



E@ease EXPRESS

Deployed Guard Soldiers connect home in novel way

Spc. Eric W. Liesse

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Score it a virtual victory for four Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers currently deployed to Iraq, and their families, thanks to a non-profit

organization and the Green Bay Packers.

The organization of "Guitar Hero" and "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare" Pro vs. GI Joe brought together four Green Bay Packers with four Soldiers from the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in a battle of "Guitar Hero" and "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare"

Family members of Sgt. Robert Spors, a 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldier from Janesville, Wis., take the rare opportunity to chat via web cam with their loved one overseas in Camp Virginia, Kuwait, during the Pro vs. GI Joe event at the Green Bay Packers' Lambeau Field Atrium Oct. 15. The non-profit organization allows deployed troops to play online videogames against different professional athletes, also letting their family to come see them in action. Wisconsin Army National Guard photo by Spc. Eric Liesse

despite the fact that they were thousands of miles apart.

Four Soldiers deployed with the Janesville-based Company A, 132nd Brigade Support Battalion of the 32nd Brigade traveled from Camp Bucca, Iraq to Camp Virginia, Kuwait for the event to connect with Green Bay Packer's kicker Mason Crosby, running back Ryan Grant, nose tackle B.J. Raji and defensive end Jarius Wynn at Lambeau Field Atrium Friday, Oct. 16.

Family members of two Company A Soldiers joined in. And Pro vs. GI Joe connected Soldiers and families via webcam and on-line gaming.

"It was amazing," said Sgt. Robert Spors, one of the Company A Soldiers taking part in the event. "It was the luck of the draw [being selected]. I don't have real good luck sometimes, so it was real nice." Also participating were Pfc. Trent Lien, Pfc.

Bryan Schneider and Spc. Brett Lange.

Dani Spors, wife of Sgt. Robert Spors, was very pleased with the event.

"It was almost like I was star-struck," she said. "I wanted to jump through the computer and give him a big hug."

Participating Packers had nothing but excellent words for the opportunity.

"I just want them to know that we care and we're so grateful," Crosby said after several rounds of intercontinental "Guitar Hero." "We get to see them, they get to see their families, and we get to be a part of it"

"[The families] get to know that for those few hours, [their Soldiers] are having a good time, they're not thinking about the mission, and they're making a connection home," said Addie Zinone, one of the organization's founders and an Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran. Watching fellow troops virtually "beat up" on the professionals, she said, is an added bonus. ☺





November 2009

Official Newsletter of the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard

<http://dma.wi.gov>

The Adjutant General:
Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar

Deputy Adjutant General Army:
Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson

Deputy Adjutant General Air:
Brig. Gen. John McCoy

Director of Public Affairs:
Lt. Col. Jackie Guthrie

At Ease Editor:
Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson

Joint Force Headquarters
Public Affairs

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

128th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Volk Field Combat Readiness
Training Center Public Affairs

How to Reach Us

E-mail: vaughn.r.larson@us.army.mil
Phone: (608) 242-3056 **Fax:** (608) 242-3051
Department of Military Affairs; Attn: Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson
2400 Wright Street; Madison, WI 53708-8111

Submissions:

For photo or story submissions, please call (608) 242-3056 or e-mail vaughn.r.larson@us.army.mil.

The Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard's At Ease Express newsletter is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of At Ease are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, or the Department of the Army or Air Force. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Officer.

From the TAG

I think you'll all agree with me when I say that October was quite the busy month! So many things have been accomplished and many more are planned as we near the end of the year. I am very proud of your efforts and truly appreciate all that you continue to do for our communities, state and nation.

As our communities and nation begin planning the many holidays during this time of year, I believe one of the most important days we can commemorate is Veterans Day and the sacrifices our men and women have made to earn the prestigious name "veteran." Our veterans are men, women; sons, daughters; mothers, fathers; black, white. We need each and every one of them to keep our nation safe.

Formerly known as Armistice Day, in commemoration of the end of World War I, Veterans Day is recognized at the 11th hour, on the 11th day of the 11th month. On this Nov. 11, I ask that you take a few moments to honor those who have served and are serving this wonderful state and nation. I continue to be amazed at the sacrifice and perseverance of our 10,000 Soldiers and Airmen.



Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar
The Adjutant General

The Wisconsin National Guard continues to be an operational force with our presence around the world. The 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Iraq, along with the 732nd CSSB and the 115th Fighter Wing. The 951st Sapper Company and the Embedded Training Team in Afghanistan.

While we have more than 3,500 Soldiers and Airmen deployed, we have 60 percent of our Guard here at home to respond to state emergencies. The Wisconsin National Guard is truly Always Ready, Always There, and I am proud to be a part of such an extraordinary organization.

Carry On.



128th ACS is back home

Approximately 60 members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron returned to Volk Field early in the afternoon of Oct. 5, concluding a deployment to Southwest Asia that began May 13.

"One-Two-Eight, welcome home," Brig. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, told unit members surrounded by cheering family and friends during a brief ceremony.

The 128th ACS, an extension of the Theater Air Control System, augmented the active component 71st Expeditionary Air Control Squadron at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Southwest Asia.

According to Lt. Col. Jerry Iverson, commander of the deployed element, the 128th ACS performed two missions during its deployment. Working in conjunction with Patriot batteries and other resources, the 128th helped ensure air defense for roughly 188,000 square miles of air space covering Iraq, Afghanistan and other Persian Gulf interests. The squadron also provided air battle management over the skies of Afghanistan from a remote location.

Air battle management involves coordinating aircraft for air-to-air combat and air-to-ground support as well as standard flight control and air refueling tasks.

"It was a very rewarding, but very difficult mission," Iverson said.

"We will never know — you will never know — how many lives you saved," Dunbar told squadron members. "But you should know your contribution was significant. I'll match you against any other unit."



Above, Brig. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general for Wisconsin, and Brig. Gen. John McCoy, deputy adjutant general for Air, greet members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron at their home base at Volk Field Monday, Oct. 5 following a deployment to Southwest Asia that began May 13.
Left, Tech. Sgt. Jason Kostreva reunites with his wife Kasandra and children Victor and Vivian. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson

Iverson agreed.

"We are the finest air control squadron in the Air Force, without a doubt," he told his Airmen. "I'd be proud to take them wherever I go."

Iverson's praise included squadron members who did not deploy. The unit maintained its stateside mission of supporting daily military flights in local airspace.

Tech. Sgt. Jason Kostreva, an aerospace ground equipment operator with the 128th ACS, said the deployment went well, and quickly. "I still missed the family," he said.

Iverson acknowledged that he turned 53 just the day before. "This is a great birthday present," he said.

Read the entire story at <http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/2009News/09119.asp>

Linking families with food, fun and football

Staff Sgt. Gretel Weiskopf

32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Families and friends of the Wisconsin National Guard gathered at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison Oct. 18 to Tailgate with the Troops — the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, that is.

Thanks to modern technology and lots of community support, more than 2,000 family members feasted on brats, hot dogs, pizza and chips and watched the Green Bay Packers cream the Detroit Lions — with their deployed Soldiers.

The event, “Tailgating with the Troops” was sponsored by Serving the 32nd, a private organization whose mission is to bring together the people of Wisconsin to say “thank you” to the Soldiers and families of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

“It has been almost a year to the day that we started planning for this event,” said Brian Hoag, project coordinator for Serving the 32nd. “We weren’t sure if we could pull it off it, but we did and it was worth it.” While originally focused on the 32nd Brigade, the tailgating party was open to family members of all deployed service members to thank them for their continued support and sacrifices.

The thanks came in the form of financial and food donations and a formal program with remarks from Gov. Jim Doyle, Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton, Green Bay Packers players and the Soldiers themselves.

“I want to thank each and every one of you,” Col. Steve Bensed, 32nd Brigade commander, told the crowd from Iraq. “Your outpouring of support has been incredible ... and we appreciate it.”

Members of the University of Wisconsin marching band and several entertainers also made appearances. But what was special about this tailgating party was the opportunity for families to use real-time video to connect with their Soldiers in Iraq.

“It was great to see him with such a good connection,” said Melissa May, who chatted with her husband Sgt. Tobias May of the 32nd Military Police Company via Skype as did more than 1,000 of the families in attendance. “He was promoted earlier this week but waited to tell me today so he could see my face.”

The event comes at a time when the Wisconsin Guard has about 3,700 Soldiers and Airmen deployed at various locations around the world.

“When we are home and living our everyday life you kind of feel like you are the only one going through this,” Melissa said. “But here you can see just how many families have someone deployed.”

For more information about Serving the 32nd visit their website at www.servingthe32nd.org



The Country Gals, above, a performing group from northern Wisconsin, sang the National Anthem while Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard presented the colors Sunday, Oct. 18 for Tailgating with the Troops. The event focused on thanking the families and friends of deployed Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers. Wisconsin Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Gretel Weiskopf





SGT. RYAN ADAMS

The entire Wisconsin National Guard family joins me in mourning the loss of Sgt. Ryan Adams, who died Friday, Oct. 2 in Logar Province, Afghanistan, from wounds suffered when enemy forces attacked his unit.

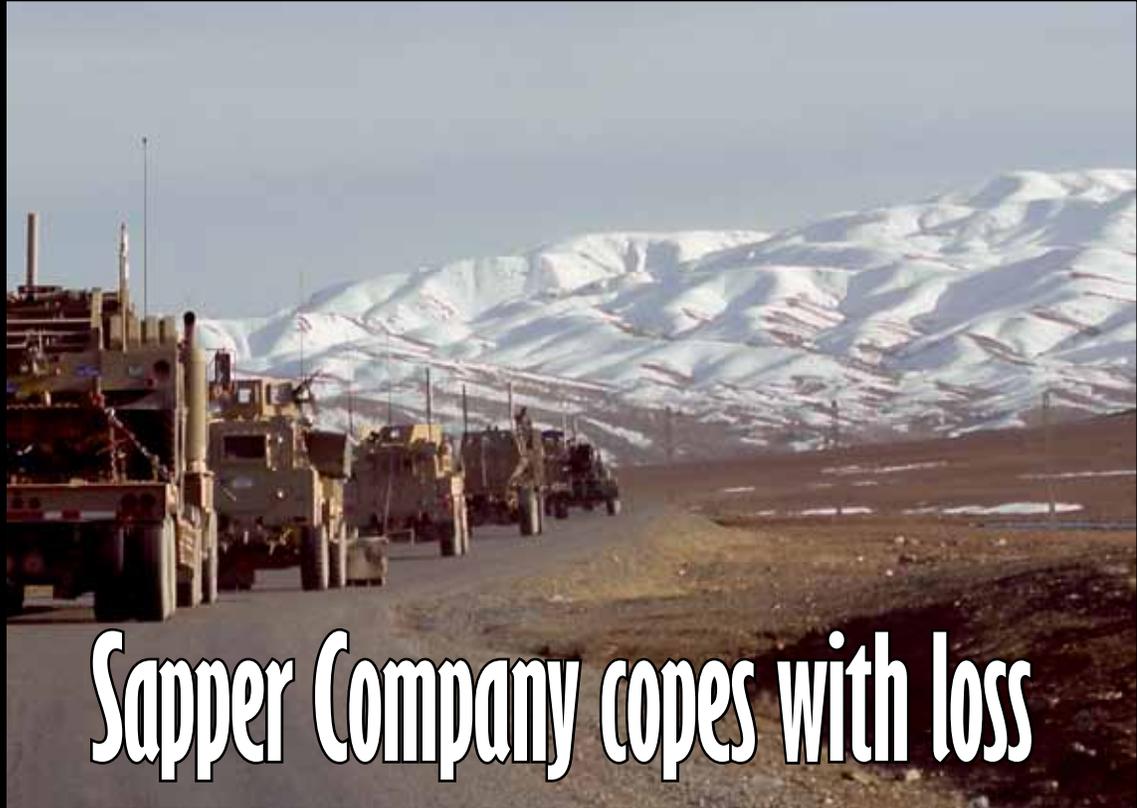
Sgt. Adams, 26, of Rhinelander, was deployed with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 951st Engineer Company (Sapper) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Approximately 100 Soldiers from the Rhinelander and Tomahawk-based unit deployed in November to Camp Shelby for several months before reporting to Afghanistan where they conduct route clearance operations for the Army's 101st Airborne Division. This was the second tour of duty for this unit, and Sgt. Adams, which also deployed to Iraq in May 2003 to April 2004 when it was Company C, 724th Engineer Battalion.

Seven other Wisconsin Guard Soldiers were injured in the same attack and are receiving medical care as needed.

While no words can soothe their pain, I pledge to our involved Soldiers and their families the full support of the Wisconsin National Guard during the difficult days and weeks ahead.

With all 10,000 of Sgt. Adams fellow Soldiers and Airmen of Wisconsin's National Guard, I salute his service to his community, state and nation; and I pray for the protection and safe return of all the Soldiers and Airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard now serving overseas in harm's way.

Brig. Gen. Donald P. Dunbar
The Adjutant General of Wisconsin



Sapper Company copes with loss

The 951st Engineer Company (Sappers) of the Wisconsin Army National Guard is tasked with clearing maneuver routes in Afghanistan. Conducting route patrols is part of how the unit accomplishes this mission. Wisconsin Army National Guard photo

As family and friends prepared to pay tribute to Sgt. Ryan Adams in Wisconsin, his friends and comrades-in-arms from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 951st Engineer Company paid tribute in a warrior's fashion — by continuing the mission.

"The men know Sgt. Adams would expect them to keep going," said unit 1st Sgt. Greg Fulton. "We lost a good friend in Sgt. Adams. We've got some guys who were nervous to get back on the horse — they've witnessed the worst part of war. But they're relying on each other for strength and comfort."

"The 951st is a close-knit group of Soldiers," said Capt. Brian Barth, company commander. "They understand that this can happen. But we continue with the mission."

Adams was killed by insurgents Oct. 2 while his route clearing platoon was on patrol in Logar Province, Afghanistan. He was commanding a vehicle providing security for his platoon when the attack occurred. Seven other Soldiers were injured in the same attack and are receiving medical care as needed.

Three Soldiers from the 951st knew Adams since childhood, and served as pallbearers during the "ramp ceremony," when his casket was loaded onto a plane to be brought to the United States.

"He's never going to be forgotten in the unit," Fulton said. "As long as we're alive, Sgt. Adams will be alive with us. We're continuing on with the mission, doing the best we can."

That includes ensuring that other Soldiers stay alive to complete their missions. The unit, based in Rhinelander and Tomahawk, puts in long days clearing

roadside bombs along routes in an approximately 6,000-square mile area of responsibility.

"We are in high demand due to the [improvised explosive device] threat," Barth said.

Besides hunting IEDs, the 951st searches key terrain features as well as bypass roads for major supply routes, alternative supply routes and combat trails, and gathers biometric data — name, date and location of birth, home of record, iris scans and fingerprints — from local residents. Missions can range from six to 56 hours in length. Since February, the unit has amassed more than 240 combat missions.

Barth praised his Soldiers for their hard work.

"We've got Soldiers that perform with the best of them," he said, noting that his unit works alongside active component Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division and the 82nd Airborne Division.

"How do you label success?" he continued. "It's tough losing a Soldier. Getting back on the road is success."

Fulton described Adams as a dedicated Soldier with a unique sense of humor who looked out for others.

"He didn't have a mean bone in his body," Fulton said.

"He was the model for the [non-commissioned officer]," Barth added. "He challenged people, regardless of rank, to perform their best. Sgt. Adams was a great individual."

The 951st mobilized Nov. 30, 2008 and are nearing the end of their deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. ☞

Air Force issues new rules for wearing fleece jacket

Brad Jessmer

Air Force Uniform Office Public Affairs

The 98th Air Force Virtual Uniform Board released a policy message here Oct. 9 for wearing the new Air Force sage green fleece as an outer garment for the airman battle uniform.

According to the message, the sage green fleece may only be worn over the ABU top, and is not authorized to be worn solely over a T-shirt, thermal underwear and similar undergarments, when worn as an outer garment.

According to the message signed by Lt. Gen. Richard Y. Newton III, deputy chief of staff for Manpower and Personnel at Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, authorized wear of the sage green fleece requires the following:

- a Velcro ABU print last name tape with dark blue block lettering, centered between the zipper and sleeve seam on the wearer's right chest,
- a Velcro ABU print U.S. Air Force tape with dark blue block lettering, adjacent to the name tape and centered between the zipper and sleeve seam on the wearers left chest,
- a Velcro subdued cloth rank with a solid sage green background, flushed and centered above the last name tape on the wearer's right chest,
- the fleece must remain zipped no lower than



- halfway between the name tape and the collar, the collar must be folded over and resting on the shoulder, chest and back when the zipper is not completely zipped,
- the bottom length of the fleece must be as close to length of ABU top as possible,
- the sleeves must be worn down at all times, and
- the fleece must be kept in a neat, serviceable and professional appearance at all times.

Items authorized for wear with the fleece include black or sage green leather, suede or knit gloves, black or sage green watch caps, black scarves that are tucked in, and black ear muffs.

The uniform board has authorized wear of the sage green fleece without name tapes and rank as an outer garment until Oct 1, 2010.

Both the black and the green fleece without tapes and rank may be worn as a liner to the all-purpose environmental clothing system, or APECS. The black fleece will phase-out Oct 1, 2010. New sage green fleece outer garments will be made available first to deployed Airmen.

Airmen with questions regarding this article should address them through their chain of command, or by calling the Air Force Personnel Center at 800-525-0102, or DSN 665-5000.

Air Force officials authorize BDU cold weather item to wear with ABUs

Brad Jessmer

Air Force Uniform Office Public Affairs

Air Force officials have authorized Airmen to wear the battle dress uniform cold weather Gore-Tex and field jacket with the current airman battle uniform.

The decision to authorize the coat stems from the demand of cold weather gear outweighing current

supply of the new ABU coat.

According to a message released by Air Force Manpower, Personnel and Services officials, "The No. 1 concern is the well-being of our Airmen."

In the message, Air Force officials extended the authority for major command leaders to authorize wear of the BDU Gore-Tex and field jacket with the ABU when other approved cold weather options were unavailable or unserviceable.

Supply of ABU cold weather garments is affected by delivery trends of the private industry sector. To ensure Airmen are equipped for adverse weather, the "mix and match" policy has been extended till May 1, 2010.

For any questions regarding this policy, please address them through you chain of command or by calling the Air Force Personnel Center at 1-800-525-0102 or DSN 665-5000.

Close-knit Airmen have explosive mission



Senior Airman John Rench, a munitions specialist at the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison, spray paints high-intensity flares used in the units F-16 aircraft during a Unit Training Assembly Sept. 19. Wisconsin Air National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Ashley Bell

Senior Airman Teri Diemel, a munitions system apprentice with the 115th Fighter Wing, Madison, performs routine service on a munitions trailer.



Staff Sgt. Matt Hamilton (left) and Senior Airman James Jacobson, both munitions maintenance specialists from the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison, assemble an AIM-9 Sidewinder missile.



Airman 1st Class Ryan Roth
115th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Working in a world of their own behind steel doors, earthen bunkers, barbed wire fences and security checkpoints, a handful of Wisconsin Air National Guard Airmen have nearly \$100 million worth of weaponry at their fingertips.

The task for the nearly 60 Airmen working at the Munitions Storage Area at the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison requires the highest level of attention to detail.

“The \$7 million MSA facility, built two years ago, is one of the finest in the Air National Guard,” said Master Sgt. Don Rabitz, a munitions shop chief.

The MSA shops include control, accountability, inspection, maintenance, line delivery, equipment maintenance and precision guided munitions.

“We have separate shops but we all work in one joint effort,” Rabitz said.

Rabitz is not alone in his assessment of the relationships at the MSA.

“We are a close-knit family,” said Tech. Sgt. Scott Klobucher, the non-commissioned-officer-in-charge of munitions line delivery and equipment maintenance section.

From bombs to bullets, they supply the 115 FW with the munitions needed to fulfill the wing mission. Additionally, they support the Air Force’s active duty munitions equipment needs.

Control receives munitions supports requests, accountability maintains the entire stockpile of munitions and inspection prepares weapons for safe use and ensures they are serviceable. Precision guided munitions tests, inspects and repairs all of the missiles used for the F-16s.

“Aircraft maintenance builds up the weapons,” Klobucher said. “They put fins on a bomb body, prepare 20mm ammo, and build different types of chaff or flare. When control requests munitions, line delivery transports weapons to the flight line.”

During drill weekends, their remote location presents some unique challenges for those working behind the fence. It is often difficult to get the whole unit to the mess hall for lunch on Guard weekends, Klobucher said.

“Instead of traveling to lunch to eat with the Wing, we make our own lunches together on drill weekends and even breakfast on Sunday mornings,” Klobucher said.

The close relationship of these men and women is evident both on and off base.

“We get together for dinner, play frisbee golf, and just like to hang out while off duty,” Rabitz said.

Recent deployments have lowered the number of Guardsmen working in the MSA but they are able to respond as the mission requires.

“We are handling the mission with a lot less people and that means everybody has had to step up and do extra work and everybody has been doing that,” Klobucher said. “We are taking on more responsibility and moving out of our ‘comfort zones’ and going to other sections to assist in whatever needs to be done.”

Challenge Academy students help former cadet in need

The cold and the rain could not dampen the enthusiasm in Spc. Jason Schulz's heart.

A few yards behind Schulz, dozens of volunteers were helping construct a 2,350-square-foot home specifically designed for him by the non-profit [Homes for our Troops](#).

When completed, the home in an upscale neighborhood in Eagle will feature counters, showers, doorways and other amenities suited for a man with Schulz's challenges. Almost two years ago — Nov. 7, 2007 — Schulz was an active-duty Soldier, an Abrams tank mechanic returning from a vehicle recovery mission in Mosul, Iraq when a roadside bomb ripped through the salvage and recover wrecker he was riding in. The blast nearly severed his right hand and took both legs.

Among the volunteers were 30 cadets from [Challenge Academy](#) at Fort McCoy — current students in the program Schulz himself graduated from in 2004, as a 17-year-old from West Allis.

"I was just having a hard time in high school," he said.

His mother, Teresa Amick, elaborated.

"He was on a bad road," she explained. "Gang stuff, hanging around the wrong people. He was stabbed in the leg one time and wouldn't tell me who did it. He had no structure."

That changed at Challenge Academy, which offers high school dropouts or habitual truants the chance to earn their high school equivalency diploma, learn life and job skills as well as how to become responsible citizens.

"It really helps a lot of people out," Schulz said. "It really helped me out. It helped me graduate high school, taught me values and leadership."

"He said when he went there, he learned what real morals were," his mother added. "He was very, very proud of himself — he got self-esteem. We kept on him to do something. He decided to join the Army at 17."

Schulz told the visiting cadets that basic training was "a walk in the park" after attending the Academy.

"It was a good experience," he said of the Academy. "I wouldn't trade it for anything. Trust me — you'll be a better person."

Academy Deputy Director Peter Blum said that a project such as this matches up well with one of the core principles cadets learn — community service.

"It's what we call a 'high payoff,'" Blum said. "They're helping out a fellow cadet who walked in their shoes. It couldn't fit any better."

Cadet Stewart Miller, 17, agreed.

"This is very important," he said. "Jason is our brother. He came to the Academy with the same problems, and that makes him family. We help out our brothers and sisters."

"It's always good to help a fellow cadet," said Cadet Mark Zimmerman. "He obviously needs this [house] very much."



Jason Schulz, left, a 2004 Challenge Academy graduate who lost both legs to a roadside bomb during a deployment to Iraq in 2007, speaks to current Academy cadets Oct. 22. The cadets took part in day two of a three-day build-up by Homes for our Troops, which is building a handicap-accessible home for Schulz at no cost to him. Wisconsin Army National Guard photos by Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson

Cadets from the Challenge Academy program at Fort McCoy lend a hand Oct. 22 during a Homes for our Troops construction project.

Amick said this is why she called the Academy to ask for their help during the three-day build-up.

"I wouldn't have called if it didn't mean so much," she said. "This is something [Jason] would have done. They learned to look out for each other at Challenge Academy. That's something that stayed with him."

Schulz and his wife Polina, an Army specialist at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, are expecting their first child in two months. He said he wants to go to college, and intends to get a power wheelchair when their daughter is born.

"I can't hold her and move around at the same time in this chair," he explained.

Schulz has yet to receive his prosthetics, and still uses a manual wheelchair. He said he is looking forward to walking again when he receives his prosthetics. His mother said she has seen the challenges her son faces in a conventional home.

"It's very heart-warming to know he'll have a roof over his head the rest of his life," she said.

That's because the house, estimated to cost \$275,000, will not cost Schulz a cent. According to Larry Archer, Build Brigade construction manager for Homes for our Troops, each home is built with volunteer labor and donated materials.

"I enjoy my freedom very much," said Archer, who has been with Homes for our Troops the past two years. "[This is] my way of giving back."

Blum said that is a message he wants his cadets to take away from this experience.

"This fits in with what we're trying to get these kids to understand," he said. "In the past they'd been taking from society, and now they're giving of themselves."



Thomas Johnson, above, a senior team leader for Challenge Academy, directs Academy cadets to the work site of a Homes for our Troops project in Eagle.





Camp Bucca's 3-Gun Competition Oct. 17 tested the physical and mental toughness of each competitor as they dive into a low crawl on the jagged gravel surface, left, making their way to the final shooting section of that stage. Below, each section of Camp Bucca's 3-Gun Competition was strategically designed placing non-hostile targets in close vicinity to the hostile threats, forcing each competitor to hone their tactical focus and eliminate all threats without any collateral damage. U.S. Army photos by Spc. Maurice A. Galloway

Bucca's best fired up for competition

Spc. Maurice A. Galloway
17th Fires Brigade

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE BASRA, Iraq – With speed and precision, Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Benzshawel, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, 17th Fires Brigade took home top honors in this year's 3-Gun Competition at Camp Bucca Oct. 17. The Appleton native edged out the closest of 69 other competitors by 2.19 seconds.

Airmen, civilians, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines from across Camp Bucca demonstrated their proficiency wielding a variety of weapons to include the M-9 pistol, M-4 carbine and M-500 shotgun in hopes of earning top bragging rights as the camp's top marksman.

"When I originally thought of the idea for this competition, I envisioned the amount of hard work that would have to be put in for this thing to work," said competition organizer Staff Sgt. Zachary Zuehlsdorf, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, from Oshkosh. "What I didn't anticipate was all of the competitors chipping in to help in every way imaginable, making this competition more efficient than I could have ever planned."

Zuehlsdorf said he set up the drills to reflect a vivid environment of real-time modern combat scenarios that U.S. forces could currently face.

When Zuehlsdorf first approached his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Brad Anderson, with the idea of hosting the competition on base, the commander was all for it. Anderson felt the event would be

not only challenging, but an opportunity for Soldiers to improve their weapons-handling abilities in an invigorating and exciting arena.

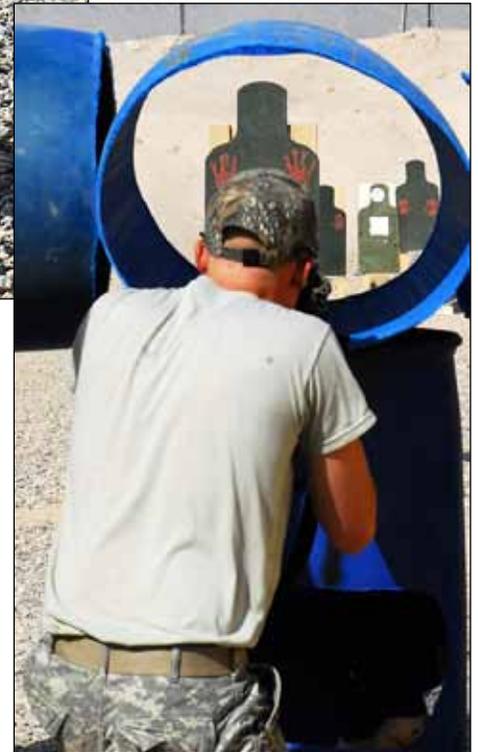
"In a firefight with the enemy, you only have seconds to change a magazine, seconds to move from one fighting position to the next," Anderson said. "Time is of the essence and this competition fully encompasses that."

The competitors were put through a thorough weapons proficiency test before they were allowed to compete. Each member was required to perform proper functions checks on all three weapons as well as fully explain the procedures to the range safety cadre.

The competition was comprised of four stages. Each stage was a timed event consisting of four different sections. Each competitor had to successfully place two kill shots in the hostile target or three shots in the target's non-lethal areas. The scoring system rewarded shooters for a combination of speed and accuracy, while penalizing competitors for safety violations.

Each section was strategically designed, placing non-hostile targets in close vicinity to the hostile threats, forcing each competitor to hone their tactical focus and eliminate all threats without any collateral damage.

"This training was much different than anything that I've ever encountered. My heart rate was up and my adrenaline was pumping from all the running," said Sgt. Curt R. Hensen, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, from Green Bay. "Fundamentals



played a huge part because it only takes one slow magazine change or one costly penalty in a competition. With this many skilled competitors, that can change everything." Henson placed third overall in the competition.

With a mere 3.3 seconds separating the first place from third place, Benzshawel admitted that along with his skill he needed a little more to push him past the rest of the competition.

"I was very confident in my abilities and I practiced my magazine changes, but when you're dealing with a field of competitors that are this evenly matched, you're going to need a little luck on your side," said Benzshawel. "Winning this means a lot to me. It's a big accomplishment and something I'm going to be proud of forever, but more importantly, this competition helped all of us become better prepared for the situations that we as troops may have to face in the future." 🇺🇸



Col. Steven Benseid (left) exchanges a handshake with Sameer Al-Haddad of the Iraqi government as Col. Martin Seifer and Haddad hold a ceremonial key to Freedom Compound in Baghdad Oct. 25. Wisconsin Army National Guard photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure

Red Arrow Brigade has key role in Baghdad's future

BAGHDAD — With a few pen strokes and hugs, and two very large keys, the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team officially transferred two large properties inside Baghdad's International Zone back to the Iraqi government.

"In terms of square footage of habitable structures, Essayons and Freedom Compound are the largest we've turned over so far," said the 32nd Brigade's Maj. Gregory Schlub, officer in charge of real properties for Joint Area Support Group-Central in Baghdad.

The two properties, formerly used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, total 35 acres and about 380,000 square feet of building space. They include 650 apartments, three business towers, a museum and seven villas.

"I think it's another very important day in the International Zone as we continue to turn properties back over to

the government of Iraq," said Col. Steven Benseid, commander of the 32nd Brigade.

Property transfers require much more than handing over the keys, according to Schlub.

"The most challenging part is to ensure that the property is acceptable to the government of Iraq, environmentally [and] structurally, and that we turn it over in a fully functional condition," he said.

"The handover of properties back from the coalition forces means a lot to Iraq," said Sameer Al-Haddad, secretariat of the Committee for Receiving Real Properties and Camps Office of the Prime Minister. He said these ceremonies signify Iraq's progress, step by step.

"It's great, it's a big job," Haddad said. "It's one of the jobs that is making you feel like you are doing great things to the country, so I'm really happy to do things for my country."

Schlub said the brigade is on

pace to turn 26 properties over to the Iraqi government by the end of their deployment.

Haddad said that he can see what these ceremonies mean to U.S. troops.

"I can see the happiness in the Americans eyes," he explained. "They are happy because they feel they have done their jobs — they helped the Iraqi army to stand up and they can hand over the security issue."

Joint Area Support Group-Central is responsible for securing and administering the International Zone, and for transferring most of the U.S.-controlled IZ properties back to the government of Iraq. The JASG-C is made up of Wisconsin Army National Guard soldiers from the headquarters of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, along with a small number of active duty U.S. Navy and Air Force personnel. 🇺🇸



John Lemke, above, one of two Lakeland College alumni inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame Oct. 9, fires a Wisconsin Army National Guard 105-mm howitzer to begin the Homecoming football game Saturday, Oct. 10. Below, Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Roberts fires a powder charge following a touchdown. Roberts is part of the Sheboygan-based Echo Company, Recruiting and Retention Command of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson

Deployed Guardsman inducts friend into hall of fame

When Ted Szymanski was notified he would be inducted into the Lakeland College Athletic Hall of Fame, he could think of only one person he wanted to deliver the induction speech — his best friend, Wisconsin Army National Guard Master Sgt. Mark Smith.

"I was privileged to play football with him," Szymanski said. "I've known him more than half my life."

But Smith is presently deployed to Iraq with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. So he recorded a video of the induction speech and e-mailed it from Iraq. The video was played during the Hall of Fame banquet Friday, Oct. 9.

"Ted played the game the way all the greats play the game — with his heart," Smith said in the video. "If you could count on one thing every Saturday, it would be that Ted would leave his heart and soul on the field. I was always so proud to be his teammate."

Szymanski said he was blown away by Smith's speech.

"There were very few dry eyes there," he said. "He was the brother my parents never gave me. If half the Soldiers are like Mark, then we're in good shape."

Smith's speech helped kick off the college's salute to the troops during its



Homecoming game the next day. Members of the U.S. Army offered personalized dog tags to fans, and members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard fired a 105-mm howitzer to start the game and following each Lakeland score.

Lakeland College, a Division 3-level private college in northern Sheboygan County, was one of the few NCAA schools selected to honor the military Oct. 10.

"It's a great honor," said event coordinator Dan Burke. "This could have

been done at a Big 10 school. We wanted to honor local troops that have deployed."

Several military units in proximity to Lakeland College have deployed in recent years, including Army National Guard units from Plymouth — Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery — and Fond du Lac — Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry — and an Army Reserve unit from Sheboygan, a detachment of the 330th Military Police Company. ☞

Painting possibilities through Officer Career Challenge

Pfc. Alyson Berzinski

112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Many people dream about being an officer in one of the greatest militaries in the world, but not many actually know what path to take on their journey to becoming a leader. Wisconsin Army National Guard officer recruiters recently answered this question for about 60 current and potential Soldiers at Fort McCoy during this year's Officer Career Challenge event Oct. 17.

Sponsored by Wisconsin Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention and hosted by the Wisconsin Military Academy, participants learned about commissioned and warrant officer opportunities and get a chance to participate in a variety of events and talk to people who know what it's like to lead.

Bill Schroeder, a former wide receiver for the Green Bay Packers, kicked off the event with a few words of wisdom.

"If you want to become a leader, an officer, if that's something you want to shoot for, well, that's a lot of hard work," he said. "But this is a great way to start." Schroeder, a Sheboygan native, has played against some of the best defenses in the National Football League as well as in Super Bowl XXXI.

"This is a great opportunity to get information to those who are interested in becoming an officer so they can make an informed decision about what training is best for them," said Capt. Daniel Kahlhamer, the officer in charge of this year's OCC and a Wisconsin Army National Guard officer recruiter.

Considering more than 3,300 of the state's Guard Soldiers are currently deployed with the 32nd Brigade and other various units, this year's turnout was still excellent, he said.

"The spark behind this program really is providing an environment to make the connection between us, who have the information, and the people out there who have an interest," Kahlhamer explained.



Sgt. Katelyn Justice, from the Marshfield-based 13th Medical Dental Detachment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, maneuvers through a paintball game during the Officer Career Challenge at Fort McCoy, Oct. 17. Wisconsin Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alyson Berzinski

"Doing it in an environment that is fun and entertaining and exciting kind of takes off some edge."

The fun and entertainment came in the form of a little friendly competition among participants during a paintball competition, football tosses and a rock climbing wall. Eligible attendees also received orientation flights in the Guard's newest UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters so they could learn about opportunities in aviation.

"This event really brought it back to me," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Bates, a military police officer with the Milwaukee-based 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. Bates participated in three semesters of Reserve Officer Training Corps classes before he enlisted in the Army National Guard. Attending the OCC gave him the opportunity to explore career options.

"I'll maybe meet some of the other officers I can talk to for mentorship and make some connections so I know all of the different rules and regulations for what processes I can go through to become an officer," Bates said.

Bates attended to gather more information to help decide between a

direct commission or attending officer candidate school. He hopes to become a nuclear biological chemical officer after he completes OCS and receives his degree in biology and chemistry in May.

"It's a good opportunity for people to get out and figure out which type of program will be best for them," said 1st Lt. James Schmitz, a Wisconsin Army National Guard Medical Command recruiter from Madison. "Whether it be through OCS, ROTC or going through a professional program, we've got a lot of different options and we really have something for everyone."

This event is designed to give Soldiers an idea of the different areas in the officer world, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Audra Bissen, a warrant officer recruiter from Madison. It gives them a chance to find their niche and take information back to their unit.

"We're just looking to reach out to the Soldiers that we already have and have them step up to that next level of leadership," Schmitz said.

For more information on opportunities as a commissioned or warrant officer in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, call Capt. Daniel Kahlhamer at 608-242-3176.  

Meritorious service

128th Air Refueling Wing takes part in community fire safety day

Ricardo Martinez
128th Air Refueling Wing

The 128th Air Refueling Wing Fire Department participated in Cudahy's Fire Safety Day at McDonald's, located at the intersection of College Ave. and Packard Ave., Saturday, Sept. 26.

128th Firefighters Barry Alberts and Ricardo Martinez participated in the event by taking their P-23 crash truck and displaying it to the general public. Alberts talked to the parents and children outside the crash truck about fire safety and the duties of being an airport fire fighter. Inside the P-23, Martinez gave a quick five minute class on the purpose of the crash truck during an aircraft fire emergency to the children.

Approximately 50 children went through the P-23 and asked plenty of questions of Alberts and Martinez. From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., there was never a moment without a line of children waiting to see the inside of the P-23. After 1 p.m., Ronald McDonald performed a show of fun and magic, while stressing the importance of fire safety.

When all was said and done, over 100 people showed up to this event, many of whom were intrigued by the P-23 crash truck. Alberts and Martinez received many compliments from parents, children, Cudahy's Fire Department, McDonald's staff and management, and even Ronald McDonald himself.

The McDonald's management staff said they will keep the 128th Fire Department in mind for future events with regard to fire safety and public awareness. ☺

128th Firefighters Ricardo Martinez left, and Barry Alberts pose with Ronald McDonald during Cudahy's Fire Safety Day. Firefighters Martinez and Alberts displayed the wing's P-23 crash truck during the event and provided tours and information. Submitted photo



Wisconsin Guard unit receives top Army award



The 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment accepted the 2008 Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Excellence in Journalism Award for its work on *The Wire*, the official publication of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, at the annual National Guard Bureau public affairs conference Oct. 28.

"We brought in a great staff, we were augmented with some strong journalists from the Navy, and we were witness to some key moments in history," said Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson, accepting on behalf of the 20-person Madison-based unit.

Larson served as editor of the weekly publication during the unit's deployment to Guantanamo Bay in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from March 2008 to March 2009.

The Wire included features on units or individuals serving in the Joint Task Force, informational stories about voting while deployed or new education benefits, and coverage of the military court hearings for terrorism suspects such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Salim Ahmed Hamdan and Omar Khadr detained at Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

The 112th MPAD was responsible for more than producing *The Wire*. The unit provided public affairs support for visiting dignitaries, and also worked closely with civilian media from around the world who travelled to Guantanamo Bay to cover detainee operations and court appearances.

The annual Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Journalism Awards competition recognizes excellence in military and civilian-employee journalism, both print and broadcast, for furthering the objectives of the Army's internal information program.

The 112th MPAD also received two first place and one third place National Guard Media Contest awards for work produced during their deployment at the Oct. 28 ceremony. *The Wire* received a first place award, and Larson received a first place award in the News Article category for a report on the Hamdan verdict and sentencing. Spc. Meghan Phillips received a third place award for a television news report on Guantanamo's post-hurricane support for Haiti. ☺



Veterans, Families, Retirees

Holiday mailing deadlines

The Christmas holiday mailing deadlines are now available on the Military Postal Service Agency website. Express Mail Military Service is available to selected military post offices. Check with your local post office to determine if this service is available to your APO/FPO address. PAL is a service that provides air transportation for parcels on a space-available basis. SAM parcels are paid at parcel post postage rate with maximum weight and size limits of 15 pounds and 60 inches in length and girth combined. For more information, contact your local post office. <http://hqdainet.army.mil/mpsa/xmas.htm>

Veterans Day theme, events set

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs announces Veterans Day ceremonies to be held statewide.

“The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs theme for this year is ‘They Stood for Us – Now Stand for Them,’” said Secretary John A. Scocos. “It is important that Wisconsin citizens take time on Veterans Day to honor veterans of all eras and to remember those who are currently serving our nation.”

In addition as part of Veterans Day, the 2007 Wisconsin Act 22, the state of Wisconsin has declared that the seven-day period that ends on Nov. 11 (Nov. 5-11, 2009) is designated as “Veterans Recognition Week” in Wisconsin and the week of November that starts on Sunday and ends on Saturday in which Nov. 11 falls (Nov. 8-14, 2009) is designated as “Hire A Veteran Week” in Wisconsin.

Veterans Day ceremonies being conducted throughout Wisconsin include:

10:30 a.m. – State Capitol in Madison, hosted by the Madison Veterans Council. A concert by VFW Band 1318 will precede the program. The colors will be presented by members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Speakers include Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle, U.S. Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin’s 2nd Congressional District, U.S. Army Reserve Brig. Gen. Marcia Anderson, vice-chair of the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs, and Don Jones, executive director of LZ Lambeau.

10:30 a.m. – Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Marden Center of the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. Speakers include Dan Naylor, member of the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs.

11 a.m. – The 46th Annual Veterans Day Parade in Milwaukee will be held Nov. 7 at 11 a.m. starting at 4th Street and Kilbourn Avenue in Milwaukee (see www.veteransdayparade-milw.org).

11 a.m. – Maurer Hall of the Wisconsin Veterans Home in Union Grove. Speakers include Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary John A. Scocos and Brig. Gen. Dominic Cariello, assistant adjutant general for readiness and training for the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Due to construction last year, no ceremony took place in 2008 at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at the Union Grove site; it should be noted that this year’s ceremony for 2009 will be held at the veterans’ home instead of the cemetery.

1 p.m. – Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Spooner. Speakers include Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Andrew Schuster, public affairs director of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran Sgt. Gabe Schauf of New Richmond.

All Day - The Wisconsin Veterans Museum will also be open on Veterans Day from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The museum is a free public educational activity of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and is located at 30 West Mifflin Street across from the State Capitol. For information about the museum programs and current exhibits visit the museum website at www.museum.dva.state.wi.us.

www.museum.dva.state.wi.us.

For more information about Veterans Day and ceremonies taking place throughout the state, go to www.WisVets.com/VeteransDay, see WDVA Events webpage at www.WisVets.com/Events, or call 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387).

Relationship seminar Nov. 13-15

About 50 percent of the Army’s Soldiers are single and most will get married while on active duty. If you’re a single Soldier, you may also be far from home, lonely, and faced with the uncertainty of imminent deployment. These pressures can lead to hasty decision-making when choosing a life partner.

A supportive mate is extremely important - so the Army is committed to helping you learn how to make good relationship choices by offering the Strong Bonds Single Soldier program. With this program, you and other Soldiers will attend training off-site for a retreat weekend. In addition to relevant teaching and skills training, Strong Bonds weekends include time for relaxation, recreation, fellowship, and fun.

Strong Bonds programs are offered by Army chaplains with the full support of your commanding officer. You’ll gain practical, useful information based on a nationally recognized curriculum that’s been carefully chosen. You’ll learn to examine priorities, manage mate-choosing patterns, and learn to evaluate a relationship’s potential for long-term success.

The Strong Bonds Single Soldier program is designed to help you establish relationship goals and gain essential skills to help you make a good choice prior to picking a partner for life.

Why should I consider attending a P.I.C.K A PARTNER Workshop?

P.I.C.K is dedicated to building and strengthening relationships before and after marriage. The heart of a vibrant relationship is a *strong bond of love*. You will find that the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) provides a picture of love and closeness. When you understand what produces the feelings of love in your relationship, and how these dynamics work together, then you can manage your relationship--healing hurts and deepening intimacy.

Will I be expected to tell a bunch of strangers what my problems are?

No. This is not group therapy. It is an educational and practical application opportunity to learn what works in picking a partner. It’s not necessary to share short-falls with the group. Your confidentiality is important and will be protected.

Is this a religious program?

No. No particular denominational teachings are included in “P.I.C.K.”

Single Service members: Can I get paid to go?

If service member is on duty status, the unit may cover using a travel order. If units do not place service member on duty status, the family program can reimburse single service members for mileage only using an ITO; they will not receive duty pay.

What does the workshop cost?

It’s free! People ordinarily pay \$150 for the workshop and materials and the total cost of the retreat, including hotel and food can easily exceed \$300. Thanks to special funding, however, this workshop is provided at no cost. The hotel expense and meals will be provided at no cost.

Room reservations will be completed by the Family Program Office. The information will be gathered from the Registration Form, so ensure it is filled out correctly and completely. Any questions refer to Carolyn Morgan at 1-800-292-9464. Credit card will be required at check-in for incidentals.

The workshop runs from 5 p.m. Friday to 3 p.m. Saturday. Late arrivals will only miss the social and dinner. Instruction begins at 8 p.m. Friday.



Parting shot

Master Sgt. Kevin Pradarelli greets his daughter Madison on the tarmac at Volk Field on Monday, Oct. 5. Pradarelli was among approximately 60 members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron who returned to their home base at Volk Field Oct. 5 following a deployment to Southwest Asia that began May 13.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson