successful you will have to assert your leadership skills on a daily basis and apply all that you have learned.

Leadership has become the single most important factor in today’s Army. Remember, you are not just technical experts anymore. We are volunteering to lead the most valuable resources our nation has – its sons and daughters. It is our responsibility to ensure that we lead them well. This will take much of our time, but as leaders, we have accepted this responsibility.

As warrant officers, we constantly need to stay abreast of modernizations and changes influencing our trade, ensuring we have the most current practices used within our field. Read the regulations that apply to your specialty. We may never see the level of professional military education officered to warrant officers that is offered to others, so we must make a life-long commitment to learning. We must know how to analyze data so we can provide the right advice at the right time. Also, we must make it our responsibility to be that warrant officer who provides timely, sound and accurate information.

Always remember that we did not get to this point in our lives alone. I am certain that many, if not all of you, sought out someone’s advice, counsel, and mentorship. Mentorship is one of the keys to our success, so please pass it along.

As you press ahead as Army warrant officers, keep in mind how important it is to take the good, the bad, and the ugly that you experience and use it in a positive way to help improve and develop yourself, our organization, our cohort, and our Army.

Again, thank you all for your support and service, and if at any time you need help or have a question please let me know. (Phone 785 274-1903; michael.w.smith293.mil@mail.mil)

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The deadline for all submission is the first Wednesday of the month: February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions may be e-mailed to Jane Welch (jane.e.welch1.nfg@mail.mil).

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The Plains Guardian may be read online at <http://kansastag.gov>
For change of address, contact Jane Welch.

25 years ago

Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield

By Master Sgt. Jeremy Byers
Command Historian

On March 16, Governor Sam Brownback signed a proclamation commemorating the end of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and the actions of the Soldiers and Airmen of Kansas National Guard who served during this conflict 25 years ago.



Master Sgt. Jeremy Byers

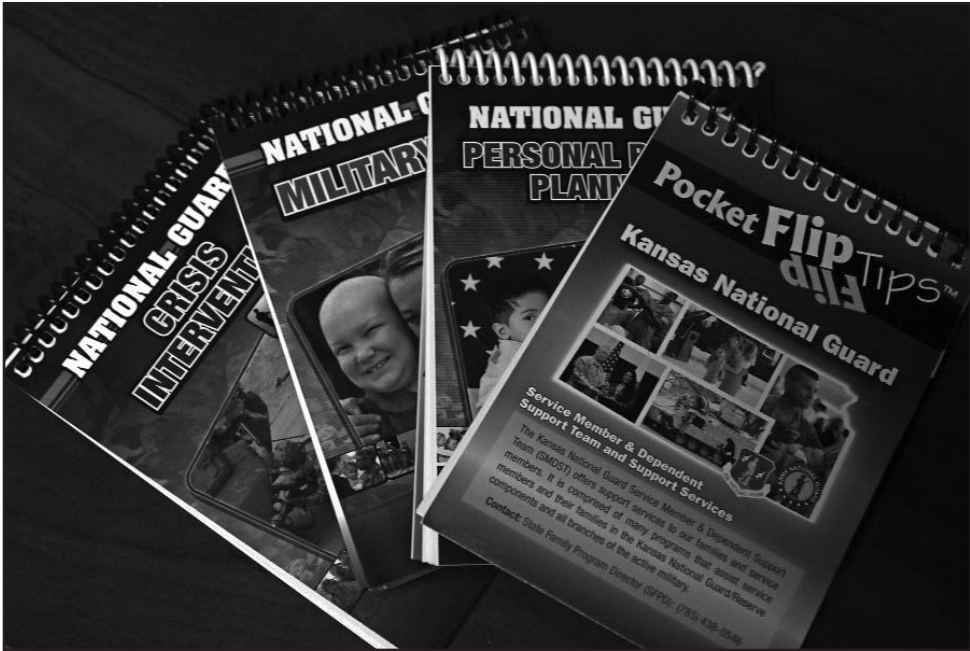
Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United States began sending forces into Saudi Arabia. By mid-August, the 190th Air Refueling Group was deployed at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia to begin supporting the coalition air campaign. Over the next six months, the 190th was the centerpiece of the 1709th Air Refueling Wing due to their extensive experience in air refueling and logistical operations. The squadron was the first on the ground at the King Abdulaziz Airport and the 190th commander, Col. Charles Baier, was selected to command all operations from that airbase. From the early days supporting the air superiority and reconnaissance missions to the bombing campaign in January 1991, the 190th provided critical support to active Air Force, Air Force Reserve

and Air National Guard units, delivering millions of gallons of fuel to sustain the air effort. By March 1991 the last of the Coyotes were back home in Kansas. Operation Desert Shield (the defense of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States) provided very few opportunities for the Kansas National Guard. The combat arms units were preselected and most were already en route to theater. On Nov. 29, 1990, the 170th Maintenance Company was activated. As a depot level maintenance unit specializing in heavy equipment and due to the fact that the American forces utilized significant amounts of armor and mechanized forces, the 170th was selected. After a Christmas at Fort Riley, this unit also deployed to Saudi Arabia, supporting units that were transitioning out of older tanks and armored vehicles and picking up new equipment. The 170th returned to Fort Riley and their families in June 1991.

There are only a few veterans of this war still in uniform. If you have one in your unit, take advantage of it and, if they are willing, listen to a few war stories. It will be worth it.

The Gulf War was the first time since World War II when the Air Guard and the Army Guard were deployed in a combat zone. Over the course of the 10 month deployment, 10 percent of the Kansas National Guard was deployed, providing critical support to the combat missions in Iraq and Kuwait. There are only a few veterans of this war still in uniform. If you have one in your unit, take advantage of it and, if they are willing, listen to a few war stories. It will be worth it.

Military families can find help through Family Programs Office




Flip-books like these offer advice and solutions to a number of problems faced by military families, particularly during deployments. The flip-books are available free of charge to all military members and their families through the Kansas National Guard’s Family Programs Office. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

By Steve Larson
Public Affairs Office

Among the tables in the rotunda of the Kansas Statehouse during Armed Forces Appreciation Day Feb. 23 was one a little different than the others -- no arrays of military equipment or neatly uniformed Soldiers or Airmen to greet those who passed by and tell them about their particular display. However, though not strictly military in nature, the information shared at the Family Readiness Programs table was of vital importance to the welfare of Kansas military members and their families. “We deal with Soldiers and their families, and their children, especially during deployments,” explained Kenton Sallee, Family Readiness support assistant. “We help them with any assistance we can offer through financial aid, education aid, counseling. We teach family members to be more resilient and self-sufficient when their Soldiers are deployed.” Sallee displayed several small spiral-bound booklets, quick-reference guides available free of charge to all military families. “These are Army Flip Books,” said Sallee, flipping one open. “This one is the complete list of all the National Guard Family Programs we offer throughout the state for National Guard and Reserve members, such as Family Assistance Centers, Child and Youth Programs, Substance Abuse, Suicide Prevention, Airman Family

readiness, ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve), EO (Equal Opportunity), the Chaplain’s office; SOS, which is a survivor outreach program; Transition Assistance, Yellow Ribbon events, SHARP (sexual harassment/assault response and prevention) and the Resilience Program.” Helping families during military deployments is a key part of what Sallee and other support assistants do. “Military personnel sometimes don’t really communicate well with dependents on how to handle certain situations if they’re not there,” said Sallee. “We’ll give them briefings on how to handle specific emergencies, such as checking account issues, budgeting issues, death in the family, accident overseas if their family member is deployed and gets hurt, how to deal with the Red Cross, certain things like that.” With some 7,500 Soldiers and Airmen in the Kansas National Guard alone, in addition to service members in other branches, the job of the Family Programs Office is far-reaching. “We have officers throughout the state, especially the Family Assistance coordinators,” said Sallee. “We have an individual in Salina, Wichita, Kansas City, Lawrence, and Coffeyville. We will go throughout the state if there’s a military member or dependent who needs assistance.” Sallee said any military member or their families can receive assistance by calling the state family programs office, 785-646-1171.



Visit the Museum of the Kansas National Guard’s redesigned website, KansasGuardMuseum.com

12th annual Memorial Bass Tournament set for May 7

Registration is now open for the 12th annual Kansas Veteran’s Memorial Bass Tournament in memory of all fallen Kansas service members. The tournament, hosted by 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery, will be Saturday, May 7, at the Coffey County Lake near Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation, Burlington.

This tournament celebrates the freedom and pursuit of happiness we enjoy as Americans. So join us in recognizing the fallen heroes of Kansas that gave the ultimate sacrifice for our American Freedom. Bring your own boat and fill it with as many participants as the boat can legally hold. The top five places will receive prizes. Registration is from 6-8:30 a.m. when the tournament begins. Fishing ends at 12 p.m. Prizes will be awarded after the final boat returns or 12:30 p.m., whichever is the earliest. A bratwurst/hamburger lunch will be served at the end of the event. The tournament entry form and complete rules are available online at http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML_d oc_upload/2016%20Ks%20veteran_s%20memorial%20bass%20tournament.pdf For registration information call David Wellman, 785-742-5645 or 785-548-5668.



Retired? Keep up with us by email

To keep our retirees better informed on what is happening in the Adjutant General’s Department, the Public Affairs Office has put together an email distribution list. If you would like to be added to the list, please email your request to Jane Welch at jane.e.welch1.nfg@mail.mil



Sen. Roberts visits 184th IW



Sen. Pat Roberts visited the 184th Intelligence Wing on Feb. 17 to learn about the wing’s intelligence mission and wing’s challenges. Roberts met with Col. David Weishaar, commander of the 184th IW, and other commanders to discuss how he could assist with the issues facing the wing. (Photo by 184th Intelligence Wing Public Affairs)

Kansas Guard Soldiers heat up at Best Warrior Competition

By Sgt. Zach Sheely
Public Affairs Office

Three Kansas Army National Guard Soldiers stood alone at the top after competing in the KSARNG Best Warrior Competition at the Kansas Regional Training Center in Salina, Kansas, March 18-19.

The competition tests Soldiers’ physical stamina and mental resolve. This year, they had another factor to fight – the elements of a late-winter storm.

The Soldiers battled the rain, snow and cold – and each other – to warm up for the regional Best Warrior Competition in May.

Battling near blizzard conditions, the Soldiers completed the Army Physical Fitness Test, and zeroed and qualified their M4 carbines on the rifle range. Along the way, they also completed a ruck march, land navigation course and Army Warrior Tasks.

“This day was very physical for them,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Anderson,

interim Joint Forces Headquarters – Land Component command sergeant major. “The wind and snow and cold weather was blowing right in their face. Everybody fought through the weather and, although there was a small turnout, each one of the Soldiers that we had put out 100 percent.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Dwane Clifford, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment command sergeant major, said that the competition is a way to build morale and esprit de corps among the Soldiers.

“They train hard and they work hard and this provides them a platform to display their attributes as a Soldier,” said Clifford.

Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Whitley, 130th Field Artillery Brigade command sergeant major, said a Soldier must be well rounded to claim the title “Best Warrior.”

On day two, the Soldiers completed an appearance board before a panel of command

sergeants major to test appearance, military bearing and knowledge of Army doctrine.

“You have to be pretty good at everything.”
Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Whitley

“You have to be pretty good at everything,” said Whitley. “You have to be very physically fit. You have to have stamina. You also have to have the ability to recover from something you didn’t do so well in.

“If you look at everything that a Soldier has to be proficient in to fight, win and survive in combat, we try to replicate that through the training and the testing process. It’s the gamut of what a Soldier is and what they have to do.”

The annual KSARNG Best Warrior Competition is open to all Soldiers. This year Sgt. Maura Griffith, transportation specialist, 137th Transportation Company,

competed alongside male counterparts. “It gave me a big confidence boost,” said Griffith. “I love when people say that females can’t do something, because I’m the first one to jump in and show that I can. A lot of it is physical, but a lot of it is just the mindset. If I can do it, any female can do it. There’s no excuses.”

Staff Sgt. Shawn Cron, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry, won the noncommissioned officer category and Spc. Trenton Goering, 2-137 CAB, won the Soldier category. Griffith was runner-up in the Soldier category.

The winners will go on to compete in the Region 5 Best Warrior Competition in May. Griffith will serve as an alternate.

Soldiers from Region 5 – which includes Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas – will come to Kansas to compete at the Kansas Regional Training Center, Salina, Kansas, May 16-20. The winners of that competition will represent the region in the national competition later in the year.



Sgt. Maura Griffith, transportation specialist, 137th Transportation Company, fires her M4 carbine during the rifle qualification event at the 2016 Kansas Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, held in Salina, Kansas, March 18-19. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)



Spc. Trenton Goering, small arms repairer, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, picks up his pace during the ruck march of the 2016 Kansas Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, held in Salina, Kansas, March 18-19. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Nussbaumer, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Sexual assault a topic that must be honestly addressed

By Capt. Tim Traylor
Kansas National Guard SARC Officer

Sexual assault is a crime being battled around the globe. It is perpetrated without regard to age, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status or, in the military, rank. Sexual assault is a hideous act, but we must be willing to talk about it openly, actively and confidently.

In years past, the topic of sexual assault seemed to be culturally taboo. However, what is more distasteful is not addressing it or not discussing what factors can increase the chances of sexual assault in an organization or ignoring how each individual carries the power to reduce, or even stop, sexual assaults.

According to Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, one in four women and one in six men will experience attempted or completed sexual assault in their life. This means that among our ranks we have fellow Soldiers and Airmen who are acutely aware of how important this topic is.

Also important is how we, as uniformed professionals, constructively address the topic of sexual assault. Surprisingly, it is pretty easy. It starts with understanding the continuum of harm.

Draw a line on a piece of paper. On the left end write “sexual harassment.” On the right end, write “sexual assault.” Below each of those terms, list examples. For instance, examples of a sexual harassment would be a sexualized jokes, pictures, etc. Sexual assault is an act, or attempt of an act, to touch in a sexual nature, including acts of grazing, groping. What the continuum of harm illustrates is how environments where sexual harassment becomes an acceptable behavioral norm, there is a

significantly increased chance for a sexual assault to occur.

Modern media is awash with creative and articulate messages providing effective and engaging means of effective dialogue starters. One viral video comes from the Thames Valley Police Department in England, where consent in regard to sexual assault is compared to giving consent to having a cup of tea. The comparison may seem far-fetched and insulting. However, take three minutes to watch this clip. The topic of consent clearly outlined, it is done openly, honestly, and with sense of humor. Watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8> or by entering “cup of tea consent” in your search engine.

The topic of sexual assault is relevant to all our uniformed service members, whether on or off duty. We all share a common bond as military member, and thus have an inherent responsibility to be at the ready to support our fellow battle buddies and wingmen. Talking about sexual assault is serious business, and it can be talked about in authentic, constructive and engaging ways.

If you have questions about sexual assault, how to report an assault, resources available to our service members, or just how to have effective dialogue about changing our work climate and culture, please call our office at 785-646-1578 or 785-646-1491.

The DoD Safe Helpline is the Department of Defense’s national, and international program for our service members for reporting sexual assault, and finding resources. They also have a smartphone app with wellness and resiliency tools. Their website is www.safehelpline.org.

DoD

Safe Helpline

Sexual Assault Support for the DoD Community

Live 1-on-1 Help

Confidential

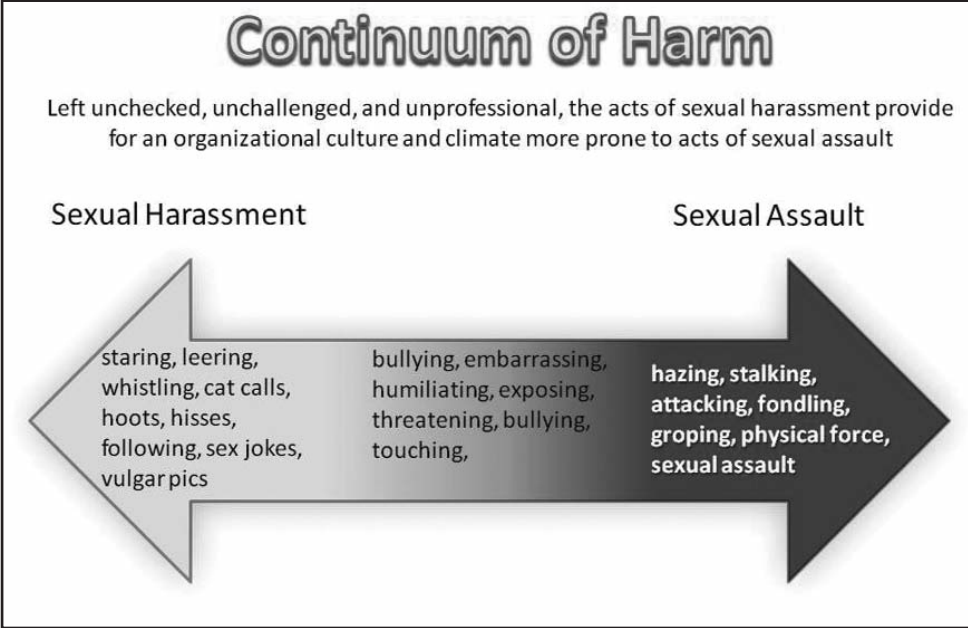
Worldwide 24/7

Click: www.SafeHelpline.org

Call: 877-995-5247

Text: 55-247 (INSIDE THE U.S.)
202-470-5546 (OUTSIDE THE U.S.)

A confidential and anonymous sexual assault hotline for the DoD Community



Left unchecked, small acts of sexual harassment can escalate into assault. (Graphic provided)

Multiple deployments keep 184th Intelligence Wing busy

By Capt. Matt Lucht
184th Intelligence Wing Public Affairs

“The Air Expeditionary Force deployments are the reason that we wear the uniform,” said Lt. Col. Brock Sissel, commander, 184th Civil Engineer Squadron. “It is a great opportunity for the guys to see how other countries live and operate, and it gives them the understanding of how they fit into the Air Force mission.”

That opportunity was one many Airmen from the 134th Air Control Squadron, Civil Engineer Squadron, Logistics Readiness Squadron, Security Forces Squadron, Comptroller Flight and Communication Flight had in late 2015. This is the largest mobilization that the wing has seen in recent years, with approximately 250 Guardsmen deployed to several locations, bringing the knowledge and training to successfully complete the mission.

“They are responsible for the air picture and they have numerous radars piped in to their facility,” said Lt. Col. Richard Young, commander, 134th ACS. “They are basically the command and control of multiple areas of responsibilities. Everything that is happening in the air in the Middle East, our people are probably controlling the air picture.”

“I know that we are sending our best and brightest,” said Maj. Janell Blaufuss, commander, 184th Comptroller Flight. “I am very proud of all the people that serve in the finance office.”

As with every deployment, Jayhawks are being mixed with their active-duty counterparts and excelling.

“Lt. Col. Alan Docauer, 729th Air Control Squadron, an active-duty commander, is extremely happy with the leadership team over there and the capabilities of all the young Airmen,” said Young. “His comment was ‘You can’t tell who’s who on scope, it is pretty seamless. It is invisible on who’s active duty and who is Guard.’”

134th Air Control Squadron assists with operations worldwide

By 1st Lt. Noble Diven
134th Air Control Squadron

We’ve all seen them in the news: grainy black and white videos of missiles and explosions somewhere in the Middle East or Southwest Asia, the last seconds of a military mission to find the target and neutralize it. What you won’t see are the deployed personnel of the 134th Air Control Squadron who are instrumental in those missions.

Currently, the 134th ACS controllers are mixed with their active-duty counterparts and coalition partners directing real-world missions, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from multiple installations across the world helping build a complete radar picture for the operators encompassing more than 750,000 square miles of airspace.

It takes a lot of skilled people to fulfill such missions. Without the expertise and support of the maintenance section, the radar screens would be dark. Technicians keep generators running and work all hours



Airmen with the 134th Air Control Squadron climb aboard buses and deploy from McConnell Air Force Base Nov. 11, 2015. The squadron’s departure was part of a much larger mobilization of the 184th Intelligence Wing that deployed members to locations all over the world, making it one of the largest deployments in the wing’s recent history (Photo by Master Sgt. Matthew McCoy, 184th Intelligence Wing Public Affairs)

Home station missions have been a concern for many squadrons with the amount of personnel deployed. As with any challenge, the wing has come together and is helping fill the gaps. Some Airmen have shifted into new offices, gaining new responsibilities, and others are working in previous Air Force Specialty Codes to ensure that the mission doesn’t fail.

“We have had to shift some additional duties around to cover and also have had the opportunity to use some manning resources to bring some of our traditional Airmen out to work full-time,” said Lt. Col. Jesse Sojka, commander, 184th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

“I have about a third of my manning deployed with more drill-status Guardsmen than full-timers,” said Capt. Jeremy Cook,

commander, 184th Communications Flight. “When you take four or five full-timers away for six months, it is a hit, but I am really impressed with the folks that have stepped up and the level of expertise of the people that are backfilling the positions and how they have handled it.”

Airman care is a priority for the wing and even with being 60 percent unmanned the comptroller office is keeping

up with one of the most important aspects of deployment being paid. But the process can get complicated.

“When folks are deployed overseas, we can’t just push a button and they get paid,” said Blaufuss. “Anyone who is mobilized or deployed overseas right now is entitled to certain pay and allowances. Those require individual inputs by our office, every single month for every single entitlement that we give them. That produces hundreds, if not thousands of transactions every month.”

Even though deployments leave gaps in our squadrons, the experience that these Jayhawks will gain and share with their fellow Airmen when they return will make the 184th IW that much more prepared for any future taskings.

“I am extremely proud of them,” said Young. “We pressed hard prior to their deployment with getting their qualifications and training up to speed, and everything that I hear from their commander is that they are performing exceptionally well.”

“This is a great opportunity for the guys that went to practice the skills that they have been honing for the last four years,” said Sissel. “They will see stuff in their career field that they won’t see back home. They will have to improvise, adapt and overcome to complete that task that they are assigned over there. They will be able to get signed off on a lot of their core tasks and hands-on training. I should see them come back fully upgraded in their Air Force Specialty Code. It is a great thing this for the squadron and the guys.”

Training gives 190th Medical Group hands-on, real-world experience

By Tech. Sgt. Mandy Johnson
190th Public Affairs

Members of the 190th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group spent time honing their skills with University of Kansas Medical Center during the February unit training assembly.

The goal is to send groups of military-trained medical personnel during every unit training assembly to allow medical personnel to train at KU Med. The training covers biomedical, laboratory, emergency room, neurology, intensive care, burns, trauma and critical care, surgical, pediatric intensive care, and pre- and post-operation. The training covers multiple positions including lab technicians, medical technicians, nurses and surgical technicians.

“The most rewarding part is that medical personnel receive the training they need to be confident and trained in the Readiness Skills Verification requirements,” said Maj. Penny Glean, 190th Medical Group liaison to the University of Kansas Medical Center.

“Colonel (William) Hefner’s vision for the

medical group is to become a training site for the whole Air National Guard, and this will allow us the time to build on that,” said Chief Master Sgt. Denise Montgomery, chief of the 190th Medical Group. “This is essential to the Airmen who have civilian jobs not in the medical field. I know they can be rock stars when they need to be.”

Hefner is commander of the 190th ARW Medical Group.

This hands-on training at KU Med is possible due to the recent change of implementing the annual physical exams. These exams enables the medical group to complete nearly 1,000 physicals during an abbreviated schedule. The APEX includes physicals, immunizations, dental, hearing and visual.

The one-stop-shop approach has received positive responses from all involved. It has allowed all medical staff to interact with others on base, which generally is not the case. The piloted program was very successful and will be continued in the years to come, said Montgomery.

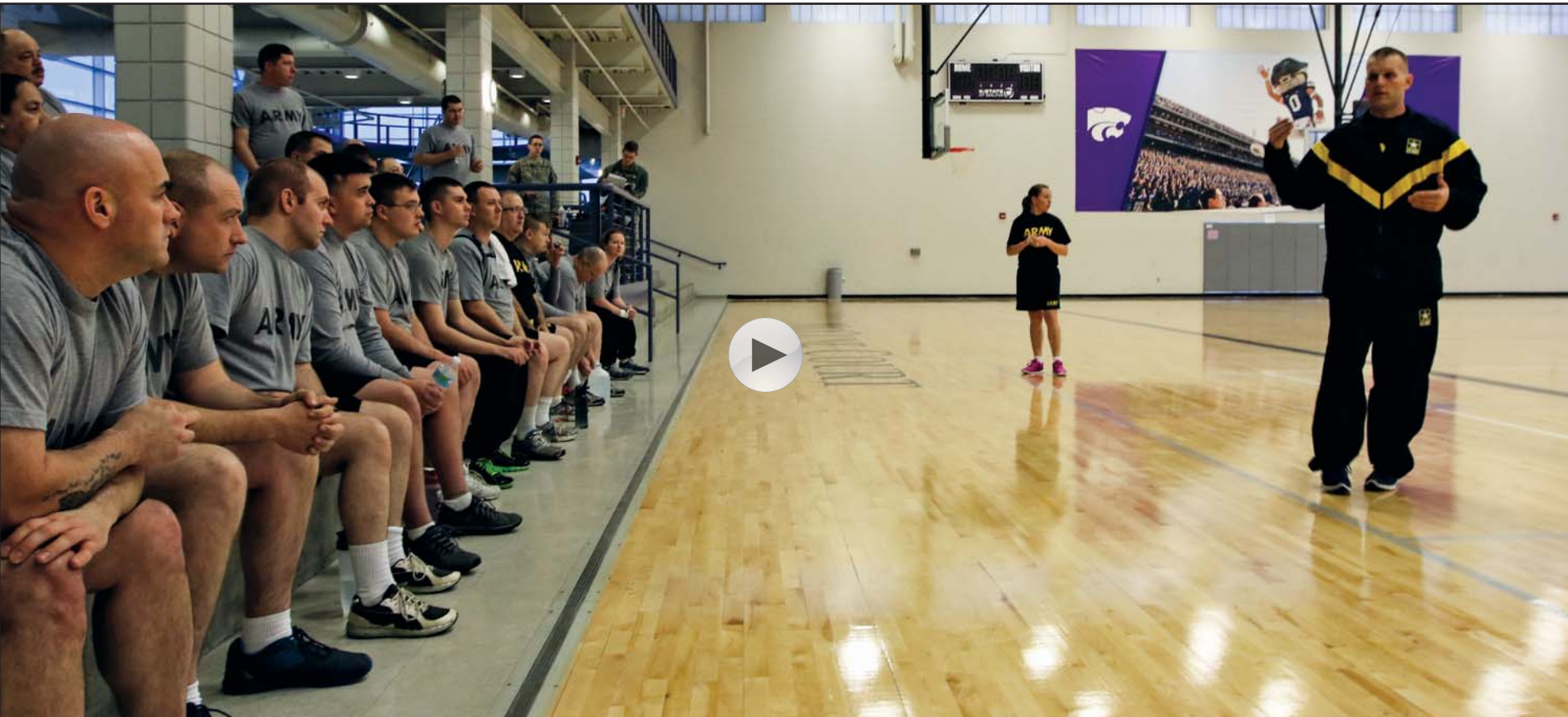


Lana Akers (left), University of Kansas Medical Center, and Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Schneider, 190th Medical Group, replace a burn victim’s bandages at the medical center’s burn ward. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jake Meyer, 190th ARW Public Affairs)



Give an Hour provides free mental health services to help heal the invisible wounds. To receive services or join our network of volunteer providers, visit www.giveanhour.org.

Maximum effort pays off



Sgt. 1st Class Charles “Chip” Cunningham addresses the Soldiers taking part in the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course at the Student Life Center of the Kansas State Polytechnic campus in Salina, Kansas. The course was conducted in Salina Jan. 17-31 to help Kansas Guard Soldiers improve their health. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course changing the CULTURE of the Kansas National Guard, one repetition at a time

By Sgt. Zach Sheely
Public Affairs Office

“Everything you’re going to do in a uniform is going to come back to that (Army Physical Fitness Test), your height/weight and if you can meet those standards.”

Sgt. 1st Class Charles “Chip” Cunningham’s opening message to the Kansas Army National Guard Soldiers attending the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course, hosted by the 235th Regiment at the Kansas Regional Training Institute in Salina, hangs in the air like an anvil.

It’s not the first time these Soldiers have heard this, but they’re here – most of them on a volunteer basis – to learn the skills to avoid ever hearing it again.

At its core, the course is intended to help Soldiers improve their APFT results and body composition. During the two-week course, in which Soldiers are away from their homes and families, they’re given fundamental tools to help them meet Army standards.

The problem

The problem, according to Cunningham, is that after basic combat training and advanced individual training, Soldiers aren’t given the education or training required to lead a healthy and military-ready lifestyle.

“We’re losing a large number of Soldiers due to APFT and height/weight issues and it’s affecting our retention,” said Cunningham, who serves as the lead instructor of the course.

Col. Michael Erwin, special assistant to the adjutant gen-

eral, Kansas National Guard, said that in the 2015 training year alone, there were approximately 156 Soldiers up for reenlistment who could not pass the APFT or height/weight. In most cases, Soldiers who cannot meet the standards are barred from reenlisting.

“I think the problem is so large, it’s like our house is on fire and we’re outside mowing the lawn... We need to attack the problem.”

Staff Sgt. Randall Milleson, human resources noncommissioned officer, 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery and a participant in the course

The issue has been shaped by the culture and operation climate of the last decade, Cunningham said.

“Due to (high-operations tempo), we were focused on numbers, numbers, numbers,” he said. “For a long time, some of the things like APFT and height/weight kind of got pushed to the side.

“Now we’re in the opposite situation. We’re not worried about (overseas deployments) as much. We’re seeing a (re-

duction) of the force and one of the first places units are going to look to is Soldiers outside of the standards.”

“I think the problem is so large, it’s like our house is on fire and we’re outside mowing the lawn,” said Staff Sgt. Randall Milleson, a participant in the course. “You can’t just tell a Soldier ‘Oh, keep running and next month we’ll test you again and see if you pass.’ We need to attack the problem.”

The Soldiers

The Soldiers who participated in the course came from across Kansas. They ranged from 21-53 years old and included men and women representing a wide spectrum of military occupational specialties. Yet, whether they grappled with meeting the height and weight standard or passing the PT test – or both –they shared a similar struggle.

Staff Sgt. Danny Mersch cited time management as a major hurdle for him.

“I work 10-12 hour days,” he said. “So where do you add time for activity?”

Cunningham, who has been featured on the cover of body building books, is quick to tell students of his own struggles with weight, nutrition and fitness in the past and how he wasn’t always aware of how bad his habits had become – or worse, how to change them.

“We get in great shape during basic and advanced individual training,” Cunningham asserted. “All these Soldiers here have passed the APFT at some point. However, when we’re attending that training, we do pushups and situps and run a lot; that’s not really that fun and it can be really hard to motivate yourself to do that on your own.

“Soldiers know they need to work out and everyone knows they need to eat better,” he said, “but a lot of times that’s not enough. We need to identify the motivating factors that will develop good habits and then keep them sustainable for the long term.”

Physical training

The Kansas National Guard Comprehensive Soldier Fitness course was the initiative of Brig. Gen. Robert E. Windham, commander, Kansas Army National Guard and developed by Erwin and Col. Tony Divish, director of logistics.

Soldiers were administered an APFT on day two to gauge their initial level of fitness. The APFT is designed to test the muscular strength, endurance and cardiovascular respiratory fitness of Soldiers in the Army. Soldiers are scored based on their performance in three timed events: the push-up, the sit-up and a two-mile run, ranging from 0 to 100 points in each event.

In the two weeks that followed, they spent three hours per day in the gym.

There, they focused on three areas: strength training; “tactical” training, including kick boxing, boxing, kettlebell swinging, CrossFit and body-weight resistance elements; and Army Physical Readiness Training.

“Part of the curriculum is teaching our students physical readiness training and how to lead the formation,” said

(Continued on Page 9)



Soldiers taking part in the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course in Salina visit a local market to buy supplies to prepare a meal. The course addressed all aspects of Soldier physical well-being, including exercise, proper nutrition and finances. “When you think about fitness, it’s more than how you can perform in a gym,” said instructor Sgt. 1st Class Charles “Chip” Cunningham. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

Maximum effort pays off

More than just fitness at the KSNG Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course

(Continued from Page 8)

Erwin. “They don’t just stand in formation and let our instructors lead it. They actually have to go up and lead that training. So when the student goes back to their unit, they have a qualified person that can actually lead that training.”

“This gives Soldiers a chance to work out and take it out to their units,” Cunningham said. “Then they’re the subject matter experts. They can start teaching PRT. That does two things: it brings PRT out to those units, but it also gives Soldiers self-confidence.

“When they get back to their units, they’re going to show what they learned here. Then they’re proving to themselves what they can really do.”

The instruction

However, it’s about much more than just physical fitness. “When we say ‘comprehensive’ we mean that word literally,” said Cunningham. “It’s not just physical fitness. We’re focusing on everything from mental strength, nutrition, resilience, goal setting and finances. All that stuff is tied together. When you think about fitness, it’s more than how you can perform in a gym.”

Milleson, a human resources noncommissioned officer, 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery, said that his biggest challenge is finding a sustainable way to eat “healthy.”

“My nutrition is all over the place,” he said. “I do a lot of yo-yo dieting. I’ll try anything just to make height/weight, but it’s never consistent and it isn’t the right way to do it.”

Students are given classroom instruction on a variety of nutrition topics, including macro nutrients, what to eat when eating out, meal prepping and foods to avoid.

“We molded it on basic nutrition,” said Erwin. “What does a carb mean? What does a protein mean? In the program curriculum, we don’t talk about counting calories. We talk about looking at the food and seeing how much you’re eating to assess what you really need.”

“The nutrition classes are teaching me what I should be eating,” said Spc. Rex Bontrager, cannon crewmember, 1-161 FA, “how I should be eating and when I should be eating versus my current habit of grabbing whatever looks good and is easy.”

The instruction doesn’t stop in the classroom. “They make a grocery list based off recommended foods that we provide. That way they can make meals they actually see themselves eating,” said Cunningham. “Then we go to the grocery store so we can see the food and also start to get an idea of how much is this stuff going to cost? That’s another obstacle of fitness. Eating better can be more expensive. Then the finance comes into it and that’s another area we focus on.”

Soldiers are given financial training by a financial advisor, and then each made a budget based on their own finances.

They also cooked two meals at the 235th Regiment culinary school kitchen using basic recipes with healthy ingredients.

“Fat camp”

Cunningham has heard the term “fat camp” attached to the course.

“Every person that calls it ‘fat camp’ or has something negative to say about this program, you know why they’re saying that?” Cunningham asked. “Because they’re probably the people that need to be in this program and it scares them. It scares them to see these Soldiers going through and actually making progress because, honestly, they don’t have the strength to do it themselves.

“That negativity has no place. People need to support these Soldiers. We have to. We should never put someone down for going out and wanting to make a change. That’s how we get here in the first place.

“It goes back to culture,” he continued. “How does this happen?”

“I’ve heard it, too, ‘fat camp,’” said Milleson. “And I’ve



Soldiers conduct the forward lunge as part of the preparatory drill of the Army Physical Readiness Training at the 235th Regiment in Salina Jan. 30. Soldiers of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course were taught the proper way to not only participate in, but lead the formation based Army Physical Readiness Training. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly Fox, 108th Aviation Regiment)

said it before, too. It brings a negative connotation to it. Until I was going to the course and I heard it, I didn’t realize the negativity that goes with it. Anybody can come to this course and you will learn something.”

Cunningham said it motivates him and the Soldiers in the course. Students from the first course named their classroom accountability group “Phat Camp” to turn the negative into a positive.

“I don’t want this to be an issue anymore... I want to continue this program, but my overall goal is that we don’t need this program.”
Sgt. 1st Class Charles Cunningham,
lead instructor,
Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course

The results

Collectively, the 31 Soldiers who participated in the course lost 136.5 pounds and averaged a three percent decrease in body fat over the two-week span of the program.

The Soldiers increased their cumulative APFT scores by an average of 40 points per person, including a 110-minute total reduction in the two-mile run from the initial test to the second test given on day 13.

Cunningham credited the team of instructors and subject matter experts who loaned their expertise throughout, and the Soldiers themselves.

“I didn’t even know what I had in me,” said Spc. John Meyer, light wheel mechanic, 250th Forward Support Company. “I’m 43 years old now. Looking at my lifestyle before, I was totally screwed up. I was not even close to doing what I should be doing. I’m really glad that I had the opportunity to participate in this program and reevaluate myself.”

“This course gives you that life rope,” said Mersch, information technology specialist, 235th Regiment, “like what they do for suicide prevention. To me, this is kind of like that severity of a situation. In reality, if you’re not physically fit and staying in shape in the military, you are committing career suicide.”

Not all the Soldiers were long-time veterans. Spc. Maria

Handy, medic with the 1077th Ground Ambulance Company, has served in the Kansas Guard for just over six years and is seeking promotion to the rank of sergeant.

“Now my friends are asking me all this advice about eating,” said Handy. “It feels really good to know what I’m actually talking about. I have firsthand experience on what to do and how to implement it. This is a great program. Anybody who’s afraid to try it, try it.”

Milleson served in the Marine Corps before his time in the Kansas Guard and said that he hasn’t participated in a course or program throughout his military career that has affected his life as much.

“This is the most important course that’s been offered in the National Guard,” he said. “I’ve been to several schools and nothing impacts the readiness, morale and resilience of Soldiers as this course.”

The future

The Soldiers returned to Salina in April to take a follow-up APFT and height/weight screening to track their progress, but according to Cunningham, it’s about much more than numbers on a piece of paper.

“We’re not really interested in where the Soldiers are at the completion of this course,” said Cunningham. “Our focus is where they’re going to be six months from now, a year from now. Can they be consistent? That’s what we try to develop, the skills, habits and education they need to develop their own action plan.”

Soldiers gathered what they learned and drafted their own individual action plans, including short- and long-term goals and how they intend to achieve them. They presented their plan to their peers, another accountability step in the changing of the culture, according to Cunningham.

One of Cunningham’s goals for the course includes inviting former students to come back and lead training in future courses, but his main objective is simple.

“I don’t want this to be an issue anymore,” he emphasized. “My goal is that we have higher APFT results across the board. We have to start to get this information out to the units and we make this more of a priority.

“I want to continue this program, but my overall goal is that we don’t need this program,” he said.

###

The next Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Course is tentatively scheduled for late summer 2016. Contact your chain of command if you are interested in participating.



Sgt. Earnest Saulsberry, 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery, works out in the Student Life Center at the KSU Polytechnic campus in Salina Jan. 21. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly Fox, 108th Aviation Regiment)



Sgt. 1st Class Charles Cunningham leads a classroom block of instruction on nutrition to the Soldiers of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness course at the 235th Regiment. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)



Spc. Ronnell Payne, 226th Engineer Company and Spc. Anissa Gonzalez, Kansas Medical Detachment, students of the CSFC prepare a meal at the 235th Regiment culinary school kitchen Jan. 24. Soldiers were shown how to prepare healthy meals. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

Governor signs proclamation

State marks March 14-18 as Severe Weather Awareness Week

By Steve Larson
Public Affairs Office

Old Man Winter has gone out the door – although he may decide to pop up again even in April; after all, this is Kansas. But even when he is finally gone, Kansans will still have to contend with Mother Nature and her annual show of power known as severe weather season, bringing with it the potential for tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, high winds, hail and flooding.

To remind Kansans to be prepared, Gov. Sam Brownback signed a proclamation Feb. 26 designating March 14-18 as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Kansas.

During the week, the Kansas Division of Emergency Management placed a special emphasis on urging Kansans to check their emergency kit supplies for their home, office and vehicle, and review their emergency plans to make sure they are prepared for whatever severe weather is thrown our way.

“It doesn’t take a lot of time or a lot of money to ensure you and your family are prepared,” said Angee Morgan, KDEM deputy director. “If you don’t already have an emergency kit, start now by buying a few extra batteries and high-energy snacks during your weekly shopping. Throw a change of clothes, an old pair of glasses and a pair of shoes in your kit.

“Check your first aid kit and make sure

it’s complete and up-to-date,” said Morgan. “Doing a little bit each week makes it easier to prepare for unexpected events, particularly when you get the entire family involved in gathering the supplies and making an emergency plan.

“If you don’t have a specially-constructed storm shelter or a basement, do you know where the safest place in your home is? Do you know how to safely shut off the gas or electricity? If you become separated, do you have a meeting area? How will you communicate with family members who may not be at home when a disaster hits or your loved ones who will be wondering about your safety? These are the things you will need to think about when making your plan.”

Morgan said more information on emergency preparedness and building an emergency kit can be found online at www.ksready.gov.

According to the National Weather Service, the first tornado of 2015 occurred April 2 in Labette County and the last tornado was on Nov. 16. Last year, there were 33 days with more than one tornado reported. The most tornadoes reported in one day was 22.

In all, there were 126 confirmed tornadoes in the state last year, 86 more than hit the state in 2014. On average, Kansas experiences 96 tornadoes a year.



Gov. Sam Brownback signs a proclamation Feb. 26 designating the week of March 14-18 as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Kansas. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)

Don’t stay home without it

What’s in your emergency kit?



Basic Emergency Supply Kit
The information on this page is the FEMA recommended disaster supplies kit and it should be considered as the minimum kit that everyone should have ready.



First aid kit



Local maps, have an evacuation plan ready.



Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio.



Dust mask to help filter contaminated air. plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.



Battery-powered or hand crank flashlight with extra batteries



Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Manual can opener for food.



Whistle to signal for help



Garbage bags, moist towelettes and plastic ties for personal sanitation.



Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities



Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation



Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger



Home emergency kits should contain supplies for every member of the family for a minimum of three days, including:

- Bottled water -- one gallon per person per day
- Non-perishable foods
- First-aid kit
- Flashlights and batteries
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Blankets
- Medications
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Children’s items (favorite toys, comfort items, etc.)
- Pet food

An emergency plan should answer such questions as:

- What is the safest location in my home or business?
- Is the emergency kit stocked with everything we need? Are all the supplies fresh, i.e. is anything past its expiration date? If so, replace it.
- Does everyone know basic first aid kit?
- If we are separated, where will we meet to ensure all family members are accounted for?
- How will we communicate with family members who are away? Remember, cell phone service may not be available after a tornado.

2015 Kansas Tornado Facts

Tornadoes: 126
(65 above the 1950-2015 average of 61)
(43 above the past 30 year average of 83)
(26 above the past 10 year average of 100)

Fatalities: 0
Injuries: 3

Longest track: 51 miles (Seward-Meade-Gray Counties, November 16, EF3)


Strongest: EF3 (May 6, Jul 13, Nov 16)

Most in a county: 10 (Gray)

Tornado days: 33 (Days with 1 or more tornadoes)

Most in one day: 22 (May 6)

Most in one month: 63 (May)



Tornado near Grainfield (Gove County) November 16, 2015. Photo via Twitter courtesy of Brett Oelke. (Miami County, KS)

First tornado of the year: April 2 (Labette County, 7:24 pm CDT, EF0 0.04 mile length, 50 yard width)
Last tornado of the year: November 16 (Comanche County, 9:38 pm CST, EF1 5.3 mile length, 460 yard width)
Length of tornado season: 229 days (Days between first and last tornado)

2015 Monthly Tornado Totals

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	
EF5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
EF4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
EF3	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	3%
EF2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	7	6%
EF1	0	0	0	1	14	2	1	0	2	0	8	0	28	22%
EF0	0	0	0	27	42	9	1	2	0	0	6	1	87	69%
Total	0	0	0	28	63	10	3	2	2	0	17	1	126	100%
Percent	0	0	0	22	50	9	2	2	2	0	14	3		

Violent (EF4—EF5) in red, Strong (EF2-EF3) in yellow, Weak (EF0-EF1) in green. Monthly totals in gray.
(Monthly percent values do not add to 100% due to rounding)

Annual Highlights: In terms of tornado count, 2015 was an active year ranking 4th highest since 1950. By comparison, the most tornadoes ever reported in Kansas in a calendar year is 187 in 2008. The most active month in 2015 was May with 63 tornadoes reported, which is well above the normal 23 for the month but well shy of the record 127 which occurred in May of 2008. The most active tornado day in 2015 was May 6th when 22 tornadoes occurred, including 5 that resulted in several million dollars in damage.

Fortunately there were no violent tornadoes in Kansas last year, but 11 tornadoes were rated strong (EF2-3) and 115 were rated weak (EF0-1). One of the more noteworthy events was a late season tornado outbreak in western Kansas. On November 16th, a total of 17 tornadoes occurred between 5 and 10 pm, including one tornado which traversed 51 miles across Seward, Meade and Gray counties. It was rated EF3 with a width of approximately 2000 yards.

Courtesy of the National Weather Service. For more weather facts, go to http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML_doc_upload/SWAW_2016.pdf or scan the Qcode at the right with your mobile device.





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Anderson Creek fire fight

(Continued from Page 1)

a lot of cooling of the fire, so the ground crews can get in and knock it down.”

The Guard dumped an estimated 124 buckets of water on the hot spots and areas in need, as directed by the incident management. Col. Dave Leger, state Army aviation officer, KSARNG, estimated an approximate 68,000 gallons of water were dumped March 26-27. As of the evening of March 27, the fire containment was estimated to be above 80 percent by incident officials.

Each Black Hawk, which is manned by a four-person crew, scooped water into the Bambi buckets from local water sources to dump on the flames and hot spots. In addition to the aircraft, the 108th sent a fuel tanker truck and another ground support vehicle with two crew members each.

All of the crews fighting the fire received a much-needed break from the windy and dry weather as south central Kansas, including much of the burn area, received an accumulation of up to three inches of overnight snow March 26.

“The timing of the weather was super helpful,” Masters said. “We got more moisture than we expected and the timing of getting the National Guard aircraft here and dropping water was helpful. I’m hopeful to be able to put this thing to bed and try to get the local community back to some sense of normalcy.”

According to Masters, the teamwork between the fire crews, incident management team and Guard Soldiers came naturally.

“We were working seamlessly as one air team,” Masters said. “That cohesion and teamwork was instant as soon as the aircraft landed.”

“The integration between us and the guys on the ground has been phenomenal,” said Maj. Kevin Kennedy, 1-108th operations officer Black Hawk pilot. “They’ve been able to zero us in on some of the spots that are inaccessible as well as some of the areas where the fire is just so big it makes more sense to attack it from above.”

Many of the Kansas aviation Soldiers have assisted with wildfire suppression in other states, but for most, this was their first fire control mission in Kansas.

“As Guardsmen,” Kennedy said. “This is one of the reasons that we joined. We joined so that we could help our brothers and sisters in the event that something happened. The ability to take our training and use that training to help our neighbors is why we got into this business to begin with.”

Kennedy was quick to credit the ground crews for a majority of the containment.

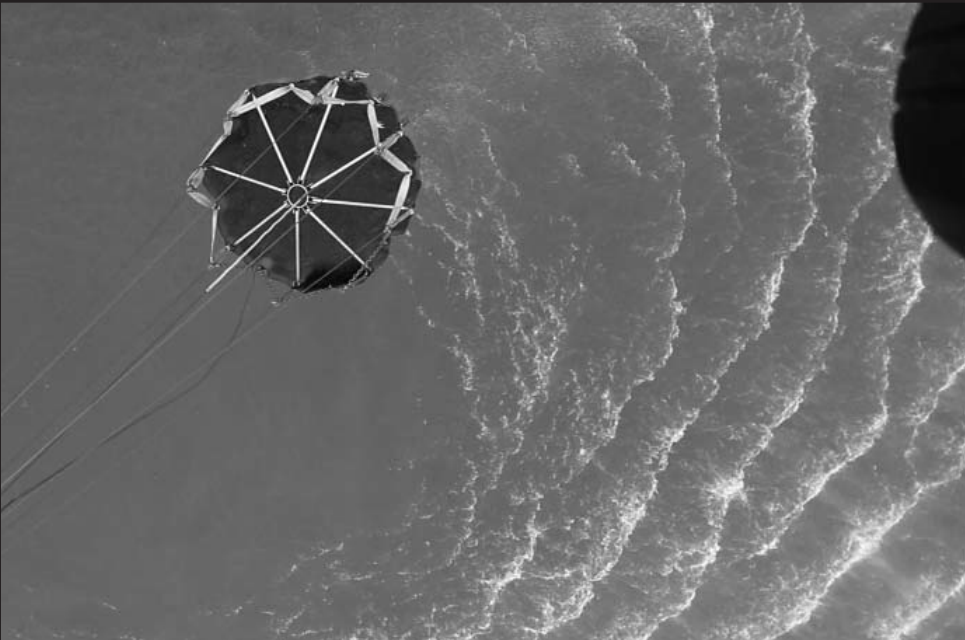
“Even though our contributions are probably the most visible,” Kennedy said, “the people who are making the most difference are the firefighters that are on the ground.”

The Guard Soldiers departed Medicine Lodge March 27 to return to their respective home stations in Salina and Topeka.

“Our highest gratitude goes out to the Kansas National Guard for their expertise and professionalism,” said Wood. “We couldn’t have done it without them.”



Two Kansas Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters depart the Medicine Lodge Airport to collect water from Barber County Lake to dump on areas of the Anderson Creek fire March 26. Four Black Hawks dropped approximately 124 buckets, an estimated total of 68,000 gallons of water, on the fire March 26-27. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)



A 660-gallon Bambi bucket is hoisted up from Barber County Lake March 26 by a Black Hawk helicopter flown by Soldiers with the Kansas National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation and 2nd Battalion, 211th General Support Aviation Battalion. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

KDEM earns StormReady® designation

Officials of the Kansas Division of Emergency Management formally received the StormReady® designation from the National Weather Service during a brief ceremony March 10 at the State Emergency Operations Center in Topeka.

“We’re pleased to receive the StormReady® designation,” said Angee Morgan, KDEM deputy director. “We encourage communities, schools, businesses and other groups to become StormReady as well.”

StormReady® is a nationwide community-preparedness program of the National Weather Service that uses a grassroots approach to help communities develop plans to handle all types of severe weather, from tornadoes to tsunamis. The program encourages communities to take a new, proactive approach to improving local hazardous weather operations by providing emergency managers with clear-cut guidelines

on how to improve their hazardous weather operations.

To be officially StormReady®, a community must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center
- Have more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public
- Create a system that monitors weather conditions locally
- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

“We are prepared,” said Devan Tucking-Strickler, KDEM human services officer. “We hope the ‘big one’ doesn’t occur, but we’re prepared as we possibly can be.”



Angee Morgan, deputy director of the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, (far right) and Devan Tucking-Strickler (right center), KDEM human services officer, receive official notification that KDEM has been designated StormReady® by the National Weather Service. Presenting the StormReady® sign and certificate are Chad Omitt and Audra Hennecke, meteorologists with the National Weather Service, Topeka. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

Emergency managers express concern over misuse of job title

Members of the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers believe there is serious misunderstanding of the use of the term “emergency manager” in the press and public related to the Flint, Michigan, water situation. Traditional emergency managers focus on preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters or crisis situations.

“One thing must be made absolutely clear: the term ‘emergency manager’ in the Flint, Michigan, situation refers to a fiscal-only function that bears no relationship to the term as it is commonly and universally used on a national and an international

basis,” said Robie Robinson, IAEM-USA president. “In the context of the Flint situation, emergency managers are actually municipal emergency financial managers established by the Michigan legislature and appointed by the governor to oversee jurisdictions in Michigan that are threatened with financial insolvency.”

Robinson said the use of the term “emergency manager” to describe these financial managers in Michigan has created confusion, giving the impression emergency managers exist to “cut budgets and reduce costs at the expense of community safety and security,” Robinson noted, when the opposite is true.

Federal disaster declaration granted for Cherokee County

The Kansas Division of Emergency Management received notice Jan. 12 that the state was granted a Small Business Administration disaster declaration for Cherokee County. Gov. Sam Brownback requested the declaration after flood damage Dec. 26-29, 2015.

The declaration named Cherokee County as the primary county and Crawford and Labette as contiguous counties.

Beginning Jan. 14, 2016, SBA representatives were available at the Disaster Loan Outreach Center, located at Baxter

Springs City Hall, to assist applicants and answer questions.

Businesses and private nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets. Disaster loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, and homeowners and renters are eligible for up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property.

“DJ” Medina keeps the music spinning



When not in his Army camo uniform, Sgt. 1st Class David Medina Jr., 3rd Modular Training Battalion, 235th Regiment, Kansas Army National Guard, spends his time entertaining at weddings, parties, fundraisers and other venues. (Photo provided)

By Capt. Earnest Kratina, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nick Reynolds, Spc. Amanda Hrabe, Spc. Zachary Nolen, Pfc. Harley Linnell, and Pfc. Taryn Vaughn
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

Sgt. 1st Class David Medina Jr. a full-time quality assurance officer with the 3rd Modular Training Battalion, 235th Regiment, Kansas Army National Guard, joined the National Guard in 1994 to pursue a degree.

Before joining the Guard, Medina found his passion in disc jockeying and entertaining, and DJ Medina was born. Medina began as a DJ in high school, performing house parties for peers. It was not until later that he realized he could be paid for this talent.

Medina began applying his skills as a DJ during deployments, entertaining troops for Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs.

“The most memorable events that I’ve done are entertaining fellow troops overseas,” Medina said.

After returning from a deployment in 2005, he learned of a position at a local radio station as an on-air DJ. Being an on-air personality gave Medina the recognition that he needed to establish his own entertainment company.

Medina opened his first storefront in Garden City, Kansas. Word-of-mouth keeps his business thriving. He performs a wide variety of events. Part of his job includes keeping weddings and parties on schedule.

Medina entertains in many states, performing trivia shows, music bingo, “minute to win it” type games, karaoke, fundraising and sports announcing. His business, Medina Promotions/Kansas Best DJs, now employs nine people. In addition to his full-time National Guard duty, full-time business and part-time employment on air, he is also married and a father of seven.

“Really it’s my family that keeps me motivated to do what I do,” said Medina.

Making a difference behind iron bars

By 2nd Lt. Ryan Smith, Sgt. Christopher Rectenwald, Sgt. Rosa Valdez and Spc. Justin Boswell
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

“It’s a great feeling to change a person’s life in a positive manner,” Spc. Nelson Schillings said. Schillings is a wheeled mechanic with the 995th Maintenance Company, Kansas Army National Guard, and is also a correctional officer with the Norton Correctional Facility. His line of work has become his passion, he said, especially when transforming the lives of young inmates.

Working at the correction facility can be difficult times, said Schillings.

“Dealing with intimidation with certain inmates because it’s all a game to them,” said Schillings. “That is one of the challenging aspects of the job.”

Schillings also sees the positive aspects of the job. One day Schillings was at Wal-Mart with his family when a former inmate with a drug history came up to him and told him that Schillings had changed his life for the better.

“Talking with those individuals while they are in prison makes you realize that they are a human being like you,” Schillings said.

The stories on this page were written by Kansas National Guardsmen who attended the Unit Public Affairs Representative course in Salina March 5-6. Additional stories on Page 15

Cyclist’s goal: 5,000 miles in 50 states

By Spc. Jeri Billings, Spc. Steph Monaghan, Pfc. Michael Jones and Pfc. Joardy Looney
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

Staff Sgt. Donald Lobmeyer serves as a truck driver with the Forward Support Company, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, Kansas Army National Guard. However, in his free time, he enjoys riding in the seat of



Staff Sgt. Donald Lobmeyer’s goal is to cycle 100 miles in all 50 states before the age of 50. (Photo provided)

Blood delivery missions keep CAP members busy

By Sgt. David Curry, Spc. William Grier, Spc. Cheyenne Hudson, Sgt. Seanta Prescott
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

The Bible correctly tells us “the life of the creature is in the blood.” Lose too much and you die. Getting critically injured patients the blood they need is a mission Brad Hawthorne takes very seriously.

Hawthorne is a second lieutenant and an assistant transportation officer with the Emerald City Composite Squadron, Civil Air Patrol. For the past year and a half, he has regularly committed his time volunteering to assist in American Red Cross blood product delivery in the state.

When the American Red Cross blood center in Wichita is in need of assistance, they often call the Kansas Wing of Civil Air Patrol, who alerts the Civil Air Patrol’s National Operation Center. Once they approve the mission, the message is relayed back to an incident commander for dispatch of a ground team delivery mission.



2nd Lt. Brad Hawthorne
Civil Air Patrol

smaller set of wheels.

“My ultimate goal is to ride 100 miles in all 50 states before I turn 50 years old,” said Lobmeyer, who is an avid bicyclist and a member of the National Guard Cycling Team.

Lobmeyer’s quest had simple beginnings. He completed his first long distance ride of 60 miles in 2001, traveling between Wichita and Hutchinson. He now rides between 50 and 100 miles per week and regularly participates in Century Rides for charity, cycling over 100 miles at a time. He has participated in the Bike Across Kansas multiple times and in numerous other rides.

Lobmeyer estimates he has ridden more than 14,000 miles while on deployments with the Kansas National Guard. Lobmeyer said one of his most memorable rides was during his deployment to Iraq in 2005-2006, where he took part in the Hotter Than Hell 100 25th anniversary ride, an annual ride in Wichita Falls, Texas. Since he was deployed, he created his own version called the Hotter Than Hotter Than Hell, where he rode in 117-degree heat.

He encouraged anyone who is interested in getting involved with cycling to start out slow, look online for local events, and other training tips.

“The best way to prepare for a long ride is to start out slow, build up to the long distance,” Lobmeyer said.

He challenges himself by always pushing his goal. His advice to others is to “Keep doing it, and always push yourself farther.”

Missions can be classified as routine, urgent, or even a lifesaving delivery.

“The Kansas Wing of Civil Air Patrol has been providing delivery assistance for the American Red Cross since the 80s,” said Hawthorne. “I felt it would be the best use of my Civil Air Patrol ground team training to help assist the American Red Cross. Our squadron transportation officer, Maj. David St. John, has been participating in these emergency service missions for several decades now. Early on in my Civil Air Patrol participation John’s leadership and mentoring helped make my decision easier to assist.

“During the month of December 2015, St. John and I drove approximately 25,000 miles for blood deliveries,” said Hawthorne. “We keep quite busy.”

While many of the blood delivery missions are not urgent, one of Hawthorne’s most memorable experiences came last November when he drove approximately 500 miles overnight delivering blood to Garden City. As a direct result of that mission, an infant’s life was saved. In recognition of their lifesaving efforts, St. John and Hawthorne were both awarded a Civil Air Patrol Wing Commander’s Commendation and a Life Save ribbon.

“It gives meaning to my spare time,” said Hawthorne. “It makes me feel good to know I’m helping people.”

Young Soldier reflects on JROTC involvement

By 1st Lt. Patrick Stoops, Staff Sgt. Danny Mersch, and Sgt. Kevin Lumley
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

Uniforms represent discipline, organization and distinction and according to Spc. Bertha Aguinaga, that is what first grabbed her attention as a young girl.

Aguinaga, human resources specialist, 635th Regional Support Group, Kansas Army National Guard, said that her early impression of military members was what inspired her to join the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps in high school and to continue to be involved as a drill team leader to this day.

“It teaches the students how to be more disciplined and how to conduct themselves,” said Aguinaga. “As for me, I naturally fell into it, even though I’d had no prior experience with the military.”

Aguinaga was born in Odessa, Texas, and moved to Kansas with her family in 2008. When she was eight years old, she saw a Soldier in uniform at a restaurant and asked him what life as a Soldier was like.

“He said it was the best way to be a hero,” said Aguinaga, “to serve your community and your country.”

Six years later, when she was a freshman at Wichita Southeast High School, she joined the JROTC program.

“I knew it would benefit me when I joined the military,” she said.

In July 2014, Aguinaga attended Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. After all the years of anticipation and preparation, she said it was a very surreal experience.

“I felt like I had won the lottery,” said Aguinaga.

When Aguinaga returned to Kansas, she was assigned to the 635th RSG in Topeka. In September 2016, she will attend Wichita State University and study criminal justice with aspirations of becoming a police officer.

Reflecting on her own experience with JROTC and her observations of her current cadets, Aguinaga said, “I like being able to pass on my knowledge to the younger students.

“The first thing that catches their eye is the weapons and the uniforms. Once they get more involved, they start to think that the military life is something that they can get into. The majority of my cadets will move on to ROTC in college.”

Aguinaga said that she plans to participate in ROTC to become a commissioned officer in the military police.

Help us tell *YOUR* story

Become a Unit Public Affairs Representative

As a Unit Public Affairs Representative, you will help spread the word about your unit, its Soldiers or Airmen, and the valuable work they do in serving and protecting the state and nation, and enriching their communities.

If you have writing and/photography experience or are eager to learn these skills, contact your unit commander.

299th NOSS lends its expertise to Air Force network migration

**By Tech Sgt. Justin Jacobs
184th Intelligence Wing Public Affairs**

The 299th Network Operations Security Squadron began migrating users and computers from the Air National Guard Enterprise Network to the Air Force’s network in September 2014.

The migration combined the two independent networks into one larger network domain, providing better coordination and security management at the enterprise level. This also positioned the ANG and the AF for the eventual move to the Joint Information Environment.

The 299th NOSS manages 92 ANG wings at 146 locations; each location required new network servers to be built and configured before any of the users or computers could be migrated.

An enterprise network reduces communication protocols, facilitating system and device interoperability, as well as improved internal and external data management.

The 299th NOSS manages 92 ANG wings at 146 locations; each location required new network servers to be built and configured before any of the users or computers could be migrated.

In October 2015, the final users and workstations in the ANG were migrated. The final application server was migrated in January 2016.

However, some of the services being used can’t easily be migrated, which has

delayed the decommissioning process.

“We encountered many complications over the process as any major project would,” said Maj. Brian Pacchelli, assistant director of operations, 299th NOSS.

The most notable change was the working environment for the communications flights across the ANG.

“A challenge that we have had is not having the same administrative privileges that we had on the legacy ANG domain,” said Tech. Sgt. Matthew Benoit, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 184th Communications Focal Point. “This means that we have to rely on other higher-level organizations to perform functions that we were once able to perform ourselves.”

Communications flights lost some of their independence during the migration due to the standardization requirements of the AFNet. As a result, the new processes required for day-to-day jobs caused the transition to the AFNet to be difficult for communications flights throughout the Air National Guard.

“The AFNet initiative has provided the Air Force with several benefits, including standardization, ensuring that all bases are operating under the same blueprint providing for increased network security and reduced maintenance cost,” said Benoit.

The 299th NOSS combines its skills with the 561st Network Operations Squadron, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, and the 83rd NOS, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, to handle network defense and enterprise services for the entire U.S. Air Force.

“The 299th handles almost all tickets and the cyber command and control chain for all of the ANG,” said Pacchelli.

Warrior to Warrior

(Continued from Page 4)

- Battalion programs rating schemes updated and maintained
- Senior noncommissioned officer evaluation reports status monthly through brigade command sergeants major
- Ensure training is properly conducted for the new NCOER system

Schools

- Ensure brigades develop Order of Merit Lists for schools aligning with the new select, train, promote system
- Develop plan for pre-execution checklist and completion of required tests 30 days prior to Soldier’s school attendance.
- Review schools report weekly to identify reserved, wait and enrolled status

Professional Development

- Develop brigade/battalion mentorship programs
- Update noncommissioned officer professional development program within the state to ensure brigade and below units are meeting the training requirements.
- Enforce Developmental Counseling program at unit levels.

M-Day Guardsmen

- First sergeants - 90 day training plans posted and reviewed for training needs.
- Units conduct training meetings to meet suspenses and requests through battalion for all training needs.
- Unit focus - Train Soldiers and squads monthly to meet training requirement and have the ability to train as a unit at annual training.
- Keep Soldier and unit training schedules full.

Promotions

- Ensure brigade leadership informs and trains all Soldiers on the new promotion system
- Ensure battalions review flags and enlisted promotions monthly.
- Brigade command sergeants major will monitor senior NCO promotions and Soldier appointments/positions.

- Brigade command sergeants major will coordinate with state command chief master sergeant when there is a need or are senior NCO movements.
- Hiring of full-time Army personnel**
- Post openings in a timely manner
 - Coordinate with the Human Resources Office and unit commanders to identify any special training or needs for the position.
 - Ensure all available positions are open to all eligible candidates and notices are sent out.

First Sergeants

- Ensure potential candidates have completed first sergeant packets prior to promotion boards.
- Track and ensure first sergeants have completed the yearly command/first sergeant conference.
- Brigade/battalion command sergeants major need to develop a mentorship program to ensure newly appointed first sergeants meet the commander’s needs and are conducting business properly.
- First sergeants and battalion command sergeants major will conduct monthly info transfers (email, phone call or face to face) to identify unit shortcomings and current successes for the next 90 days training events, recruiting and retention issues, awards, APFT program, height/weight program, schools, promotions and NCOER status.
- First sergeants should be active participants/advisors in the Family Support programs.

Honor Guard

- Recruiting and retaining members
- Training requirements and recurring training
- Number and location of teams available

Awards/Decorations and Outstanding Soldier of the Year

- Battalions and units will conduct quarterly checks to ensure all Soldiers are receiving good conduct awards.
- Encourage award submission on a monthly basis for state and Department of the Army awards.

Museum luncheon marks quarter century anniversary of Operation Desert Storm

Retired Brig. Gen. Charles M. “Mick” Baier and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Joe Romans were the keynote speakers at a 25th anniversary commemoration of Operation Desert Storm March 16 at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard in Topeka. During Desert Storm, Baier was the commander of the 190th Air Refueling Wing and Romans was a tank commander.

More than 500 airmen and women of the 190th Air Refueling Wing served during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, with the first contingent arriving in Saudi Arabia on Aug. 10, 1990. By the start of Operation Desert Storm, 10 KC-135E tankers and crews were in Saudi Arabia, with Baier becoming commander of the 1701st Air Refueling Wing in charge of refueling operations during Desert Storm. Over 2,000 refueling sorties were flown before and during the 100-hour war which pushed the Iraqis out of Kuwait. On March 14, 1991, their 10-tanker formation landed at Forbes

Field after flying in formation over the Kansas capitol. They were greeted by a large crowd and a big Topeka parade shortly thereafter.

The 170th Maintenance Company, Kansas Army National Guard, of Hays, Colby and Goodland, also served during Operation Desert Storm, providing general support maintenance for the thousands of tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles in theater. They returned to their home stations on June 23, 1991.

Romans, then a member of the 635th Armor Regiment of the Kansas Army National Guard, was one of 31 other Kansas Guardsmen who volunteered to serve during the war. Volunteers consisted of soldiers from the Kansas Army National Guard and airmen from the 184th Tactical Fighter Group, Kansas Air National Guard. Romans served as a tank commander in the 1st Infantry Division, and was involved in the actual destruction of many Iraqi vehicles.



Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback signs a proclamation at the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka March 16 recognizing the 25th anniversary of Operation Desert Storm. Brownback was joined by Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, Kansas adjutant general, and Airmen with the 190th Air Refueling Wing, Topeka, who deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm in 1991. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)



Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Joe Romans shares photos and stories of his experiences as a tank commander during Operation Desert Storm with the audience attending a 25th anniversary commemoration luncheon March 16 at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard in Topeka. Romans was one of more than 30 Kansas National Guardsmen who volunteered to serve during the war. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

Soldier Issues


- Brigade and battalion command sergeants major keep the state command chief master sergeant in the loop on Soldier misconduct issues.
- Unit leadership will monitor pay, benefits and Soldier issues every day.
- Brigade and battalion command sergeants major should monitor units’ misconduct flags, APFT failures and

- height/weight program.
 - Family Support Programs should be reinforced and encouraged.
- State Teamwork**
- Brigade command sergeants major and higher conduct quarterly phone bridges or meetings.
 - Ensure the leaders know and understand the Kansas leadership mission requirements.

Awards and Decorations

KANSAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Meritorious Service Medal



Lt. Col. Steven Denney, HQ, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Kansas City, with oak leaf cluster

Maj. Roland Galliard, HQ, 235th Reg, Salina, with oak leaf cluster

Capt. Todd Leeds, Co B, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Wichita

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Samuel Bonham, Rec & Ret Bn, Topeka, with oak leaf cluster

Sgt. Maj. Christopher Kuti, 130th FA Bde, Manhattan, with two oak leaf clusters

Sgt. 1st Class Allan Lanier, HHD, 635th RSG, Topeka


Sgt. 1st Class Terry Mead, 130th FA Bde, Manhattan

Staff Sgt. Tony Kirk, Btry B, 2nd Bn, 130th FA, Paola

Staff Sgt. James Laning, 2nd Bn, 235th Regt, Salina


Staff Sgt. Michael Swisher, 2137th FSC, Manhattan, with oak leaf cluster

Army Commendation Medal



Master Sgt. Mark Zafran, 170th Maint Co, Wichita, with oak leaf cluster

Kansas Commendation Ribbon



Command Sgt. Maj. Dwane Clifford, HHC, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Kansas City


Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Debaere, Co B, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Wichita

Staff Sgt. Matthew Howard, Det 1, HHC, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Junction City

Staff Sgt. Diego Raymundo, Co B, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Wichita

Sgt. Nathan Carnahan, Det 1, HHC, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Junction City

Kansas National Guard Emergency Duty Service Ribbon



Maj. Larry Leupold, 130th FA Bde, Manhattan

Maj. Daniel Mehlhaff, HSC, 997th BSB, Hays

Sgt. 1st Class Lawrence Hart, HSC, 997th BSB, Hays

Staff Sgt. Cody Breon, Det 1, 997th BSB, Colby

Staff Sgt. James Griffin, Det 2, 995th Support Maint Co, Norton

Staff Sgt. Richard Luvender, Det 1, 997th BSB, Colby

Sgt. Schyler Cook, 170th Support Maint Co, Wichita

Sgt. Joshua Kline, Det 1, 997th BSB, Colby


Sgt. Brandon Williams, Det 2, 995th Support Maint Co, Norton

Spc. Daniel Kerkсиеk, Det 1, 997th BSB, Colby

Spc. Luke Pechanec, Det 1, 997th BSB, Colby

KANSAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Meritorious Service Medal



Col. David Weishaar, 184th IW, Wichita, with six oak leaf clusters

Lt. Col. Christopher Hill, 190th ARW, Topeka, with two oak leaf clusters

Maj. Andrew Vanderziel, 184th IW, Wichita, with two oak leaf clusters

Command Chief Master Sgt. Patrick Moore, 190th ARW, Topeka, with seven oak leaf clusters

Chief Master Sgt. Brian Norris, 184th IW, Wichita, with two oak leaf clusters

Chief Master Sgt. James Weldy, 184th IW, Wichita, with two oak leaf clusters

Senior Master Sgt. James Barth, 184th IW, Wichita, with oak leaf cluster

Senior Master Sgt. David Butler, 184th IW, Wichita, with two oak leaf clusters

Senior Master Sgt. Mark Rush, 184th IW, Wichita

Master Sgt. Jason Beshears, 184th IW, Wichita

Master Sgt. Kim Evans, 184th IW, Wichita, with oak leaf cluster

Master Sgt. Glen Godsey, 184th IW, Wichita


Master Sgt. Robert Leguillon, 190th ARW, Topeka

Master Sgt. Chase Liphart, 184th IW, Wichita

Master Sgt. Jason McAndrews, 184th IW, Wichita

Tech. Sgt. Christopher Hines, 184th IW, Wichita, with oak leaf cluster

Air Force Commendation Medal



Capt. Enrique Aguiniga De La Torre, 184th IW, Wichita

Capt. Rebekah Carr, 184th IW, Wichita, with three oak leaf clusters

Senior Master Sgt. Richard Hines, 190th ARW, Topeka

Master Sgt. Stephen Agnelli, 190th ARW, Topeka

Master Sgt. Erin Massey, 190th ARW, Topeka, with two oak leaf clusters

Master Sgt. Justin Stephens, 184th IW, Wichita, with two oak leaf clusters

Master Sgt. John Williams, 190th ARW, Topeka, with oak leaf cluster

Tech. Sgt. Stacia Farmer, 184th IW, Wichita, with oak leaf cluster


Tech. Sgt. Richard Hurla, 190th ARW, Topeka

Tech. Sgt. Matthew Montgomery, 190th ARW, Topeka

Staff Sgt. Adam Sexton, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Blake Ballard, 184th IW, Wichita

Air Force Achievement Medal



Maj. Kevin Dark, 190th ARW, Topeka

Capt. Jeffrey Larkin, 190th ARW, Topeka

2nd Lt. Alex Porter, 184th IW, Wichita

Master Sgt. George Hart, 190th ARW, Topeka, with two oak leaf clusters

Master Sgt. Kathleen Thornton, JFHQ KS – AC, Topeka

Master Sgt. Cale Yost, 190th ARW, Topeka, with oak leaf cluster

Tech. Sgt. Holly Baker, 190th ARW, Topeka, with two oak leaf clusters

Tech. Sgt. Timothy Calvin, 190th ARW, Topeka

Tech. Sgt. John Combs, 184th IW, Wichita

Staff Sgt. Diane Collins, JFHQ KS – AC, Topeka

Staff Sgt. Lexi Copp, 190th ARW, Topeka

Staff Sgt. Ramon Espana, 184th IW, Wichita

Staff Sgt. LeMarc Franklin, 184th IW, Wichita

Staff Sgt. Cody Larson, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Randy Avila, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Bradlee Brown, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Clare Cooney, 190th ARW, Topeka

Senior Airman Ryan Crutchfield, 190th ARW, Topeka

Senior Airman Luke Janzen, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Rachel Johnston, 190th ARW, Topeka

Senior Airman Shannon Johnston, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Wesley Kubie, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Nathaniel Lopez, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Jacob Mattern, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Cody Means, 190th ARW, Topeka

Senior Airman Benjamin Nelson, 184th IW, Wichita

Senior Airman Karlee Stallbaumer, 190th ARW, Topeka

Senior Airman Steven Underwood, 184th IW, Wichita

Airman 1st Class Molly Greener, 190th ARW, Topeka

Staff Sgt. James Laning, 2nd Bn, 235th Rgmt (MTB), Salina

Staff Sgt. Tyrone Martinez, Co B, 2nd CAB, 137th Inf, Wichita

Staff Sgt. Terry McGrath Jr., Btry B, 1st Bn, 161st FA, Abilene

Staff Sgt. Steven Michealson, 287th Sustainment Bde, Wichita

Sgt. Steven Kaestner, Det 1, 2137th FSC, Kansas City

Sgt. Dennis Reedy, 2137th FSC, Manhattan

Kansas Air National Guard

Brig. Gen. Scott Dold, JFHQ KS – AC, Topeka

Lt. Col. Thyra Bishop, 190th ARW, Topeka

Chief Master Sgt. Pat Moore, 190th ARW, Topeka

Master Sgt. Timothy Burget, 184 IW, Wichita

Tech. Sgt. Chris Hines, 184 IW, Wichita

Bluestem Farm and Ranch receives ESGR Patriot Award

Brian Wendling, Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply, Emporia, was honored Dec. 16, 2015, with a Patriot Award from Kansas Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in recognition of his support of an employee serving in the Kansas Army National Guard.

Pfc. Michael D. Lemaster, a member of Company D, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, nominated his supervisor, Brian Wendling, for the “My Boss is a Patriot” award. Lemaster said Wendling always adjusts his civilian work schedule when Lemaster must take time off for military duties and has always shown support for him being in the National Guard.

According to Walt Frederick, ESGR state chair, “The Patriot Award was created by ESGR to publicly recognize individuals who provide outstanding patriotic support and cooperation to their employees, who like the citizen warriors before them, have answered their nation’s call to serve. Supportive supervisors are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation’s Guard and Reserve units,” Frederick said.

The award was presented on behalf of Lemaster by Kansas ESGR volunteer, Eugene Michaelis.

For more information about ESGR Out-



Brian Wendling, Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply, Emporia, was the recipient of a Patriot Award from Kansas Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in recognition of his support of an employee serving in the Kansas Army National Guard. (Photo provided)

reach Programs, or ESGR volunteer opportunities call 800-336-4590 or go online to www.ESGR.mil.

Two Kansas employers named semifinalists for ESGR Freedom Award

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense office, has announced two Kansas employers of Guard and Reserve employees are among the 139 semifinalists for the 2016 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom.

Kansas employers nominated for the 2016 Freedom Award were the Topeka Police Department, Topeka and the Kansas University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kansas.

The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the DoD to employers for their support of National Guard and Reserve members. Each year, up to 15 awards are presented to employers in the three categories – large (500 or more employees), small (fewer than 500 employees), and public sector. This year’s semifinalist group is comprised of 48 large employers, 46 small employers, and 45 public sector employers. Almost half of the U.S. military is made

up of National Guard and Reserve members, many of whom also hold jobs with civilian employers. The Freedom Award recognizes those employers that provide the most outstanding support for these Citizen Warriors. Up to 15 employers will be selected for this year’s award and honored at the Pentagon in an official ceremony in August.

“Each of these 139 semifinalists have given great support to our citizen warriors,” said Navy Capt. Steve Knight, ESGR Director of Outreach. “They play a key role in maintaining the strength of the National Guard and Reserve, as they help take care of our troops and their families.”

ESGR received 2,424 nominations for employers in all 50 states, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. This year’s 30 finalists are expected to be announced in April, with the recipients being announced in late June.

Halstead Police Department earns ESGR award

Kansas Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense office, has announced that Josh Orem, acting chief of police with the Halstead Police Department, was honored with the ESGR Patriot Award in recognition of extraordinary support of an employee serving in the Kansas Army National Guard.

Orem was nominated by Kansas National Guardsman Lt. Matthew J. Ayres, 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery, Hutchinson. When Orem hired Ayres, he was fully aware of Ayres’ commitment to his military career, and welcomed him without any hesitation.

Halstead has a population of a little over 2,000 citizens with a small police department. When Ayres has to be gone for military duty, the department must call in one of a few reserve police officers to take his place. Ayres said Orem has never been concerned about his absence as a result of his military duties.

According to Walt Frederick, ESGR state chairman, the Patriot Award was created by ESGR to publicly recognize individuals who provide outstanding patriotic support and cooperation to their employees, who, like the citizen warriors before them, have answered their nation’s call to serve.

Five recognized as Armed Forces Personnel of the Year

Two members of the Kansas National Guard were among five Topeka military service members recognized as Armed Forces Personnel of the Year at the Feb. 2 Topeka City Council meeting.

This year’s honorees included Staff Sgt. Elissa Hobbs, Kansas Army National Guard; Senior Airman Aaron Burkdoll, Kansas Air National Guard; Sgt. Shane Gibbs, U.S. Army Reserve; Sgt. Lisa Conate, United States Marine Corps; and

Petty Officer 3rd Class Kayla Logan, United States Coast Guard.

The awards are sponsored annually by the Topeka Military Relations Committee. The committee was formed in 2003 by a group of Topeka businessmen to promote the military within the community. The award recipients are selected by their respective military branches to honor personnel who have excelled in their military careers and service to their community.

Retirements

Kansas Army National Guard

Col. Gordon Kuntz, KSARNG Med Det, Lenexa

Maj. Leonard Carper Jr., Det 1, Co B, 35th Inf Div, Fort Leavenworth

Maj. Roland Galliard, HQ, 235th Rgmt (RTI), Salina

Maj. Michael Gast, 287th Sustainment Bde, Wichita

Maj. Jeffrey Woods, Co A (-), 35th Inf Div, Fort Leavenworth

Capt. Neal King, Det 1, Co B, 35th Inf Div, Fort Leavenworth

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steven Whittle Jr., HHB, 1st Bn, 161st FA, Hutchinson

Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Haworth, JFHQ KS-LC, Topeka

Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Littlefield, Det 1, 2137th FSC, Kansas City

Sgt. 1st Class David Richardson Jr., Btry A, 1st Bn, 161st FA, Dodge City

Heartland Military Day

16th Annual

Sat, June 11, 2016

Museum of the Kansas National Guard

Forbes Field, 125 SE Airport E. Drive, Topeka

Free Admission to the Museum and Events

June 11 Schedule of Activities

7-10 a.m.

Pancake Feed (Donations)

8 a.m.

Reveille Ceremony

8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Military Equipment Displays and Re-enactors

WW II Equipment – Rolling Thunder Chapter, MVPA

War on Terrorism Equipment Kansas Army National Guard

Civil War Exhibits & Demonstrations –

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 604

9:30 a.m.

Band Concert – Topeka Big Band

10:30 a.m.

World War II Battle Re-enactment

11 a.m.

Band Concert – Fairlawn Road Swing Band

11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Noon Concessions (Hot Dogs, Hamburgers, etc.)

1 p.m.

Lecompton Re-enactors – “Bleeding Kansas”

2 p.m.

World War II Battle Reenactment

Building women’s confidence, self-esteem is Guardsman’s passion

By Sgt. Cassandra Phillips, Sgt. Shawna Dunham, Spc. Jessie Edwards, Pvt. Dalton Williams and Civil Air Patrol Lt. Col. Mark Lahan

Spc. Rebecca Reynaga believes in building women’s confidence and self-esteem.

She does this through her passion as a senior sales consultant for Mary Kay Cosmetics. She helps women improve their self-confidence through the use of cosmetics by improving their self-image, building their confidence, showing and developing them as leaders.

Reynaga also draws on that passion in her career with the Kansas National Guard, where she is an automated logistics specialist with Company B, 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment in Salina. Reynaga joined the military as a junior in high school and went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, between her junior and senior year of high school. After graduation, she attended her advanced individualized training in Fort Lee, Virginia. Reynaga said she is the only person in her family to graduate from high school and to serve in the military.

After high school, she began working for a transportation company and started attending college, but found something was missing in her life. She attended a Mary

Kay party and then realized what she wanted out of life.

Reynaga now hosts parties to show women how to take care of their skin and apply beauty products that compliment them. She also donates makeup to the women’s shelter, allowing her to feel like she’s doing her part. She attends leadership meetings in Manhattan, Kansas, every Wednesday to improve her developmental skills.

One of her most memorable experiences was meeting Stacy James, Mary Kay national sales director, who, like Stacy, rose from humble beginnings to directing the Mary Kay sales force. Reynaga said that her goal is to one day become as inspirational as James, and to influence someone’s life the way that James has for her.

She applies the leadership skills she has learned with the company to her military career, allowing her to work better with the Soldiers in her unit. Reynaga has been a member of the Kansas Army National Guard for five years and is continuing her education at Highland Community College. She hopes to complete her college degree in radiological medicine in the next couple of years and become the first in her family to graduate college.



Spc. Rebecca Reynaga uses the leadership skills she’s learned through her job with Mary Kay to make her a better Kansas National Guardsman. (Photo provided)

Civilian experience augments Guardsman’s military career

By Lt. Col. Linette Lahan, Staff Sgt. Rene Castilleja, Staff Sgt. Joshua Littlejohn and Sgt. Wayne Bowser

Unit Public Affairs Representatives

Sean Deaton augments his professional skills with his experience and knowledge gained as a mixed martial arts instructor. Deaton, a sergeant and a military policeman with the Kansas National Guard’s 35th Military Police Company in Topeka, began his martial arts training in Arizona, inspired by his father. Deaton’s father is a Vietnam-era veteran with a love for grappling.

Deaton takes his MMA skills and transfers them to his military profession as a military policeman. Deaton is Level II certified in Army combatives, the second of

four levels in Army combatives. “I just take my MMA knowledge and add in cuffing techniques.”

Although Deaton has the knowledge and experience gained from his military and civilian training, he doesn’t compete. “My stand up (technique) sucks,” he admits with a chuckle.

Deaton, a fulltime mechanic at an Emporia car dealership, makes sure he still gets to the gym to train and instruct others at least three to four times a week.

“I don’t charge a fee. Just show up at the gym,” said Deaton, who said he doesn’t need the extra income training fees would bring in. “I make enough as a mechanic. I just enjoy it.”

Apiarist wants to increase awareness of bees’ importance

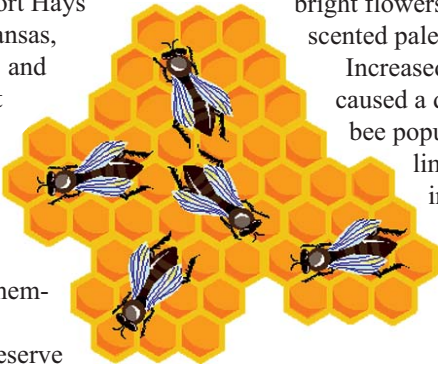
By Spc. Hannah Arellano, Spc. Janet Cooley, Spc. James Mullins, Cadet Taylor Wiebe and Civil Air Patrol Maj. Arthur Grover

Unit Public Affairs Representative

“If bees die, we die,” said Pfc. Cheyenne Prevatt. “Bees are dying by the thousands every day and they are vital to all life.” Prevatt is a student at Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas, studying pre-med biology, and is a utility repair specialist with the Kansas National Guard’s 997th Brigade Support Battalion.

She is also a member of the Fort Hays Bee-keeping Club. With four members and 3,000 bees in six hives, the club helps to preserve the important role that bees play in the environment.

“During the winter months the bees are dormant,” Prevatt said. “In the spring and summer, as plants grow and the weather becomes warmer, bees become active and begin the pollination process.”



Within the artificial honeycombs, bees take shelter and raise their young. Eggs develop in hexagon shaped shells, gaining nourishment from the honey.

According to Prevatt, this new bee population continues pollination and, if they survive to adulthood, reproduce.

“Bees are attracted to near-scentless bright flowers and sweet, heavily-scented pale flowers,” she said.

Increased pesticide use has caused a drastic reduction in the bee population. However, with limited pesticide use and increased awareness of less harmful pesticides, change can be made and the bee population can grow.

Prevatt said she enjoys raising bees and watching them pollinate, as that is what they are born to do. She hopes bees will be enjoyed for generations to come.

“Sharing awareness that bees are beneficial will decrease bee fear, and people will kill fewer bees,” said Prevatt.

Life on the shooting range more than just a hobby to Guardsman

By Sgt. Veronica Guzman, Sgt. Michael Lee, Sgt. Preston Williamson, Spc. Jeffery Beck and Spc. Sandricka Paylor

Unit Public Affairs Representative

“I don’t consider shooting a hobby,” said Sgt. Bradley Schnauffer. “It’s a way of life.” Schnauffer, 772nd Mechanized Engineering Company, Pittsburg, recalls his first target practice at the age of 6 in Lamar, Missouri. His father gave him a JC Higgins single shot .22 and taught him the basics of safety and shooting fundamentals. His dad set up a water bottle in an old field and stepped back.

“I lined up my sight picture and pulled the trigger. I watched it explode, and that’s when I fell in love with shooting,” said Schnauffer.

The shooting range is his home away from home at least once every two weeks. Schnauffer and his best friend, Seth Pipkin, fire off thousands of rounds with his favorite weapons, a Sig Sauer 716, P226 MK25 and Remington 870.

Schnauffer plans on teaching his future children weapon fundamentals and safety and hopes to inspire them to fall in love with shooting as he did.

Soldier, mother, role model

By Staff Sgt. Ivan Sanchez, Sgt. Andrew Waters, Pfc. Shown Smith, and Pfc. Sumal Jayawarna

Unit Public Affairs Representatives

Pfc. Leslie Taylor’s day starts promptly at 5 a.m. with a quick workout before she gets her five daughters up to get ready for school. Her day generally doesn’t end until about 9 or 10 p.m.

Taylor, a human resources specialist with 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery in Hutchinson, has been with the Kansas National Guard since 2013. In her civilian career, Taylor has worked as a float receptionist at the Hutchinson Clinic for the last five years, registering patients, planning workshops, setting up, cleaning up, doing inventories, keeping records of participants and media coordination.

For the last two years, she has also been a project manager for the American Cancer Society’s “Look Good, Feel Better” program. The program helps cancer patients with the mental anguish of their changing skin and appearance due to chemotherapy and radiation. Cancer patients are fitted for wigs and are taught how to use head coverings.

“I feel emotionally connected to the American Cancer Society because I have lost two aunts and a grandfather,” said Tay-

lor, who is also a cancer survivor herself.

Workshops are held every other month at the Hutchinson Clinic, where patients are given a free makeover by professional cosmetologists and are able to take home a free bag of makeup. She has her children help with some of the tasks at the workshops.

“It feels good to know they like to be involved,” said Taylor.

Taylor said one of the most touching moments working for the American Cancer Society came when an oncology patient was very upset because she knew she was going to lose her hair, but did not know she was going to lose her eyebrows. Taylor put together a bake sale to help pay to have the patient’s eyebrows tattooed on by a cosmetic tattoo artist.

In 2014, Taylor was scheduled to get married, but cancelled her wedding when her grandfather died of colon cancer. Because of the work she does for the American Cancer Society, Hutchinson Clinic, and the oncology patients, the American Cancer Society planned a surprise wedding ceremony for her held in the middle of a Relay for Life event in Hutchinson.

In the little spare time she has, Taylor enjoys making jewelry, but does not sell anything she makes.

“I am one of those crazy people that get



Annual Training Is Coming!

The Plains Guardian will be looking for stories and photos of your unit’s annual training experiences.

Contact your Unit Public Affairs Representative NOW to discuss training schedules and story ideas.

Jenkins visits Topeka STARBASE

Kansas Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins visited the Topeka STARBASE Jan. 19 to talk with STARBASE students and observe the lessons they are learning in math, science, engineering and technology.

Jenkins joined the STARBASE students from Farley Elementary in Topeka at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard as they learned some of the basics of robotics.

Jenkins watched the students program small wheeled robots to move forward, backward and turn, calculating the number of wheel rotations, angles and turning radius needed to accomplish the desired tasks.

Jenkins said programs, such as STARBASE, that foster interest in science, math and technology are critical to the future of the nation.

“If we’re going to stay innovative and on the cutting edge and be world leaders as we are today, we need to encourage young people, young men and women to go into these fields,” said Jenkins. “These kids have already far exceeded my knowledge of robotics. I’m very impressed with what their learning!”

Since 1992, Kansas STARBASE has inspired thousands of Kansas children to take a greater interest in math, science, and engineering by sparking their imaginations through creative, hand-on projects led by volunteer mentors from the Kansas National Guard.

Since its inception, more than 69,000 Kansas elementary students in grades four through six have attended the STARBASE academies. The Kansas program is the largest in the nation with academies in Kansas City, Kansas, Manhattan, Salina, Topeka and Wichita, plus a summer academy in Hays. In 2015, volunteers contributed more than 19,000 hours to STARBASE; more than 6,000 of those hours were contributed by members of the military.



Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins observes as two STARBASE students measure the distance traveled by their robot over one revolution of its wheels. The measurement was used to help the students in their calculations when programming the machine for other maneuvers. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)

Registration now open for “Hack The Pentagon” program

Interested participants may now register to compete in the “Hack the Pentagon” pilot program.

Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said the pilot program -- designed to identify and resolve security vulnerabilities within Defense Department websites through crowdsourcing -- is the first “bug bounty” program in the history of the federal government.

DoD is partnering with HackerOne, a reputable bug-bounty-as-a-service firm, to run the program over the next several weeks.

The Hack the Pentagon bug bounty pilot will start April 18 and end by May 12, Cook said, and HackerOne will issue qualifying bounties no later than June 10.

“The program will target several DoD public websites which will be identified to the participants as the beginning of the challenge approaches,” Cook said. “Critical, mission-facing computer systems will not be involved in the program.”

HackerOne has set up a registration site for eligible participants at <https://hackerone.com/hackthepentagon>. Eligible participants must be a U.S. person, and must not be on the U.S. Treasury Department’s Specially Designated Nationals list of people and organizations engaged in terrorism, drug trafficking and other crimes. U.S. citizens and companies are prohibited from doing business with listed entities.

In addition, the press secretary said, successful participants who submit qualifying vulnerability reports will undergo a basic criminal background screening to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. Screening details will be communicated to participants in advance, he added, and participants will be able to opt out of any screening. Those who opt out of the screening will forgo bounty compensation, he said.

Individual bounty payments will depend on a number of factors, and will come from the \$150,000 in funding for the program.

Chaplain’s Corner

Chaplain detachment deploys to minister wherever they’re needed

By Chaplain (Col.) Peter Jaramillo
State Chaplain

On Feb. 4, Chaplain (Capt.) Nathan Witt and Sgt. David Mohler from the 137th Chaplain Detachment were honored with a departure ceremony in Topeka. Somewhat different from a regular chaplaincy, the detachment exists to support multiple units over a wide area. In theater, the 137th will stay mobile, circulating through the entire area of operations, going where needs are the greatest, where no Unit Ministry Teams are present.



Chaplain (Col.) Peter Jaramillo

When Jesus was moved with compassion and healed the wounded and those afflicted with illness, the scriptures say the crowds were “like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). So, essentially, the team will minister to those sheep who have no shepherd. This is the work and the calling of our chaplaincy.

Since 2002, the Kansas Chaplain Corps has logged 20 deployments to support multiple units, missions, and operational as-

signments. From Operation Noble Eagle in 2002 to Operation Enduring Freedom, Spartan Shield in 2016, Kansas National Guard chaplain corps personnel are on the move to support our Soldiers and Airmen. When a unit goes forward, chaplains go with them. The day, time or location does not matter; the chaplain corps will go and support the mission.

Chaplains move with their unit for a reason. Commanders see the essential ministry that they provide. They value the impact of the chaplaincy and its commitment to the force as they nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the dead across the full spectrum of military operations.

Witt and Mohler are a seasoned Unit Ministry Team. This mission represents their fourth deployment and they are ready for the tasks ahead of them. I am confident they can and will meet every demand and task they receive in their itinerant ministry downrange.

I am grateful for this willing pair of ministerial servants and their commitment to provide for the pastoral care for Soldiers and other deployed personnel. I am especially grateful for the sacrifices made by their families and local church communities to support them. Please pray for the success in their ministry efforts downrange and their safe return.



Col. Matt Oleen (left), deputy chief of staff, Joint Forces Headquarters Kansas – Land Component, presents a Kansas flag to Chaplain (Capt.) Nathan Witt and Sgt. David Mohler, 137th Chaplain Detachment, during a deployment ceremony Feb. 4. The soldiers deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom Spartan Shield. (Photo by Sgt. Zach Sheely, Public Affairs Office)

Taking the Polar Plunge



Kansas Army National Guardsmen and civilian participants waded through frigid waters Feb. 6 during the Polar Plunge and Strut 5K at Lake Shawnee in Topeka. Soldiers with Joint Forces Headquarters, 69th Troop Command, Recruiting and Retention and the 35th Military Police Company and Airmen with the 190th Air Refueling Wing helped organize and judge the event, which raised more than \$37,000 for Special Olympics Kansas. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Nussbaumer, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)