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Winter 2024

GUARDSMAN

MAGAZINE



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NEW HAMPSHIRE GUARDSMAN MAGAZINE STAFF

Lt. Col. Greg Heilshorn | Director of Public Affairs

Master Sgt. Charles Johnston | Editor

CONTRIBUTING UNITS

- 114th Public Affairs Detachment,
N.H. Army National Guard
- 603d Public Affairs Detachment,
N.H. Army National Guard
- 197th Field Artillery Brigade Public Affairs,
N.H. Army National Guard
- 157th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs,
N.H. Air National Guard
- Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs,
N.H. National Guard

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NEW HAMPSHIRE AIRMAN CONQUERS
APPALACHIAN TRAIL 4-6

THE CHRISTMAS THEY DESERVE 7

TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTION 8

OUR GOOD SAMARITAN..... 9

SNAPSHOTS 10-14

HE'S ON ANOTHER LEVEL 15

MUNSON, ROBERTS ARE BEST WARRIORS . 16-17

GUNS N' WHO? 18-19

GOOD & PLENTY 20-22

ARMY, AIR NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS . 23

COVER: Tech. Sgt. Alan Dwyer, cyber operations network administrator with the 157th Communications Squadron, shows off the gear that supported his Appalachian Trail through-hike Dec. 12, 2023, at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. Dwyer hiked the trail from March through October last year, which covered over 2,200 miles and 460,000 feet of elevation across 14 states.
Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.



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NEW HAMPSHIRE AIRMAN CONQUERS APPALACHIAN TRAIL

By Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs


A New Hampshire Air National Guardsman from Rye recently spent seven months camping under an open sky as he through-hiked the Appalachian Trail.

Tech. Sgt. Alan Dwyer started on March 22, 2023, at Springer Mountain, Georgia, and proceeded to hike the 2,200 miles through 14 states along the east coast before finishing Oct. 26.

“It’s pretty crazy to complete a lifetime goal,” Dwyer said. “It was difficult and frustrating at times, but there was an ever-growing awareness as I hiked that this is an opportunity a lot of people don’t get.”

The trail heading north begins at the southern terminus marker. Before the official start to the trail, there is a lengthy set of stairs that leads hikers up the side of a waterfall to Springer Mountain. Eight miles in, a rock with a logbook stored inside a metal box contains names and stories of people beginning and ending their journey on the AT.

“If you look inside the box, on the top, there’s a Maineiac sticker,” Dwyer said, referring to the Maine Air National Guard. “I had to put a 157th Comm Flight sticker next to it.”



Tech. Sgt. Alan Dwyer, cyber operations network administrator with the 157th Communications Squadron, stands atop a mountain peak on the Appalachian Trail on April 20, 2023. *Courtesy photo.*

Dwyer said he embarked across the mountain ridgelines from Georgia to Maine to give the outdoors more gravity in his life.

“Before I left, I loved spending time outdoors,” he explained. “But there were always other things that would pull me away from it. I’ve wanted to hike the AT since I was 15 years old. Living out there I developed a relationship with that space and now have a greater draw to make time for it, and that’s really special.”

He began his planning years in advance. Dwyer put money aside each paycheck for four years. Originally, he hoped to start on the trail in 2021, but a member of his unit deployed, and Dwyer filled their role.

“It made me even more grateful for this opportunity and pushed me to keep planning,” he said. “I saw that if I didn’t make it happen soon it may never happen, so I just kept going.”

Dwyer kept in contact with friends, family and coworkers on his website and through a GPS tracker, accessible through a QR code. Chief Master Sgt. Frederick Balas, the defense operations senior

enlisted leader in his unit, followed Dwyer’s journey and updated the squadron during drills.

“His efforts have made an impact—not just here in Comm, but across the Wing,” Balas said. “I had a conversation with someone in [the Logistics Readiness Squadron] about Dwyer while I was picking up my mobility bag and with someone in personnel and security forces. They were all excited. They thought it was so cool that a member of this Wing could go and do that.”

Balas said he thinks the fulfillment of this dream will fuel Dwyer to continue to move forward in stride and inspire others.

“We spend our whole lives thinking about what we want to do, but how many of us take the steps to actually make it happen?” Balas asked. “He’s a trailblazer.”

Last year was grueling for AT through hikers. Dwyer said he faced relentless rainy weather during the spring and summer seasons, including catastrophic flooding in Vermont and dangerous water levels in rivers across Maine.



Tech. Sgt. Alan Dwyer, cyber operations network administrator with the 157th Communications Squadron, stands alongside a through-hiker sign-in board along Appalachian Trail April 5, 2023, in North Carolina. *Courtesy photo.*

"It's one of those things you realize: nothing you plan goes as planned," Dwyer said.

His gear and shoes took a beating up and down more than 460,000 feet of elevation, yet he remained resilient.

"The most challenging days for me were in Massachusetts," remembered Dwyer. "The pack I was using had adjustable straps. One side broke, so I tied it with a shoelace. Then the other side broke, so I tied it with a shoelace too. The same day I got stung by a bee, and it swelled. My pack was rubbing against it, and I got a friction burn. I got a hole in my water bladder that day as well. Soon after, I tripped on some rocks and snapped a trekking pole. It was just one thing after another after another, and I just wanted to move forward."

According to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, 75% of people who attempt to through-hike the AT do not complete it. Dwyer said many of the people he crossed paths with were making another attempt or finishing a journey they started years ago.

"The people you run into are amazing and overcoming so many things that could be categorized as obstacles and reasons why they would be unable to complete such a feat," Dwyer said. "But they were out there hiking with cystic fibrosis, an 83-year-old who had two knee replacements and so many people coming back to finish what they started."

More than three quarters of the way through, Dwyer was faced with the potential closure of Baxter State Park in Maine, the final stretch of the northern AT. The park closed due to flooding and frozen conditions in October, days before Dwyer was scheduled to finish.

He decided to flip. Dwyer got a ride to Mt. Katahdin before the park closed and then hiked back down to the spot he got off trail in Gorham, New Hampshire.

Headed south from Maine, he adapted to the colder weather and physical demands of the White Mountains.

"The trail lets you rebuild the fundamental skills you need to survive," explained Dwyer. "It was getting colder, and you need to feed yourself, shelter yourself, and keep yourself safe. One of the coolest things on the trail is seeing people healthier and more able than when they started, yourself included."

He added that seven months on the trail is as much a mental challenge as it is physical.

"You have time to think every thought you've ever had like eight times over," Dwyer said. "It doesn't change what you've been through but by the time you're done, you're more at peace with the life you have."

Dwyer now stops to appreciate his time outside and the time he makes for friends and family more.

"I have a greater gratitude for the little things in the same way you do getting back from a deployment," Dwyer said. "Hopefully I bring that mentality back to my workplace."

Balas and other members across the wing said Dwyer's endeavor gave them an opportunity to help someone achieve a life-changing dream.

"It's something I will never forget because it was unique for me as well," Balas explained. "Just being in a position where I could be part of making it happen, you don't often get an opportunity to help someone achieve something so amazing and life changing."

Dwyer was surprised how much joy people found in helping and supporting his endeavor.

"There were many times this pursuit felt selfish because it's a personal goal," he said. "But so many people supported me along the way. As soon as I got back people stopped me to ask questions, because it's their dream to hike the AT someday or something similar."

He said those conversations felt important and added to the gravity of his accomplishment.

"It's weird to have those interactions, because I just walked for a long time, you know?" Dwyer said. "It never seems as much of a big deal once you've done it, but there is something to be said about pursuing your next big goal. When we see someone else achieve a big thing, it makes it much less foreign."

After finishing his journey, he transitioned back into his role in the New Hampshire Air National Guard. He said he is excited for what the communications team has ahead and the future hikes he has in store.

"Honestly, the trail is a ridiculous pursuit," Dwyer said. "It's a constant grind and challenge, and I think a lot of our pursuits in the military can feel the same way. The mission is so big that the single achievements of a day can feel irrelevant. But then you look back, and you see how far you've come and how much you can accomplish as a team."

THE CHRISTMAS THEY DESERVE

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO

New Hampshire Guardsmen again helped deliver donated gifts this past Christmas to families in need via vans, military trucks and a Black Hawk helicopter from the state military reservation in Concord.

The charitable endeavor was in partnership with the State Employees' Association and Operation Santa Claus, a program in its 63rd season.

"There are so many families that are in dire straits," said Christine McManus, SEA communications manager. "I think this year has probably been one of the worst that I've seen."



Dozens of soldiers, airmen and civilian volunteers loaded vehicles from a giant stockpile of donations Dec. 12, 2023, that had been amassing for weeks. Packages were then transported to various distribution centers, including sites in Berlin, Concord, Manchester, Keene, Claremont, Portsmouth, and Rochester.

The volunteer event comprised guardsmen of all ranks, including OSC stalwart Tech. Sgt. Christopher Wood of the 157th Air Refueling Wing.

"This is my 13th year helping kids get the Christmas they deserve," Wood said. "It's a pretty amazing event."

NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities, the Guard's senior officer, also helped with the colossal undertaking.

"Distributing toys to underprivileged kids, it's just an honor to be a part of it," said Mikolaities, who labored shoulder to shoulder with the rank and file. "It's all about giving back to our communities."

The SEA's support of OSC is year-round.

Donations can be made at operationsantanh.org.

Spc. John Ung, an intelligence analyst with 197th Field Artillery Brigade, helps load a new bicycle onto a delivery truck Dec. 12, 2023, at the state military reservation in Concord.



From right, **Sgt. Audrey Monroe**, a crew chief with A Company, 1-169th Aviation, joins volunteers from the State Employees' Association on the flight line with a Black Hawk helicopter loaded with donated Christmas gifts Dec. 12, 2023, at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord. New Hampshire National Guardsmen teamed with volunteers from the SEA for Operation Santa Claus to deliver gifts to needy families across the Granite State.

TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTION

*Story and photos by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston,
NHNG Deputy State PAO*

An exchange program backed by the New Hampshire National Guard continues to evolve between high schools in Bow and Cabo Verde.

In January, guardsmen collected 33 boxes of donated books from the Bow campus—a sizeable gift that’s slated for delivery to Pedro Gomes High School in Achada Santo Antonio, Cabo Verde.

“They wanted to expand their English library,” said Bow social studies teacher Derek DeAngelis. “Everything from encyclopedias to Stephen King is in there.”

The West African island nation became the NHNG’s second state partnership country two years ago, joining El Salvador, a model partner since 2000.

Through the state partnership, Bow has made similar contributions to a school in San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador. In 2010, they hosted a teacher exchange.



Spc. Olivia Palmiter, international support specialist with Joint Force Headquarters, helps load donated books into a cargo van Jan. 17 at Bow High School.

“Bow has been a fantastic partner over the years by networking with schools in both El Salvador and Cabo Verde,” said Maj. Mario Rey, NHNG’s State Partnership Program director.

The budding exchange program has the full support of Marcy Kelley, Bow’s superintendent. She was on hand Jan. 17 as teachers, students and soldiers packed books into a cargo van.

“I think it’s a pretty amazing opportunity to have this connection with people so far across the world and to share what we’re doing, to share our resources where we can and make our kids feel like they’re involved,” Kelley said.

Rey also oversees donations earmarked for public safety, military and medical personnel in both partner nations. In the past year, the NHNG has facilitated the shipment of PPE, firefighter clothing and body armor.

“Whether it’s military to military or civilian to civilian opportunities, we’re constantly exploring ways to collaborate and grow together,” Rey said.

Although collaboration between Bow and Cabo Verde has been limited to videoconferences and written letters, educators are hopeful for future in-person visits.

“We want to have an educational exchange, and one of the best ways for students to learn is to travel,” DeAngelis said. “It’s one of the biggest ways to open your mind.”

Until then, Bow teachers and students are grateful for the growing bond with its new sister school, a seven-hour flight across the Atlantic.

“We could never do this without the assistance of the Guard,” DeAngelis said.



Teacher Colony Barrett helps load donated books into a cargo van Jan. 17 at Bow High School. New Hampshire Guardsmen collected 33 hefty boxes of donated books, which were delivered to students of Pedro Gomes High School in Cabo Verde.



From left, ninth graders **Charlotte Weiss** and **Stella Wantuck** help load donated books into a cargo van Jan. 17 at Bow High School.

OUR GOOD SAMARITAN

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs

A New Hampshire Guardsman with the 157th Air Refueling Wing was driving down a dark and winding back road along the Piscataqua River on her way to the gym at 5:30 a.m. Jan. 3 when she saw a man walking toward the water.

"I saw a man walking in the breakdown lane next to the sidewalk without any reflective clothing," recalled Tech. Sgt. Yvonne Bartoszak, a member of the traffic management office with the 157th Logistics Readiness Squadron. "It was definitely below freezing, it was dark, and I couldn't tell if he had a jacket on.

"I saw his truck a little way up the road on the sidewalk with no lights on," she said. "Something didn't seem right, so I turned around to ask if he needed help."

The older gentleman told Bartoszak he was going to see family, but his truck stopped working. She offered to drive him to the gas station and call for a tow truck.

"When the tow truck got there, we went to try to start the car but nothing, no lights, no sound, nothing," she said. "So the tow driver and I walked around the car and saw that he had jumped the curb, punctured stuff in his engine bay and blew out his passenger side tire."

Bartoszak called the Newington police, who contacted the man's son.

"His son told us he had dementia," said Capt. Brandon Smart, the police officer who responded to the scene. "It was very cold, and we are extremely lucky that she stopped and found him when she did.

"He kept trying to tell us that he wanted to go over the bridge to the Dover side where he had family, which he doesn't," Smart said. "That walking path over the river has been shut down for quite a while. Had she not found him who knows where he would have ended up."

Bartoszak's leadership said they were not surprised to hear she took the time to help.

"Most people would have just driven by," said Maj. Aaron McCarthy, the 157th Logistics Readiness operations officer. "I know she's the type of person that goes above and beyond because she does it here every day. Bartoszak consistently works hard and puts in the extra thought. This just shows she has a big heart, too. She really took the time to stop and care and that made an impact.

"I'm really proud to know her and to work with her," he said.

Bartoszak said she considered driving past, but her parents always stopped to help if they could.

"It was dark and early and there was no one around so I was nervous," she said. "But something was just not right and if I could help him jump his car or get to the gas station it felt like the right thing to do."

Her intuition and kindness saved the man from additional harm and brought him back to his family.

"I was just glad to help," Bartoszack said. "I'm really glad I turned around."



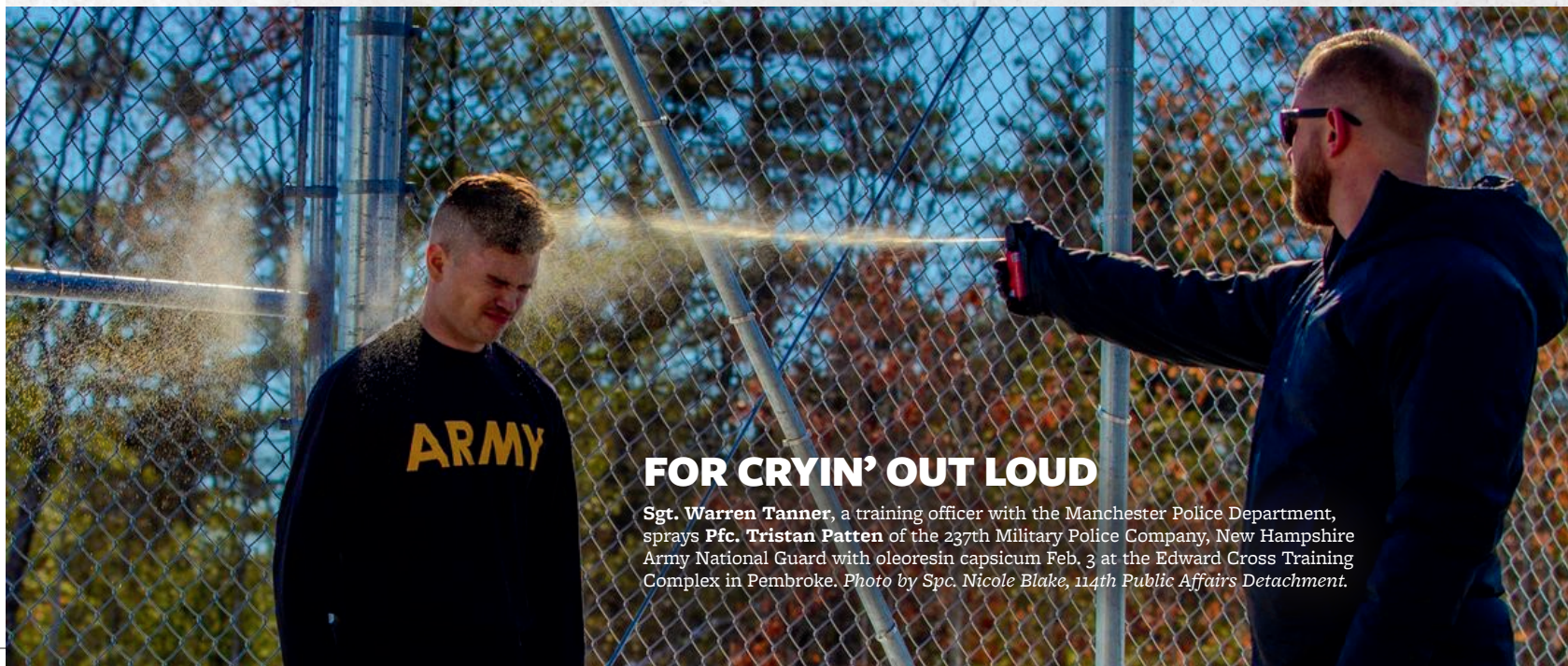


THE FIXER

Chief Master Sgt. William Bates of Joint Force Headquarters sits center stage during his retirement ceremony Feb. 4 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. Bates retired after a nearly 39-year career, which he began as a jet engine mechanic in 1985. He cross-trained into the personnel field in 2003. Bates retired as JFHQ's senior enlisted leader. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*

LONG WAIT'S OVER

From left, **Staff Sgt. Larry Davis** reunites with his children, **Parker** and **Camryn**, and wife, **Samantha**, during a 3-197th Field Artillery Regiment welcome home ceremony Feb. 8 at the Manchester armory. About 370 soldiers, including a battery of 84 guardsmen from Michigan, deployed last spring to the Middle East. The New Hampshire Army National Guard HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) battalion completed a nine-month rotation in support of Operations Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD

Sgt. Warren Tanner, a training officer with the Manchester Police Department, sprays **Pfc. Tristan Patten** of the 237th Military Police Company, New Hampshire Army National Guard with oleoresin capsicum Feb. 3 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. *Photo by Spc. Nicole Blake, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*



THE FOUNDATION

Spc. Mitchell Kelly, a UH-60 helicopter repairer with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment (MEDEVAC), performs maintenance on the flight control rods of a Black Hawk during a 48-month inspection Jan. 30 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord. *Photo by Sgt. Kelly Boyer, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*

GAZING TOWARD THE FUTURE

At left, **Chief Master Sgt. Frederick Balas**, senior enlisted officer for the 157th Communications Squadron, unfurls the unit's new guidon during a reclassification ceremony Feb. 3 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. Prior to becoming a squadron, the 157th Communications Flight supported the mission at Pease AFB for more than 50 years. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Elliot Boutin, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*



WINTER GAMES

From left, **Spc. Tanner Cammett** and **Staff Sgt. Andrew Smith** of Charlie Company, 3rd of the 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), New Hampshire Army National Guard, adjust security during a simulated, cold-weather combat exercise Jan. 18 on Glencliff Trail in Warren. "The training was great," Smith said. "We had a lot of preparation and planning prior to hitting the ground. We ran into roadblocks and logistical changes but adapted." *Photo by Sgt. Kelly Boyer, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*

JANUARY THAW

Master Sgt. Michael McCrady, a crew chief with the 157th Maintenance Group, deices a KC-46 Pegasus on Jan. 31 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. *Photo by Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*



CAREER DEFINING

From left, **Lt. Col. David DeVoy**, 3643d Brigade Support Battalion commander, congratulates retired **Command Sgt. Maj. James Westgate Jr.** after presenting him the Legion of Merit for “exceptionally meritorious service” Jan. 25 at the state military reservation in Concord. Westgate retired in 2022 after a combined 41 years in the U.S. Army and NH Army National Guard, which included five deployments and numerous state activations. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



INSPECTOR GENERALS

Staff Sgt. Thomas Lundy, an aircrew flight equipment specialist with the 64th Air Refueling Squadron, finishes a 120-day inspection of the Scott Quick Donn Masks on Jan. 11 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. The masks are used for emergencies providing aircrew with secondary oxygen and a means to plug into the aircraft for communication. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Elliot Boutin, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*

TWO GOOD MEN

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Thibodeau, outgoing senior enlisted advisor, 54th Troop Command, New Hampshire Army National Guard, passes the brigade guidon to **Col. Allen Aldenberg**, commander of 54th TC, during a change of responsibility ceremony Jan. 6 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. *Photo by Sgt. Kelly Boyer, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*



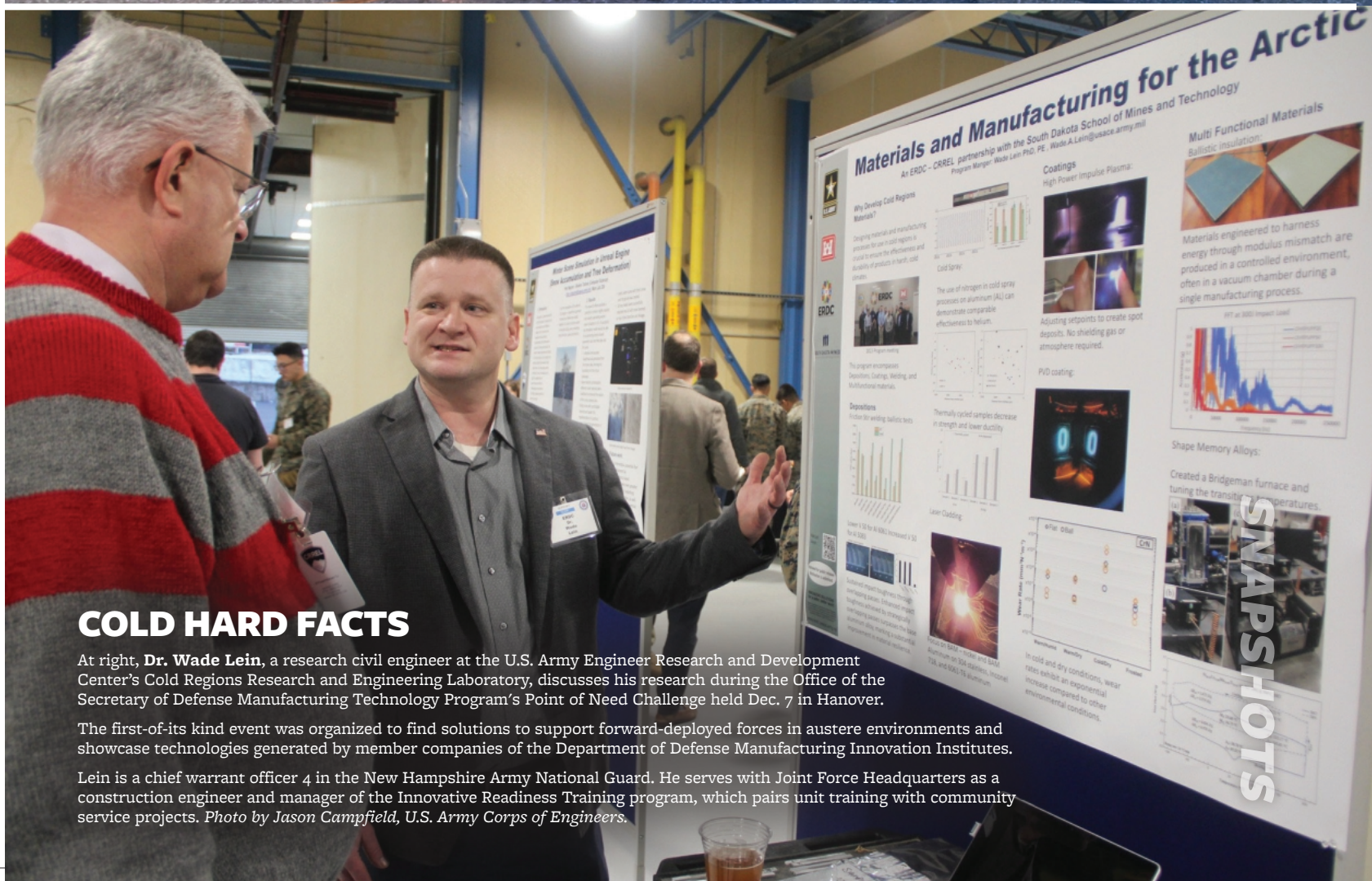
FOR EVERY ACTION

From left, **Reps. Chris Pappas, Anne McLane Kuster, and Sen. Maggie Hassan** visit with students of Manchester's Southside Middle School during a STARBASE education session Jan. 5 at the New Hampshire National Guard's Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. Members of the state congressional delegation visited with the fifth graders following a program orientation and facilities tour. New Hampshire recently became the 34th state to offer a STARBASE community outreach program, which stands for Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



GRAND POOBAHS

Col. Davis Ulricson, commander of 197th Field Artillery Brigade, waves from an antique M151 Jeep during Manchester's annual holiday parade Dec. 2. Soldiers marched in formation and drove unit vehicles along a short parade route that extended from the armory and along Elm Street. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



COLD HARD FACTS

At right, **Dr. Wade Lein**, a research civil engineer at the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, discusses his research during the Office of the Secretary of Defense Manufacturing Technology Program's Point of Need Challenge held Dec. 7 in Hanover.

The first-of-its kind event was organized to find solutions to support forward-deployed forces in austere environments and showcase technologies generated by member companies of the Department of Defense Manufacturing Innovation Institutes.

Lein is a chief warrant officer 4 in the New Hampshire Army National Guard. He serves with Joint Force Headquarters as a construction engineer and manager of the Innovative Readiness Training program, which pairs unit training with community service projects. *Photo by Jason Campfield, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*

HE'S ON ANOTHER LEVEL

By Sgt. Bei Simmons, 114th Public Affairs Detachment

On paper, Spc. Ethan Moorhouse may still be a part-time fuel handler, but it's his customer service skills that are making a difference for the New Hampshire Army National Guard.

Since taking on a full-time personnel position in 54th Troop Command, Moorhouse has been the driving force behind the brigade's S1 team. Recently, it was recognized by the U.S. Army for processing 1,418 customer management cases last year, the most in the National Guard, under the new integrated personnel and pay system, known as IPPS-A.

"Spc. Moorhouse operates more on a noncommissioned officer level," said Maj Carolyn Lovell, chief of the S1 shop. "He is one of the hardest working soldiers I've ever served with."

Three years ago, Moorhouse enlisted as a petroleum supply specialist. This spring, he will reclass as a human resources specialist.

On his own, Moorhouse spent four months scrubbing the brigade's enlisted documents, Lovell said. As a result, he processed more than 3,200 service awards and added promotion points for more than 700 soldiers.

Moorhouse also created a retirement points verification worksheet for the brigade's 13 subordinate units. More than 370 reports were corrected, allowing some soldiers to retire earlier than expected because of their contribution to the COVID-19 relief mission. The fix amounted to an estimated 250-300 years in retirement points.

It's no wonder Moorhouse has earned the nickname "Powerhouse."

"Don't let Moorhouse's rank fool you," said Master Sgt. Rachel Robak, senior human resources NCO for 54th Troop Command. "Powerhouse is the backbone of this section."

Outside of work, Moorhouse is an avid hiker. In 10 months, he climbed all 48 of New Hampshire's 4000-foot mountains. He also volunteers on the NHNG Search and Rescue Team.

Moorhouse's passion for helping others will serve him well in future assignments, Robak said.

"He has unlimited potential. I see him being the next Automation Services Branch chief once he meets the requirements and becomes a warrant officer."



MUNSON, ROBERTS ARE BEST WARRIORS

By *Spc. Nicole Blake, 114th Public Affairs Detachment*



Pfc. George Munson



Staff Sgt. Bradford Roberts

Pfc. George Munson and Staff Sgt. Bradford Roberts out-soldiered a field of 10 competitors to win the 2024 Best Warrior Competition held Feb. 8 to 11 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke.

The New Hampshire National Guard infantryman and forward observer earned Soldier and NCO of the Year, respectively. Both secured a spot in the regional BWC later this spring. They bested seven fellow guardsmen including an airman, and three special force operators from Fuerza Armada de El Salvador.

It was the second BWC title for Roberts, who won in 2020 while serving in the Maine Army National Guard.

“Soldiers come here because they want to challenge themselves,” said NHARNG State Command Sgt. Maj. William Ferland. As part of their reward, the winners get their pick of an Army specialty school like Air Assault.

Events ranged from an Army Combat Fitness Test, rigorous physical and written tests, a professional board, warrior task lanes, land navigation, marksmanship, and a 12-mile ruck.

“The significance of the competition is really that the units and soldiers get to work together,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Caleb Smith, senior enlisted advisor for 54th Troop Command. “It’s how we build relationships and partnerships to continue making each other better.”

Prior to the start of BWC, organizers briefed the competitors on expectations, but it was the responsibility of the individual competitor to be physically and mentally ready.

“On drill weekends, I worked with the junior enlisted to brush up on skills,” Roberts said. He focused on weapons systems, claymore mine processes, and level one warrior tasks.

The Salvadoran soldiers, competing through the NHNG-El Salvador State Partnership Program, swept the mostly uphill ruck, finishing one, two and three.

“They are very proud to be representing their country,” said Sgt. 1st Class Raul Zubicary, SPP NCOIC. “They are recognized by their minister of defense.”



Spc. Zel Kerkel of Recruiting and Retention Battalion finishes a 12-mile ruck during the 2024 New Hampshire National Guard Best Warrior Competition on Feb. 11 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. Photo by *Spc. Nicole Blake, 114th Public Affairs Detachment*.



Special Force operators from Fuerza Armada de El Salvador proudly display their country's flag after sweeping the mostly uphill 12-mile ruck march in the New Hampshire National Guard 2024 Best Warrior Competition held Feb. 8 to 11 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. The soldiers continued a tradition of high performance in the annual event under the NHNG-El Salvador State Partnership Program. Photo courtesy of Fuerza Armada de El Salvador.



Staff Sgt. Bradford Roberts, a joint fire support specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 197th Field Artillery Brigade, notionally employs a Claymore mine during a graded soldier task during the 2024 New Hampshire Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition on Feb. 9 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. Photo by Spc. Nicole Blake, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.



Sgt. Victoria Fatukasi, vocalist for New Hampshire Army National Guard's 39th Army Band, captivates an audience of thousands while singing a cover of "Corazon Espinado" in Spanish at the Ilopango Air Show in El Salvador on Feb. 18.

GUNS N' WHO?

Story and photos by Sgt. Kelly Boyer, 114th Public Affairs Detachment

For the fourth time since 2019, the 39th Army Band returned to El Salvador to perform for thousands of spectators at the Ilopango Air Show on Feb. 17 and 18.

The largest annual aviation and aerobatic exhibition in Latin America has become a highly anticipated venue for the New Hampshire Army National Guard's traveling company of soldier-musicians. And their popularity among locals has continued to soar.

"It's amazing to feel like you're famous," said Sgt. Eliot Lawrence, band pianist. "Hearing thousands of screaming fans who showed up to enjoy our music is surreal."

For more than 20 years, the New Hampshire National Guard and El Salvador have fostered a model relationship under the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program. The band has added another dimension to what has been primarily a military-to-military exchange. Last year, they played at the U.S. embassy's July 4th celebration.

"We have had the opportunity to make a direct impact through our music," said Sgt. 1st Class David Selmer, drummer and production director for the 39th. "Our performances have been very popular in El Salvador, which keeps our relationship strong." The band played each evening of the weekend air show. The

sets were paired with a light display, smoke machine, and hot air balloon with a pulsing flame. The stage was flanked by stunning panoramas of the sun setting behind a volcanic mountain range.

"I love their performance," said Joselyn Sanchez, who attended the air show for the second time with friends solely to see the band. "Their energy makes me feel the songs."

Spectators wrestled for drumsticks thrown from the stage. Others vied for set lists while plenty of time was made for selfies and autographs.

"We had so much fun," said Camellia Recinos as she hugged the band's vocalist, Sgt. Victoria Fatukasi. She and her sister, Andrea, attended the show with their mother. "We are really happy we came because you are so good."

During the closing ceremony for the air show, director Francisco Sol presented the band with a propellor-shaped plaque. "The music was so incredible," he said. "We could see the passion in each of you. We really appreciate you being here."

In return, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Franklin Montenegro, commander of the 39th, gave Sol a band challenge coin.

"We love coming to this stage," Montenegro said. "We love the people in El Salvador and your gracious hospitality."

New Hampshire National Guard's 39th Army Band performs at the Ilopango Airshow in El Salvador on Feb. 18.



Sgt. Joshua Burpee, saxophonist and vocalist with the 39th Army Band performs at the Ilopango Air Show in El Salvador on Feb. 18.



Sgt. Elliot Lawrence, pianist for the 39th Army Band, performs a cover of "Paradise City," by Guns N' Roses at the Ilopango Air Show in El Salvador on Feb. 18.

GOOD & PLENTY

By Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO

A six-person aircrew from the 157th Air Refueling Wing treated thousands of spectators to KC-46 flyovers Feb. 17 and 18 at the Ilopango Air Show in El Salvador.

The aerial passes were in conjunction with a New Hampshire National Guard-El Salvador state partnership visit that included senior leadership meetings, donation of personal protective equipment, Humvee mechanic exchange and performances by the 39th Army Band.

“They said ‘Come down low and give us a show,’” said pilot 1st Lt. Taylor DiRocco.

And low they went.

Pilots dropped to an estimated 1,000 feet in their state-of-the-art refueler over throngs of visitors.

“It’s a way to contribute,” said Lt. Col. Paulo Morales, aircrew commander. “It’s part of our state partnership mission to collaborate.”



A six-person aircrew from the New Hampshire Air National Guard’s 157th Air Refueling Wing conducts a KC-46 flyover at the Ilopango Air Show on Feb. 17 in El Salvador. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.



From left, **Maj. Luke Huebener** and **1st Lt. Taylor DiRocco** of the 157th Air Refueling Wing pilot a KC-46 Pegasus from Pease Air National Guard Base to El Salvador on Feb. 15. A six-person aircrew transported a group of NH guardsmen for various engagements under the New Hampshire National Guard-El Salvador State Partnership Program. They also performed flyovers at the Ilopango Air Show. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.



From right, **Command Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Reiter** and **NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities** present **Col. Pablo Soriano**, chief of the Salvadoran Air Force, a framed print of a KC-46 aircraft Feb. 17 at the Ilopango Air Show in El Salvador. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



Thousands of spectators converge on the Ilopango Air Show in El Salvador on Feb. 17. The 39th Army Band performed two, hour-long performances and an aircrew from the 157th Air Refueling Wing conducted two KC-46 flyovers. The performances supported the New Hampshire National Guard-El Salvador State Partnership Program, now in its 24th year. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



From left, **Pfc. Rodney Quezada**, a wheeled vehicle mechanic for the 237th Military Police Company, assists **Sgt. Refrain Guzman**, a motor pool sergeant for the Salvadoran Cavalry Regiment, with draining transmission fluid from a Humvee on Feb. 16 in Sitio del Nino, El Salvador. Quezada was also one of the translators for the exchange. Photo by Sgt. Kelly Boyer, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.



New Hampshire Army and Air National Guardsmen gather with Salvadoran logistics chief **Lt. Col. Jose Figuerda**, center, and his staff after unpacking hundreds of pounds of personal protective equipment Feb. 17 in El Salvador. The PPE, donated by the State of New Hampshire, is slated for Salvadoran military medical personnel. It was transported the 157th Air Refueling Wing during a state partnership visit. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS

Private (PV2)

Canyon Batchelder
Sam Caldwell
Julian Chmiel
Olivia Cook
Christian Cordio
Austin Davison
Brendan Eddy
Andrew Fanti
Dion Flanders
Gurung Gurung
Liam Hanks
Jayden Hendrickson
Gavin Hunt
Sydney L. Heureux
Cyrus Lebron
Brady Legassie
Gavin Letourneau
Josephine Malloy
Halley Pierson
Addison Rodger
Tulio Santana

Private First Class

Michael Cleveland
Mason Creager
Luis Cruz Rodriguez
Vazquez Encarnacion
Adam English
Geoffrey Erickson
Edwin Feliz
Kiera Gardiner
Xavier Glidden
Corbyn Harzmovitch
Joseph Hebert
Brianna Lepage
Killian MacPherson
Amelia Magay
Adrian Mailloux
Marcus Marland
Ashley Michaud
Makayla Panzer
Logan Priesel
Ty Rivera

David Rodriguez
Logan Roe
Zachary Smart
Benjamin Smith
Gutierrez Teruel

Specialist

Parker Adams
Oyinkansola Adewoye
Moise Akili
Benjamin Antonellis
Tyler Biron
Nicole Bradley
Christopher Brown
Nadyan Byrnes
Renee Champagne
Marnie Crichton
Kathy Dang
Bradley Gamelin
Carson Geha
Kylie Hamilton
Jezelle Ann Michelle Josef
Dominic Lacasse
Joseph MacLeod
Jisoo Moon
Edward Moore
George Munson
Christian Nepa
Anh Ngoc Thien Nguyen
Khim Oli
Michelle Otgonbaatar
Jordan Post
Rowan Rakich
David Recupero
Cameron Rivard
James Rouillard
Jacob Savage
Matthew Seymour
Jake St. Cyr
Sean Throneberryperkins
Joshua Turpin
Alexandra Villers
Daniel Watts
Daryl Wilson

Sergeant

Jeremiya Andrade
Lucas Blanchette
Alan Burns
Tyr Davenport
Jason Iannitelli
Khai King
Connor Lagace
Ryan LeBlanc
Tyler Loukides
Tyler Mansfield
Khali McLean
Christian Peterson
Tyler Pischinger
Michael Rudewicz
James Small
Isaiah Stephens
Troy Utton
Ian Watt

Staff Sergeant

Justin Dixon
Laura Galvezlovo
Krystina Gibbons
Michael Olson
Jonathan Peters
Zachary Plante

Sergeant First Class

John Minahan
Steven Ainsworth
Michael Avard
Ryan Lavoie
Manner Manner
John Shepherd
Robert Sullivan

Master Sergeant

Andrew Grassie

First Sergeant

William Martin
Edward Wiggin

Sergeant Major

Michael Thibodeau

Command Sergeant Major

Caleb Smith

Warrant Officer

James Shelby

Chief Warrant Officer 2

Andrew Miquelon

Chief Warrant Officer 3

Shaun Delbene
Ryan Murphy
Paul Santana

Chief Warrant Officer 4

Wayne Silva
Joseph Villalon
Scot Yeanish

Second Lieutenant

Ethan DeAngelis
Paulette Niwewase

Captain

Elissa Ploski
Serena Shuter

Major

Jeremy Brann

Lieutenant Colonel

Barry Emmert
Mark Fazio
Craig Stansfield

Colonel

Jaren Boucher

Brigadier General

Erik Fessenden

AIR NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS

Airman

Jacalyn Cox
Faith Griffin
Matthew Mezza

Airman First Class

Richard Ochoa
Samuel Pittman
Warren Tucker

Senior Airman

Jagger Bell
Shelby Demingway
John Flynn
Cahleel Gentillon
Haley Lawrence
Kendall Lawrence
James Luttrell
Luke Murray
Rachel Pincince
Rebecca Pincince
Ethan Roberts

Kenny Rodriguez
Alex Rowe
Emma Schmidt
Kevin Simpson
Collin Small
Alexander Swanson
Zachary Yeaton

Staff Sergeant

Robert Alcocer
Max Allen
Lauren Brophy
Anthony DeFrancesco
Aspen Dyer
Faith Jenkins
Alaina Justice
Casey Maas
Julia McGonagle
John O'Neill
Meghan Ridley
Collin Shanahan
William Soucy
Cassandra Wachowiak

Technical Sergeant

Benjamin Bambrick
Alex Barnhart
Joseph Chase
Emma Danielson
Matthew Dawley
Andrew Gwinn
Michael Higgins
Matthew Hurley
Seth Joy
Katlyn Legerstee
Gary Morton
Casey Pridham
Nathan Ramsdell
Ricky Shaughnessy
Brian Sullivan
Michael Tagliareni
James Thorpe

Master Sergeant

Andrew Davis
Matthew Schultz
Nicholas Stack

Senior Master Sergeant

Lori Johnson

Captain

Kirsten Arends
Jason Churches
Taylor Dirocco
Alexander Horton
Alexander Waitner

Major

Zachary Ashley
Steve Kawonczyk

Colonel

Toby Pellenz

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1 Minuteman Way
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