Click here to find out how Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers fared in the Region 4 Soldier and NCO of the Year competition at Fort McCoy.
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spec. Eric W. Liese
From the TAG

Our operational tempo has never been higher. We just completed a year in which more than 40 percent of our Guardsmen — Army and Air — deployed to a combat zone. We suffered two casualties during this time — one combat and one non-combat — with the vast majority of our force now home with their loved ones. It is a tragic irony to celebrate the safe return of our Soldier or Airman from the combat zone, only to stand at a memorial service a few months later following an accidental death.

Such losses are unbearable to the service member’s family and deep wounds to all of us. We are his or her battle buddies or wingmen. Unbearable to be sure, but magnified when we realize that some of these losses were preventable.

Across the nation, our non-combat loss of life is alarmingly high. It has caused the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force to call for a stand-down day. Sadly, we in Wisconsin have been affected with multiple deaths and injuries.

Since the beginning of 2010 six members of the Wisconsin National Guard have died and two others have been seriously injured due to inappropriate actions on their part or on the part of others.

The plain truth is that leaders can preach safety, but speaking and listening are no substitute for doing — we all must practice safety, each and every day. We need to practice risk management because it is not enough to think of our own actions, we must anticipate the actions of others.

Many of our non-combat losses have been caused by people, other than our Soldiers and Airmen, acting irresponsibly. We have to stay on point watching for the driver who has had too much to drink or the driver who is so intent on texting the next ‘tweet’ that they cross the yellow line.

Bottom line — you are too important to your family and the National Guard to take chances. We train hard, work hard, play hard — but, there is no excuse for taking unnecessary risks. This is just plain common sense.

In this edition of @ease there are numerous links to tools, policy, and resources for your information and in some cases for your compliance. If you have questions, ask your commander or first shirt. If there is something we should add — speak up.

Serving in the National Guard requires sacrifice and for many of our comrades, it has required the ultimate sacrifice. It does not require needless loss of life. We can fill a vacancy, but you are irreplaceable.

Click on photo to see Brig. Gen. Dunbar video on safety

2 June 2010
Lt. Col. Jose M. Ortiz, Chief, Preventive Medicine, Army National Guard

Resiliency is a common theme in much of the news today. Stories of personal and team resiliency permeate headlines and pull readers closer to real-life stories of overcoming hardship.

The military is no exception in embracing resiliency in challenging times, and the term has become ingrained in the military consciousness. There is now a more vocal call for strengthening resilience in our Soldiers and families, particularly as they face multiple deployments and uncertainty due to a sustained high operational tempo and greater federal budget constraints.

Statistics show that stress and pressure are taking a tremendous toll on Army National Guard (ARNG) Soldiers and their families:
- The suicide rate in the ARNG is about twice the rate from a year ago. Thirty-eight percent of Soldiers report psychological symptoms at 90-120 days after deployment; rates may be as high as 49 percent in the National Guard.
- Up to 17 percent of combat Soldiers may be at high risk from major mental illnesses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or major depression, while Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is found in about 20 percent of injured troops.
- In 2006, 20 percent of married Soldiers planned to divorce or separate after a 12-month deployment.
- Mental health issues are devastating and costly for both the military and for civilians, with an estimated annual indirect cost of $79 billion, with $63 billion a direct result of loss of productivity.

The unique burdens and responsibilities placed on combat leaders, the continued need to cross-level Soldiers to fill unit rosters, the dispersion of ARNG Soldiers in remote communities after deployment, and “compassion fatigue” among our medical professionals and chaplains, all combine to produce uniquely challenging stresses and strains in our states and territories.

In addition, with about 40 percent of the Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom coming from the reserve components, such challenges and concerns are pushing the ARNG and others to take action.

The ARNG’s 2010 Decade of Health campaign focus is “Ready & Resilient.” As in past years, DOH is fully supported by the ARNG director and will continue to deliver education and resources that enhance resiliency and boost medical readiness in the ARNG.

The 2010 Ready & Resilient campaign materials are available 24/7 at the DOH web site, www.decadeofhealth.com. The site provides essential tools and is a central resiliency resource for the ARNG.

All Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers are required to complete the Global Assessment Tool, which can be accessed at http://www.army.mil/csf/index.html, by Sept. 30, 2010. Soldiers on Title 10 status as of March 15, 2010 have until May 31, 2011 to complete the GAT.

The GAT is a survey-based instrument used to assess Soldiers on the dimensions of physical, emotional, spiritual, social and family fitness. Developed by military and civilian university subject matter experts, the GAT comprises a series of questions drawn from scientifically validated scales. Administered online through AKO, it takes up to 30 minutes to complete and rapidly estimates an individual’s fitness in these five dimensions of strength.

When the survey is completed, Wisconsin Guard Soldiers are strongly encouraged to use the results to complete recommended training modules, tailored to meet personal needs as identified in the GAT, within 12 months.

The GAT is intended to encourage post-traumatic growth, as opposed to developing post-traumatic stress disorder. The survey results cannot be accessed by others and will not be used as a selection tool for promotion.
JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq — Farewell, Eagle. Welcome aboard, Badger.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 724th Engineer Battalion officially replaced the 18th Airborne Corps’ 37th Engineer Battalion during a transfer of authority ceremony May 22, and also changed the name of the mission from Joint Task Force Eagle to Task Force Badger. The 724th will support the 36th Engineer Brigade, which itself arrived in theater in April.

“We are privileged to work alongside this brigade with its proud and distinguished history,” said Lt. Col. David O’Donahue, Task Force Badger commander. “We look forward to the opportunity to contribute to that history. Together we will do great things here in Iraq.”

In addition to serving as the higher command element for engineer units in Iraq, the 36th Engineer Brigade oversees training for Iraqi army engineers. The outgoing 37th Engineer Battalion, for example, partnered with the 5th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment and the Headquarters Field Engineer Regiment Strategic Bridge Company.

Other highlights from the JTF Eagle deployment include the construction of the Baqubah Landfill, emplacement of the Mabey Johnson Float Bridge in Taji, nearly 4,000 investigations of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), unexploded ordnance (UXOs) and other explosive hazards, and clearing hundreds of miles of road during the course of nearly 5,000 hours on route clearance patrols covering a cumulative distance of more than 2,200 kilometers of road. Additionally, the battalion maintained all military bridges north of Baghdad and constructed more than 11 Southwest Asia huts.

Lt. Col. Paul Huszar, 37th Engineer Battalion-JTF Eagle commander, thanked the commanders of the 555th Engineer Brigade, 194th Engineer Brigade and 36th Engineer Brigade for enabling the 37th’s success while providing multiple opportunities for the battalion to excel. Huszar indicated the success of the battalion can be attributed to the Soldiers from across JTF Eagle.

“To all of these phenomenal teammates, you each helped make our vision of the U.S. Army Airborne Knife a reality,” Huszar said. “I could not be more proud and honored to serve as your commander.”

This transition of authority ceremony marks the beginning of the 724th’s second deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Task Force Badger is composed of the 228th Engineer Company from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, the active Army 617th Engineer Company from Fort Lewis, Wash., the 950th Clearance Company from the Wisconsin Army National Guard and the 1013th Engineer (Sapper) Company from the Puerto Rico National Guard.

The 739th Multi-Role Bridge Company from the Army Reserve is also joining the battalion in theater for the deployment.

The 724th Engineer Battalion was mobilized on March 5. The unit conducted training at Fort McCoy before deploying to Iraq in late April. Upon arriving in Iraq, Task Force Badger Soldiers spent nearly three weeks with their Joint Task Force Eagle counterparts learning to apply their training to their specific area of operations. This training consisted of a type of job shadowing better known as “left seat-right seat” training, as incoming units first observe the mission and then are observed performing mission tasks by the outgoing unit.

The incoming unit must be certified as mission capable by the outgoing unit prior to the transfer of authority.

See additional stories about the 724th Engineer Battalion at:

Lt. Col. David O’Donahue, 724th Engineer Battalion commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Genz unfurl the battalion colors during a transfer of authority ceremony May 22 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The 724th, or Task Force Badger, is assuming control of an engineer mission from the active Army’s 37th Engineer Battalion. 724th Engineer Battalion photo by 1st Lt. Peter M. Owen
After spending approximately 11 months delivering supplies in Iraq and transferring military equipment back to the United States or laterally to Afghanistan, it would take more than bad weather to keep this Wisconsin National Guard unit from making it back home.

The Tomah-based 732nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion Headquarters Company, with approximately 80 Soldiers, arrived by bus at Volk Field at approximately 10 p.m. April 24, where they spent about an hour with family and friends before heading to Fort McCoy to demobilize. The unit was originally to land at Volk Field, but poor weather translated into a Milwaukee landing and a bus ride to Volk Field. The arrival was later than planned, but the Soldiers were well-received nonetheless.

“It was overwhelmingly positive to see the Soldiers and their families reunited,” said Lt. Col. John Blaha, 732nd CSSB Headquarters commander. “To see parents pick up their kids and the interaction with their loved ones was definitely worth waiting a few extra hours.”

Master Sgt. Douglas Raabe, acting sergeant major for the deployment, noted the unit did not let the weather dampen the mood.

“I was really impressed that everyone’s spirits stayed high through all the travel complications,” he said.

Marie Tarantino, who married Sgt. Paul Tarantino of the 732nd CSSB Headquarters Company just before the unit deployed, admitted to feeling butterflies during the wait for the Soldiers to arrive.

“I was overwhelmed when I saw him,” she said. “I just can’t wait for him to come home after his debriefings. I’m really proud of everything he did over there to help — I know he was very happy to do his part for the U.S. Army and I’m so proud that giving up this time was worth it for all he did.”

Hearing from family members that their Soldiers were hungry following their travel delay, Mike and Gwen Morgan — the owners of the Homefront Travel Mart in Camp Douglas, just across Interstate 94 from Volk Field — donated 80 sub sandwich box lunches. Gwen said employees volunteered their time to come in late in the evening and prepare the meals.

“My husband is retired Air Force,” she explained. “Just to see these families wait for their service members to return, and to know what those service members go through, I think it’s the least we can do. We’d do it again if we had to.”

The 732nd CSSB Headquarters Company left Tomah in early May, 2009, for mobilization training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., and assumed command of its logistics mission in Iraq in mid-July. Ordinarily overseeing about 500 Soldiers, the 732nd CSSB was in charge of up to 1,200 Soldiers at one time — as many as 15 company-sized elements fell under the 732nd’s direction during its deployment.

“We had the biggest battalion in Iraq, and the amount of logistics in and out of Iraq was unbelievable,” Raabe said. “They handled it very well. They stayed professional throughout the entire deployment and they’re all highly experienced.”

Blaha agreed.

“[Our Soldiers] were constantly getting positive remarks from the leadership of the 13th Expeditionary Sustainment Command for the quality of work and the pride they had while accomplishing it,” he said.

The Wisconsin Air National Guard would see a modest increase in civilian and military personnel as well as aircraft in the next fiscal year, under a proposed force structure realignment announced May 11 by the Air Force.

This Force Structure Announcement addresses the Air Force’s Fiscal Year 2011 force structure, realignment and management actions supporting President Barack Obama’s 2011 budget submission. The document specifies the force structure changes experienced by the active duty, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard.

All the Wisconsin Air Guard gains in the 2011 proposal are slated for the 128th Air Refueling Wing, based at Gen. Mitchell Field in Milwaukee. The unit stands to gain 12 full-time National Guard positions, 41 part-time or drill status positions, and 32 civilian technician positions. However, decreased maintenance requirements at the Air Guard base associated with a drop in programmed flying hours will result in the loss of three civilian technician jobs, leaving a net gain of 29 civilian technicians.

The overall strength increase is due to the proposed addition of three KC-135R Stratotankers, or air refuelers, which would bring the total at Mitchell Field to 12.

Brig. Gen. John McCoy, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, said the increase in manpower and aircraft for the 128th Air Refueling Wing is not unexpected, as it was first outlined in the Base Realignment and Closure implementation of 2005.

“The Air Force continues to support new and emerging missions while making every effort to remedy the stress experienced by critically manned career fields,” said Gen. Norton Schwartz, Air Force chief of staff. “This realignment emphasizes the strength and synergy of the total force — active duty, National Guard and Reserve — putting the right skills in the right place.”

Schwartz said these initiatives would continue to make more efficient use of Air Force resources and savings to the U.S. taxpayer over the long term.

An F-111F aircraft approaches the refueling boom of a KC-135E Stratotanker of the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, during Open Gate ’89, a Joint Chiefs of Staff/NATO exercise.

An F-16 Fighting Falcon is refueled by a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 128th Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, during Red Flag Exercises held in February 2007 at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. The 128th ARW could gain three more stratotankers under a proposed force structure realignment in 2011. Photo courtesy 128th Air Refueling Wing.
Wisconsin Airman serves entire installation in Southwest Asia

Master Sgt. Scott Sturkol
380th Air Expeditionary Wing

An Airman assigned to the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison is more than halfway through a six-month deployment that began in January, when he volunteered to leave his Middleton home, friends and family, and a job that he loves to gain experience as a military contractor.

Tech. Sgt. Tyson Hall’s hometown motto in Middleton is the “Good Neighbor City.” As a contracting officer with the 380th Expeditionary Contracting Squadron (ECONS), Southwest Asia, Hall also might be considered a “good neighbor” to the many people he supports throughout the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing.

“If you got it, we bought it,” said Hall. “As a contracting officer, we appear to be ‘behind the scenes’ career field within the Air Force. However, we are involved with every squadron or group on base in one way or another.”

Hall said the 380th ECONS mission is separated into three areas to service the majority of base acquisitions — commodities, construction and services.

“I work within the commodities flight with three other contracting officers purchasing for all other squadrons and groups,” Hall said. “We purchase items per the customer’s request, while remaining within the guidelines as established, and get these items in the hands of the end users as soon as possible at a fair and reasonable price with the best quality commercially available. The workload and days are long with most guys staying here till midnight — six days on and one day off.”

In a deployed environment, Hall said the majority of base purchases are directed through the contracting squadron.

“That’s done to ensure a streamlined and efficient transaction for a broad range of services, supplies and construction projects,” Hall said. “These purchases range from the cleaning of restrooms, providing personnel for food services, construction of living quarters and the installation of slide barriers and traffic spikes. It also includes routine purchases of office furniture, cleaning supplies, medical supplies, security equipment and a variety of other items.”

Tech. Sgt. Ryan Johnson, 115th FW contracting officer and one of Hall’s coworkers at Traux Field, said Hall has gained a lot of experience while working at the fighter wing despite only working there part-time as a traditional Guard member.

“I believe Tech. Sgt. Hall’s experience overseas is directly related to his positive attitude, eagerness to learn and his ability to catch on quickly,” Johnson said.

Hall, who began his military career with the Army National Guard as a transportation specialist, said he soon realized the benefits the Air Force and the Air National Guard had to offer. Hall reenlisted to the Air National Guard in 2004 and said he is enjoying his time in theater while deployed.

“I feel fortunate and privileged, to be located in the best squadron on base and working alongside with the best active duty contracting officers the Air Force has to offer,” Hall said.

It’s a quiet day at the battalion aid station at what is known as Coalition Operation Location Freedom at Fort McCoy. Staff members on duty occupy their time with small tasks.

Suddenly, a call comes in from the operations cell that wounded battalion Soldiers will be coming in following attacks on their patrols. Aid station staff members gather around the radio to hear the nine-line medevac calls coming in from the field — a total of eight Soldiers will be at the station in about an hour for treatment.

Everyone springs into action — some are assigned to go get medics who have just been relieved and are getting ready to go to bed after a long shift, others arrange the aid station tent for what will be a busy next couple of hours.

All that, along with the “wounded” Soldiers that fill the tent in the next hour, is part of a mass casualty training exercise that aid station staff members go through during mobilization training. They are with the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 724th Engineer Battalion, which deployed to Iraq April 22, nearly three weeks following the exercise.

The battalion aid station crew, with help from medics with the Puerto Rico Army National Guard’s 1013th Sapper Company and medics and combat lifesavers from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard’s 228th Engineer Company, do triage on the notional casualties outside the tent before bringing them in for treatment in the necessary order.

The core battalion aid station staff has very little deployment experience, but one of their noncommissioned officers, Staff Sgt. Dave Eischen of Milwaukee, is very pleased with the group that’s been assigned to him.

“My job is to get these guys trained and up to speed as much as possible,” said Geissinger. “We’re kind of blessed in that we really don’t have any duds here.”

The medical officer, Maj. Gregory Geissinger of the Wisconsin Medical Command, is a medic looking to be a flight medic when she returns from this deployment. Currently going to school to be a fire medic, Schiro volunteered for this deployment.

“I’m not very worried, though” Schiro said. “We fit in with each other so well. I’m pretty confident about everything.”
128th Air Control Squadron welcomes new commander

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue
Wisconsin National Guard

For the first time in nearly 15 years, a new commander leads Wisconsin’s 128th Air Control Squadron. Lt. Col. Gerry Iverson formally assumed command of the ACS during a change-of-command ceremony at Volk Field May 1.

Iverson thanked his fellow Airmen and Wisconsin National Guard leaders for the trust and opportunity to lead such a great unit. He said the significance of the change of command is less about himself and more about the unit.

“We’re closing another chapter in the illustrious career of the 128th Air Control Squadron and we’re opening a new one,” Iverson said.

Iverson assumed command from the 128th’s longest-standing commander since the unit’s inception in 1947. Lt. Col. Herb Dannenburg will retire following 28 years of service — the last 15 leading the air control unit.

Dannenburg thanked his Airmen and their families, and Wisconsin military leaders for their support over the years. He also offered some promising words to his successor.

“If your stint as commander turns out to be half as good as mine, it’s going to be a great and awesome job,” Dannenburg said.

The 128th is a mobile radar/communications unit that supports air operations from the ground. The 128th has more than 125 traditional Guard members and about 30 full-time employees. The unit most recently returned in October from a deployment to Southwest Asia but has conducted multiple deployments in support of the war on terror since 2001.

Volk Field Commander Col. Gary Ebben pledged his support for Iverson and said he expects the great work from the 128th will continue.

“I have just extreme confidence in Col. Iverson,” Ebben said. “I think the 128th ACS is very fortunate to march forward with him as the leader.”

Iverson, who hails from a small, rural town in southeastern Wisconsin, said he is proud of what he’s been able to achieve thus far. He also acknowledged some keys to success that will help him lead the 128th in the future.

“Never in my 35 years did I ever think this would happen,” Iverson said. “It just goes to show a little bit of hard work and a little bit of dedication can take you a long way.”
Air Guard security forces train as they fight

Senior Airman Ryan Kuntze
128th Air Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — Five calm Airmen huddled together in the spring morning air.

Weapons in hand, the Airmen discussed their objective: to recon various points on the perimeter of Gen. Mitchell International Airport.

With their plan made, the five Airmen moved with caution and experience. They were expecting resistance during their mission.

Such was the training atmosphere at the 128th Air Refueling Wing as security forces team members conducted their annual training on May 1.

The training gave security forces team members the opportunity to refresh their valuable combat skills, which could be used at home station or during a deployment, a security forces representative said.

Most of the training events incorporated techniques and information that apply to off-base missions in non-urban environments, but the training situations did enhance teamwork and the ability to work as a cohesive unit in any situation, the representative said.

The training was conducted with the use of the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System, or MILES gear. These devices allow for the use of simulated ammunition, and they can identify an Airman as a target or victim of an enemy shooter by emitting a high-pitched noise.

Training scenarios utilized proper compass use, land navigation techniques, reactive fire to near-ambush situations, and combat life saver skills, the representative said.

“In addition to the [deploying] teams, we think it’s important to keep all teams up on their training,” said Master Sgt. Mark Warner, the 128th security forces training manager.

Warner said the training environment used by the 128th security forces squadron is identical to down-range training and techniques.

“We learned this from the Army, and this is the way we do things,” Warner said.

In addition to conducting field training, security forces team members performed their weapons qualifications, said Master Sgt. Matthew Knight, a 128th security forces combat arms training and maintenance instructor.

Team members qualified with the M-4 assault rifle and the M-9 sidearm using simulated-distance targets at the on-base range, Knight said. Other weapons the team members train with include the M-203 grenade launcher, the M-249 squad automatic weapon and the M-240B crew-serve weapon, he said.

Security forces weapons qualifications differ from main-base Airmen’s qualifications by introducing shooting-in-movement scenarios and by allowing the team members to operate their weapons ambidextrously, Knight said.

Weapons training is conducted annually or as needed for deployment purposes, Knight said.

The day’s field training concluded with the successful completion of the reconnaissance mission.

By being proactive in their defensive efforts and utilizing their collective experience, the security forces team members were able to mitigate the loss of life, subdue their enemies and end the day with the knowledge that they are prepared to perform their duties in any global environment.
Eleven Soldiers in the Chippewa Falls-based 724th Engineer Battalion-Task Force Badger celebrated Mother’s Day differently this year than in years past.

Battalion Commander Lt. Col. David O’Donahue and Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Genz wanted to make sure all the moms deployed with Task Force Badger would still be recognized on the holiday that honors them. The 11 Soldiers in question arrived at the battalion headquarters May 9 without any idea what was in store.

“We wanted to do something special for these young women,” O’Donahue explained. “Their situation is so special because they are young mothers with young children. Everyone that deploys makes sacrifices — however, their sacrifices are unique.”

O’Donahue and Genz greeted the women, wished them a happy Mother’s Day and announced that they would be treated to a Mother’s Day dinner. In addition to the military dining facilities, Joint Base Balad features commercial restaurants with options available for purchase.

After arriving at Ciano Italian Restaurant, the women ordered food and immediately engaged in casual conversation with O’Donahue and Genz. The evening featured a relaxed atmosphere with a variety of conversation topics, including Spc. Jennifer Denhartog instructing Genz on how to use Facebook.

“I thought it was very generous of them to take us out — I really enjoyed the quality one-on-one time with the leadership,” said Sgt. Andrea Wahl of Chippewa Falls, who is on her second deployment and has a two-year-old daughter.

The group dined on pizza, calzones, pasta and steak while enjoying the relaxed atmosphere. Dining at a different location and being recognized gave these hardworking mothers a brief respite from their duties that support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“One of the most special things for me was being able to treat these women to a meal,” Genz said, “and seeing the bonding take place between mothers on the day where they deserve special treatment.”
Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 150 Airmen from Volk Field’s Combat Readiness Training Center and 128th Air Control Squadron have deployed to the Middle East in support of the war on terror. Friends, family and Wisconsin National Guard leaders paid tribute to those Airmen during the Hometown Heroes Celebration May 1.

“These Airmen have made and continue to make sacrifices on behalf of their state and country,” said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin. “Time away from their families and jobs, the stressful conditions of their deployments and the continuing demands of their outstanding service are all reasons they deserve recognition.”

Dunbar was among senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders on hand for the ceremony.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Bruce Arness, who has served five deployments in his 20 years with the 128th ACS, the ceremony is important for all unit members — but especially the young Airmen and their families.

“Most of the people associated with the 128th are really dedicated and supportive, and we’re like a big family,” Arness said. “I think it’s important, now, for them to know the public and everyone else is on their side.”

The operations tempo for the air control unit has remained steady over the last 15 years. Since 1995, the unit has supported U.S. operations in Bosnia, South America, Hungary and Romania, the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Southwest Asia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The squadron deployed to Illinois to safeguard the air space around Chicago following the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001.

Every member that was recognized, including retired unit members, had deployed at some point since Sept. 2001. The unit typically deploys about one half of its unit at a time but some Airmen also deploy to other units as needed.

“I get a great sense of pride in being with the 128th,” said Staff Sgt. Kirk Slama, security forces specialist with the 128th. “We are very prepared to [deploy] on a moment’s notice and I think our unit has done a great job at that.”

Each of the Airmen who were recognized received a plaque of support and thanks — signed by the Chief of National Guard Bureau, Gen. Craig McKinley — as their names were read aloud.

Staff Sgt. Bob Garrels, Volk Field Honor Guard team member and member of the 128th Air Control Squadron, leads the Color Guard after playing of the National Anthem during the Hometown Heroes Celebration at Volk Field May 1. The ceremony paid tribute to more than 150 Airmen of Volk Field’s Combat Readiness Training Center and 128th ACS for their sacrifices and deployed support around the globe since Sept. 11, 2001.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue
Editor’s note: This article is part one of a series on the experience a member endures while going through the F-16 incentive flight process. Receipt of an incentive flight is a highly sought after opportunity.

The call unexpectedly came Thursday at 3 p.m. I was at my home, preparing for a swim, so I was not using military time. “115th Fighter Wing” flashed on the caller ID. Something told me to answer.

“Sgt. Wunderlin? I’m just calling to let you know that you’re getting your incentive flight this UTA. I’m sending you an email with the details.”

Actually, there were a lot more words than that, but once I heard “incentive flight” all blood left my brain. It went to that mysterious place that produces the excited feeling one gets before asking a girl out on a date or after the birth of a first child. My thumb could barely find the “end call” button.

This was a dream come true. I first heard of an F-16 when I was seven years old. My parents had gotten me a die cast model of the aircraft and ever since I wanted to fly one. It was one of the reasons I joined the Air National Guard. Life had gotten in the way of my pursuing a career as a pilot, but I had never given up hope of at least flying in a fighter jet. Like many who dream, I was afraid it would remain a dream.

After being nationally recognized as Air National Guard Command Post Controller of the Year in 2006, I was told I was being put on the list for an incentive flight. Score!

I eagerly sat by the phone waiting for the call telling me it was my turn to go. I waited ... and waited ... and waited some more. My wife told me to stop lunging for the phone every time it rings and move on.

After essentially giving up, life was infused into my dream of soaring upside-down at 600 mph.

In preparation for the experience, I drove to the base to make sure I was medically cleared to handle an altitude of 18,000 feet. Songs by Kenny Loggins streamed through my brain.

At one point, I began to wonder why this medical screening was scheduled for an hour. What sort of probes would this involve? What type of meticulous scrutinization would I need to endure to show myself as a superior specimen capable of handling such an extreme environment?

The medics handed me a list of seven “yes” or “no” questions. I was stumped by “can you clear both ears?” because for everything else I had answered “no” and this seemed to need a “yes.” I asked my escort who informed me the correct answer was indeed “yes.”

After a short scare where the automatic blood pressure cuff told me my heart was about to explode, the medics confirmed my ticker was good. She took some measurements of my seated height and the length from my hip to knee to make sure I could fit in the cockpit.

After a review of my test, the flight surgeon said those five magic words, “You are qualified for flight.” But as exciting as this was, I soon would question whether I even wanted to go.

Getting sick on these rides is almost inevitable I was told, even for those not prone to seeing their meals twice. I was fully prepared to fill both air sickness bags as needed. Why would anyone need more than two? In that unlikely event, I am supposed to disgorge into my shirt. Apparently, bodily fluids can ruin the costly electronics in the aircraft. I was also told the pressure changes can affect one’s, uh uhh ... recesses. Note to self: Bring a change of undergarments. Later my wife wondered if this was a ride or part of some sort of military human testing ploy.

I was also told not to touch anything if I was not given permission. The flight surgeon reminded me of Goose’s fate in Top Gun, and told me even if I survived the ejection there was no guarantee my parachute would open. I thought to myself, “Even if the parachute opens, I don’t want to be known as the idiot who ruined a perfectly good $20 million jet.”

I could barely sleep Friday night. On Saturday morning I had no problems waking up for a Guard drill. After fantasizing through roll call and carefully deleting 118 of my 121 e-mail messages, I was off to life support for three hours of training. It was the final step to my dream come true.

I walked in for my appointment and was told by Chief Jones, “Your flight has been postponed until next drill.”

I am sure there was a perfectly good reason, but I did not hear it as my heart sank. The reason didn’t matter. It felt like the result of asking that first girl on a date. “But maybe she’ll change her mind and call back.”

And so I sit, waiting by the phone, hoping next drill will be my Top Gun moment.
Enlisted leaders from the Wisconsin Army National Guard traveled to Managua, Nicaragua in mid-April to emphasize the importance of enlisted leadership in the Nicaraguan military.

Four sergeants major from the Wisconsin Guard, with more than 80 years of combined military leadership experience, visited with students and staff of the Andres Castro National School of Sergeants (ENSAC) in Managua to talk about the significance of non-commissioned officers and the important role they play in the U.S. military.

“We coordinate exchanges between members of the Wisconsin National Guard and other government agencies, like Wisconsin Emergency Management,” said State Partnership Program (SPP) coordinator Capt. Joe Davison. “The program is about sharing experience and exchanging information on the techniques each force uses in a variety of focus areas.

During the visit, State Command Sgt. Maj. George Stopper, and Command Sgts. Maj. Brad Shields, Paul Easterday and Ralph Rosemore, gave presentations about rank structure, non-commissioned officer (NCO) development, mentorship and counseling techniques.

“We train them on our basic NCO skills, support channel and what we do as NCOs,” said Easterday, of the 426th Regional Training Institute Regiment. “We share information overall about our techniques, tactics and skills that we teach our NCOs.”

Stopper has participated in several SPP exchanges and has seen a lot of progress but recognizes there’s still work to do.

“When this program started, one of the goals was to convince senior leaders of the net-worth and value of a non-commissioned officer and how they could assist the leaders in running the military. “I think that goal has progressed greatly and is evident by the way the [academy] commandant and other officers at the academy treat us,” Stopper continued.

The National Guard has 373 years of experience to share and the Nicaraguan Army is just over 30 years old as an organization. “We have experience and knowledge that can make their lives a little simpler,” Stopper said.

“We have a system that works and NCOs are absolutely a necessity to have a well-run and effective military,” Stopper added. “That’s what we’re trying to share with them, how we make leaders: effective counseling, mentorship and how to get the most out of our people.”

For the first time, the Nicaraguan Army is proposing three new senior non-commissioned officer ranks. Currently they only have three NCO ranks which are the equivalent to the Army’s sergeant, staff sergeant and sergeant first class. They are considering applying three levels of sergeant major to their military.

“We’re not trying to change them or make them mirrored to us,” Stopper explained. “However, after several hundred years of experience this is where we’ve ended up. If we can help them avoid some of the wrong turns in getting from point ‘a’ to point ‘b’ I think it’s our duty and obligation to try and help them.”

Members of the Nicaraguan NCO academy staff as well as students recognize the significance of the partnership and hope to develop more exchanges in the future where Nicaraguan soldiers can attend U.S. Army schools to train in specific areas and receive hands-on training.

“I value the experience that the [Wisconsin National Guard] has gained through their deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and value the time they take to come to Nicaragua to share that knowledge with my soldiers,” said ENSAC Commandant Oscar Solorzano. “Even though we live in a time of peace, they’re required to be ready to take any action any time, so this [partnership] is invaluable.”

The state partnership program was established following the National Guard Bureau’s 1993 proposal to match State National Guards with countries to provide military-to-military support and mentorship to developing countries.

Wisconsin Soldier marches on to Best Warrior Competition

Spc. Eric W. Liesse
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A National Guard Soldier in the second year of his military career will represent Wisconsin and the upper Midwest in August at the National Guard Bureau’s Best Warrior Competition at the Warrior Training Center, Fort Benning, Ga.

Pfc. Randy Fendryk of Mukwonago, a multiple launch rocket system specialist with Battery C, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery in Sussex, was named Soldier of the Year for Region 4, consisting of seven states around and including Wisconsin. Spc. Trevor Garner, Illinois National Guard, was named first alternate.

Staff Sgt. Adam Little, Michigan Army National Guard, was named Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for Region 4. Sgt. Cody Brueggen of Oconomowoc, a utilities equipment repairer with Detachment 1, 107th Support Maintenance Company in Sparta, was named first alternate.

Fendryk and Brueggen advanced to the regional competition after being named the top finishers at the state Soldier and NCO of the Year competition March 7.

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State Soldier moves on

Both the state and regional competitions were held at Fort McCoy. There, Soldiers competed over the course of three days in such events as a physical fitness test, weapons qualification, land navigation, hand-to-hand combat and a formal board appearance.

Starting in the early-morning hours Tuesday, May 11 and ending Thursday, May 13, the annual competition tested two Soldiers from each of the region’s Army National Guard organizations: Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and the competition’s host state, Wisconsin. With about 800 total points over 14 different rated events, the competitors were forced to give their all to have any chance of winning.

“Despite Mother Nature trying her best, I think we pulled off a pretty successful competition,” said Command Sgt. Major George Stopper, Wisconsin state sergeant major and host of the regional competition. The many different Wisconsin units gave what Stopper said was an “absolutely flawless execution.”

“Weather pairing that plagued the entire competition: below-average temperatures and near-constant rain and drizzle. The Soldiers’ soaked boots after the three-hour land navigation course that afternoon vividly displayed their hardships.

“The most challenging event for me would have been the land navigation,” Fendryk said. “I just couldn’t find my points for some reason. I kind of wanted to break down, but I still pushed on.”

“You can’t really judge someone just by looking at them,” Brueggen said. “You’re not a super-soldier. You just have to be better than everyone else.”

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Wisconsin makes second straight trip to NGB Best Warrior Competition

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“When I did my state-level competition in March, it was like a run-through for this competition,” Stopper said. He began planning the competition in June 2009, intending the state and regional competitions to mirror each other.

“This was a chance to showcase my people,” said Command Sgt. Maj. David Wetuski, Wisconsin’s 641st Troop Command Battalion senior enlisted leader. The Madison-based 641st was in charge of many of the week’s logistics and personnel support, supplying everything from equipment needs to medics to photographers. The battalion was also in charge of developing and executing the land navigation courses.

“I keep using the word ‘showcase,’ but I’m just so proud of all my Soldiers here,” Wetuski said.

“The state and regionals were essentially the same competition — minus four miles on the road march,” Fendryk said. The week’s last rated event on Thursday, a 12-mile road march with each Soldier carrying at least a 35-pound load, did have a few less miles and a flatter course than the state competition. However, it was by no means easy.

“Even if you win in the road march, you still lose,” Fendryk joked. “Twelve miles with any amount of weight on your back hurts.”

Tuesday saw multiple other events as well. After the PT test, the Soldiers competed for the highest rifle qualification score, as well as a high mark in a “stress fire” event. That event required the Warriors complete a two-mile road march followed immediately by a five rounds of quick, short-ranged rifle fire between fast-paced physical exercises. The event is made to test the Soldiers’ accuracy under harsh physical and mental stress.

The land navigation, both day and night, followed the rifle ranges. Between the two navigation courses, the competitors took a short written exam and a “mystery task” requiring Soldiers to indentify different objects at a distance as well as properly send the information using proper radio etiquette.

“I’d like to take back to my unit [to help train others] the Army Warrior Tasks,” Little said of Wednesday’s largest event. “It was like a mini-field training exercise.” The AWT event, developed and run by the Milwaukee-based 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, had multiple smaller stations held concurrently. It had the Soldiers display proper procedure for many different warrior tasks such as evaluating a casualty, requesting a medical evacuation and moving through obstructed and harmful terrain.

Wednesday began, however, with an old Army standard: the confidence and conditioning course. The obstacles forced the competitors to literally dig deep to get through many stations like monkey bars, a vertical rope climb and low rope crawls.

The day’s last event was, as Stopper put it, a “pretty ruthless” senior enlisted board consisting of three different state sergeants major from the region. With three questions per minute for 30 straight minutes, plus a close inspection of each contestant’s dress uniform, many of the contestants talked of high nerves prior to appearing before the board.

At the competition’s end, finishing with the road march early Thursday morning, all the Soldiers were visibly weary. However, none had given up.

“What they gain here, they take back to their unit and train [other Soldiers],” Stopper said. The caliber of Soldiers required to compete at this level allows for their attitude and pool of talents to “spread like wildfire” through their home units.

“Being a Soldier is all about the strong protecting the weak,” Little said. Through this grueling competition, these 14 Soldiers showed the paragon of that strength — true Army Strong.

This is the second straight year Wisconsin has sent a contender to the National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition. Last year, Spc. John Wiernasz of Vadnais Heights, Minn., a member of Detachment 1, 950th Engineer Company in Spooner, advanced to the National Guard-level competition.
Wisconsin National Guard strengthens family ties

Sgt. Andy Poquette
Wisconsin National Guard

As nearly 4,000 Soldiers and Airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard undergo reintegration back to civilian life after overseas deployments, hundreds more are preparing for deployment and the Wisconsin National Guard Family Program and its volunteers are certainly keeping busy.

Nearly 100 Soldiers, Airmen and family volunteers met with senior leaders of the Wisconsin National Guard this weekend in Wausau to discuss the 2010 Wisconsin National Guard Family Program and ways to fulfill its new motto: “Full sTEAM Ahead.”

“The purpose of the conference was really two-fold,” said Lt. Col. Tammy Gross, the Service Member Support Division chief. “First, it gives volunteers the opportunity to interact with all levels of leadership in the Wisconsin Guard, and second, it gives us the chance to recognize our volunteers for all the great work that they do.”

To kick-start the conference, Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, spoke about resiliency, empowering service members and their families with tools that will help them transition between military and civilian life.

Other workshops offered at the conference focused on dealing with legal issues while a service member is deployed, how to take care of yourself while taking care of others, and resources to help understand Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These workshops assist both service members and families to focus on their mission, whether that is taking care of the family at home or doing their jobs overseas.

“If you’re focused on the mission, there is no finer force in the world than the Wisconsin National Guard,” said Brig. Gen. John McCoy, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. “But if service members or families are worried about finances, or their employer, they can’t do their jobs effectively.”

“The TEAM of our ‘Full sTEAM Ahead’ motto refers to the team of service members, leaders and volunteers, and how they all must work together to be successful,” Gross explained. “This is really the only time we have members of the Air and Army Guard in one place to share ideas and resources.”

Volunteers and family members were also given the opportunity to pose questions to a panel of general officers, the highest ranking members of the Wisconsin National Guard leadership. The questions covered topics ranging from the effects of continuous mobilization on service members and families, to how to get better interaction with families and service members through technologies like Facebook. Other issues discussed at the panel were how to increase attendance of Badger Yellow Ribbon events throughout the state, how to increase interaction of Family Readiness Groups from different units and the vast resources and services available to service members and their families; resources including financial planning, spiritual guidance, marriage counseling and many more services.

“I look forward to the Family Program conference every year, but I most look forward to the general officer panel,” said Brig. Gen. Mark E. Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. “I think the leadership gets just as much out of it as the families do because we get to have an honest dialog with family members.”

More information on programs offered by the Service Member Support Division and Wisconsin National Guard Family Program are online at http://www.wisconsinmilitary.org.
Guard youth program keeps children active, resilient

Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell
Wisconsin National Guard

April is the Month of the Military Child, an opportunity to recognize and applaud the sacrifices and unique challenges military families and their children must deal with. Support and resilience are required for children to cope with parents absent due to deployments, and potential family relocations connected with military service. To that end, the Wisconsin National Guard Family Program dedicated a full day of activities for children at its recent state-wide conference in Wausau.

The conference provided activities for approximately 100 children aged 5 to 17 years old. Children were divided into three age groups where they could bond through their common link — having a parent or loved one in the military.

“It’s really weird not having [my dad] here,” said 14-year-old Heidi Blaha, whose father is deployed with the Wisconsin Army National Guard. As the oldest of five children, Blaha plays an important role helping her mother while her father is deployed.

“The [extra responsibility] came on really fast,” Blaha said. “I took on a lot with baby-sitting every day, I feed them dinner and help with homework … a lot of the chores my dad used to do.”

Forced to mature faster than their peers, military children often recognize the need to step up to the plate and help out with younger siblings or with chores around the house to alleviate some of the stress that the remaining parent may feel in their spouse’s absence.

“It’s helped me grow up,” Blaha said. “I’ve learned a lot about being more responsible and realize I can handle more things now. I’ve gotten closer to my sisters and my mom now that I spend more time with them.”

The WING Child and Youth Program recognizes that the stress of having a parent deployed is very real and makes the point to get military children together so they can bond with each other and form a network or support group.

“My dad’s deployment really upset me,” said Hadley Fisher, whose father was deployed for approximately seven months. “[Being involved in the youth program] makes me feel good because there are other kids going through the same thing — talking with them makes me feel close to them.

“At my school, I’m the only one with someone in the military and I can’t really talk with [other students] about it,” Fisher continued. “They say, ‘I know how you’re feeling’ but they don’t, they’ve never had a parent taken away from them for seven months. It hurts to talk to some people when they really don’t know what’s going on.”

At 13 years old, Fisher has joined the senior group of military children where she helps mentor and motivate younger children who may be new to the youth program.

“You’re respected and people come to you for things,” Fisher said. “Sometimes in society — just being a kid — you feel like you can’t do anything. When it comes to the [youth program] you feel good helping kids and you feel appreciated.”

Service and mentorship are two important focal points for the children, specifically between the ages of 10 and 17. During the weekend, the 10- to 12-year-olds created an obstacle course for the 6- to 9-year-olds, and the 13- to 17-year-olds worked together to develop a presentation for the 6- to 9-year-olds where the two age groups worked together to present.

“All these opportunities give them a chance to build a support network so when mom or dad is deployed; they have someone to talk to.”

Jeffords explained that giving the children time to get to know each other, learn and grow together helps them build resiliency which allows them to do more than cope with a parent’s deployment. It helps them bounce back and become stronger.

 “[Together] they see they are not the only ones dealing with these issues, which can make future deployments easier,” he added.

“The Month of the Military Child is an opportunity for me to show my appreciation for the sacrifices and all the things military kids do,” Jeffords said. “It also helps me encourage others to show their appreciation.”

To learn more about the Wisconsin National Guard Child and Youth Program, visit the Wisconsin Service Member Support Division Website at http://wiscinomilitary.org/.

Wisconsin Guard members join salute to Vietnam veterans

Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue
Wisconsin National Guard

More than 300 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen joined a statewide effort to honor the service and sacrifice of thousands of Vietnam veterans, thank them and welcome them home.

The three-day event, dubbed “LZ Lambeau,” ran May 21-23 at Green Bay’s Lambeau Field and honored all veterans of the Vietnam era—a time when more than 165,000 Wisconsin residents deployed to support the war.

“LZ” refers to “landing zone,” a familiar term to Vietnam veterans as a helicopter drop-off site.

More than 27,000 veterans, family members and other supporters filled Lambeau Field’s stadium seats along both sidelines for the May 22 tribute ceremony. This made for an impressive standing ovation as Wisconsin Guard members marched into Lambeau Field at the tail end of the ceremony, said Master Sgt. (Ret.) Dave Galik, 128th Air Refueling Wing.

“I thought it was awesome,” Galik said. “It was a real rush walking out there as they were cheering for us.”

On the field itself, 1,244 empty white chairs were perfectly aligned in columns and rows across the field, representing Wisconsin’s Vietnam veterans who never returned home.

The Wisconsin Guard members took positions around the field and paid tribute with a moment of silence before turning 180 degrees and saluting the many veterans in the crowd. Staff Sgt. Emily Russell, Wisconsin Army National Guard’s public affairs office, sang the national anthem.

“It was an emotional experience and it was very honoring,” said Spc. Heidi Hanneman, who marched in with her fellow Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry.

Command Sgt. Maj. Ed Hanson of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, who recently returned from an Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment, led the marching

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Wisconsin National Guard photos by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

Former Navy Chaplain and Vietnam Veteran Reverend Ray Stubbe places the Congressional Medal of Honor around fellow Vietnam Veteran Gary Wetzel’s neck back stage during LZ Lambeau, May 22. Wetzel, who was awarded the military’s highest decoration for his extraordinary heroism, wears the medal for those who did not return from Vietnam and those he served with. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell

Col. Steven Bensend of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team waits with more than 300 Wisconsin National Guard members to march out to Lambeau Field during the May 22 LZ Lambeau’s tribute ceremony that honored and officially welcomed home all veterans of the Vietnam War.

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Guard members and spoke to the crowd — not only as a current Soldier, but a Vietnam veteran as well.

Hanson emphasized that service and sacrifice bond veterans of all wars together. Gratitude, though not expected, is very much appreciated.

Galik also served in the Vietnam era in 1970 after he was selected in the draft. Having served in both the Vietnam era and in today’s military, Galik has seen some drastic changes in perception of the military.

“I think service members now are treated a heck of a lot better than they were treated in my day,” Galik said. “I wish veterans in that day would’ve been treated better, but for them to be recognized now — it’s better late than never.”

Brig. Gen Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, spoke to those in attendance about his appreciation for the sacrifices made by all Vietnam veterans.

“You endured the horrors of war, your battle scars were deep, and our nation’s gratitude was, sadly, in short supply,” Dunbar said. “However, time has brought perspective. Your country now knows that your service was extraordinary and that honor was and is due. Tonight I am proud to extend that honor as we say thank you, and welcome home.”

The weekend event also included a motorcycle honor ride from La Crosse to Green Bay, live music, story sharing by Vietnam veterans, and the Vietnam Moving Wall. LZ Lambeau was a collaborative effort between Wisconsin Public Television, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, the Wisconsin Historical Society and many veterans organizations.
Strong Bonds provides Guard members with guidelines on how to P.I.C.K. a partner

Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell
Wisconsin National Guard

While the military isn’t issuing Mr. or Mrs. Right to its service members, the Wisconsin National Guard is dispensing guidance on developing the skills to identify and select a good marriage partner — in hopes of avoiding problems at home while the service member is deployed.

Through Strong Bonds — a chaplain-led program which supports Soldiers, Airmen and family readiness — 12 service members learned about nurturing interpersonal relationships and skills during a recent weekend workshop in Door County.

“P.I.C.K. a Partner is a program that focuses on premarital, interpersonal choices and knowledge,” said Matt Maier, a chaplain’s assistant who led the singles-only program. Using the book, “How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk” by Dr. John Van Epp, “you get an introspective look into yourself, past dating habits and how to avoid repeating mistakes. Then you’re enabled with the tools to move forward and make better choices for your dating boundaries and [partner] selection.”

The program isn’t about “hooking up” single service members, Maier explained. “Service member] readiness is the intent behind the program. Essentially, the overall big picture for the military is [positively] affecting unit readiness. If you can avoid selection of a poor partner, then you’re less likely to deal with divorce issues.”

Air Guard member Matt Rausch of the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing understands how important this program is for supporting unit readiness.

“If you’re deploying and you don’t have faith in the person you’re leaving behind, then things aren’t going to get any better while you’re apart,” Rausch said. “The ties are stretched and it makes the deployment a lot more stressful which means you’re concentrating on what’s happening at home. When a service member doesn’t have their mind on the mission they can bring down morale.”

The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) addresses five critical aspects of a relationship: know, trust, rely, commit and touch.

“I’ve observed that people get too attached in new relationships without going through the process of really getting to know the other person and their dating history,” Maier said. “We go through a five-point system of how you should develop your relationship — get to know them, trust them, rely on them, commit to them and finally, touch them.

“Often, people will advance the physical aspect of their relationship without having the commitment level or really knowing the person that well,” he continued. “When that happens, you start becoming attached and you may be overlooking other downsights that would normally [end] that relationship. This can cause problems later as issues start to surface.”

The impact of the program varied among individual service members. For some, the information was new and gave them food-for-thought and an opportunity to reflect on past experiences and present trends.

“With the societal attitude that ‘sex sells’ and mainstream media taking advantage of that concept, people don’t realize the impact when they take a relationship to a sexual level,” said Bob Bauer, a Soldier from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery in Stevens Point. “If you’re not ready for that, it’s hard to take two steps back and decided that it’s time to build trust and reliability. You’ve got to build that — before you get to that [next] level — to have a healthy relationship.”

While most service members in attendance were apprehensive about the program and its intent, an open mind and willingness to share personal experiences provided a unique opportunity to learn about setting boundaries within relationships, improve communication and make new friends.

“I thought it sounded like a great opportunity for [service members] to learn something that we probably don’t get anywhere else, but through life experiences,” said Air Guard member Debra Becwar of the Milwaukee-based 128th Air Refueling Wing. “I didn’t get a lot of good information — some of it was common sense and some of it was repetitive — but I was very interested. Single people are sometimes overlooked because we don’t have families so I wanted to check out this program and benefit from it.”

For more information about P.I.C.K. and other available programs for service members visit the Wisconsin Service Member Support Division Website, www.wisconsinmilitary.org or call 1-800-292-9464.
For service members, stepping back into life after deployment comes with a few growing pains. “Everyone has adjustment issues at different levels,” said Maj. Doug Hedman, the Wisconsin National Guard state support chaplain. “It’s normal to take three to six months before you feel like you have your feet back on the ground. The important thing is to know there is plenty of help available.”

As a joint-force chaplain, Hedman interacts with both Air and Army Guard service members as well as sister services like the Marines, Navy and Coast Guard Reserve. “[Service] and family members are coming forward for help which is a good sign,” Hedman said. “The old stigma was that getting help or acknowledging a problem meant a Soldier was weak.”

That stigma is slowly dying thanks to the efforts of service member reintegration, a three-phase program which gives service members ample opportunity and access to veteran benefits like healthcare, relationship building seminars and tools that help service and family members get in sync after a deployment. Chaplains have taken on an integral role in the service and family member reintegration effort. Their duty isn’t limited to Sunday services; they are taking an active part in the day-to-day support of family resiliency.

“Since we’re service members, we deploy with our folks,” Hedman explained. “We go through the same stresses — we have children and we’re away from our families too — so it’s easier for service members to identify with us because we’ve walked the walk and talked the talk.”

Service members have ample opportunity before, during and after deployment to get to know the chaplains, according to Hedman. “Sometimes [a service member] knows they need help but won’t ask for anything until they get home,” Hedman said. “We take proactive measures to meet with service members when they return from deployment and participate in all three phases of reintegration — each step is an opportunity for a service member to reach out for help.”

To schedule an appointment with the chaplain call 608-242-3450 or e-mail Hedman at douglas.hedman@us.army.mil.
Soldiers in the Wisconsin Army National Guard have begun opening their lockers and duffel bags to determine if they have some of the 44,000 Advanced Composite Helmets (ACH) being recalled by the Army.

The helmets in question failed to provide required ballistic protection in recent Army tests. Helmets made by other manufacturers are not part of the May 13 recall. The defective helmets were made between August 2007 and May by ArmorSource LLC, formerly Rabintex USA LLC, of Hebron, Ohio, under contract to UniCorps, also known as the Federal Prison Industries.

The Army is working with the Defense Supply Center in Philadelphia, where the 44,000 defective helmets were shipped for distribution, to track down the helmets—which may also have been issued to Air Force and Navy personnel.

“We don’t know where they are,” acknowledged Brig. Gen. Peter Fuller, head of Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier in Fort Belvoir, Va. during a May 17 blogger’s roundtable at the Pentagon.

“They could be on some Soldier’s head in Iraq or Afghanistan. They could also be anywhere in the world.”

The ArmorSource label can be found inside the helmet by the left ear.

The ballistics tests conducted May 12 at Aberdeen, Md., did not result in penetrations that would prove fatal to the wearer. Fuller said, but the results were still below Army standards. He said a series of worst-case scenarios would be required for someone wearing the ArmorSource ACH to be injured.

“The helmets that we pulled at random from our stocks and conducted ballistic testing on fell short of Army standards,” explained Col. William Cole, program manager for Soldier’s protective equipment. “Not by much, but the standards are absolute.”

All of the recalled helmets will be destroyed.

Traci Billingsley, a Federal Bureau of Prisons spokesperson, said UniCorps had stopped making helmets indefinitely.

The DOJ began investigating UniCorps in December 2009, and expanded its investigation to include ArmorSource. The DOJ advised the Army on Jan. 10 to retest the helmets in its inventory. A subsequent Army visit to the ArmorSource plant led to a stop-work order Feb. 2. Contract termination proceedings began April 27.

Information for this report provided by Jeff Schogol of Stars and Stripes and Greg Grant of Military.com.

Sexual assault prevention — a mission of readiness

**Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell**  
**Wisconsin National Guard**

While April is recognized nationally as sexual assault awareness month, the Wisconsin National Guard emphasizes sexual assault prevention all year long.

“Preventing sexual assault is everyone’s responsibility,” said Capt. Kristin Boustany, Wisconsin National Guard sexual assault response coordinator and crisis intervention stress management chief. In the military, where service members are the biggest asset, men and women are called to action by promoting awareness and enforcing a safe environment.

This year’s theme “Hurts one. Affects all. Prevents sexual assault is everyone’s duty,” encourages service members to take an active role in the education and prevention of sexual assault, and reinforces the standing Department of Defense no-tolerance policy toward sexual assault.

“We want to communicate how sexual assault affects victims, bystanders or family members of a victim,” Boustany said. “Even though only one person may be affected by the trauma [of a sexual assault] it degrades mission readiness.”

Working as a unit is critical for service members, and trusting one another is paramount for any mission.

“If you pull one person from a team, you can see how it affects the individual and the [rest of] the team,” Boustany said. “You’re told, ‘look to your right, look to your left ... these are the people who will save your life,’ but when you’re a victim of sexual assault, how can you count on anyone who wears the uniform, especially if the perpetrator is in the same unit?”

The “Hurts one, Affects all” theme provides sexual assault response coordinators and victim advocates an opportunity to speak with units and convey the message that the effect of sexual assault reverberates within a unit, not just the individual.

When Sarah (not the victim’s real name) was sexually assaulted, the Wisconsin National Guard member knew victim advocates were available but was so shaken by the ordeal.

“I didn’t really know what I was doing,” she said. “[The sexual assault prevention and response program] helped me to receive the medical care and the ongoing therapy that I needed.

“When I feel ready, I want to [openly] tell my story,” she continued. “I want people to know what I’ve been through and to know how detrimental this is not just to the victim but to the family and everyone involved.”

Since her attacks, Sarah has become involved with the SAPR program as a way to empower herself and to provide support to other victims.

“Even if [the assault] happened five to 10 years ago, they can come forward,” Sarah said. “I want to educate others ... because it creates awareness and helps victims and bystanders who may not know how to help.”

The significance of this project is keeping sexual assault prevention ever-present in service members’ minds, according to Boustany. “We want to constantly remind them that we can intervene.”

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, help is available 24 hours a day. Contact the local Sexual Assault Response Coordinator at 608-469-2627. For more information visit the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Website at www.sapr.mil.
Wisconsin Guard recognized for outstanding public service

Two teams of Wisconsin National Guard members totaling 18 people, responsible for providing vital services to 10,000 Guard members statewide, were recognized by the Greater Madison Federal Agency Association during a May 6 ceremony at Madison’s Edgewater Hotel.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s Health Systems Services Branch, of the Personnel Directorate, was recognized for exemplary customer service to 7,800 Soldiers in the state. The 15-person team ensures medical certifications are up to date for each medical professional within the force and manages services for medical and dental appointment coordination, TriCare insurance support, wounded warrior transition care and medical record maintenance for each Soldier.

Health Systems Services Branch Chief Lt. Col. Leah Moore, with the Wisconsin Army National Guard state leadership, recognized HSS as “deserving of the nomination.”

“I’m extremely proud of the [HSS team] — I knew they would do a good job,” Moore said. “I think it’s terrific that the state leadership recognized them and that they exceeded every expectation. Whether we’re [supporting] one Soldier or 100, we work just as hard, every day. It’s a nice pat on the back today, but tomorrow we will get [back] to work and do it again.”

Maj. Rebecca Giese, an HSS case manager who served as the officer-in-charge while Moore was deployed, accepted the award for the team.

“We were nominated because we put in a lot of work for the [32nd] Brigade deployment,” Giese said. “Successfully getting 3,200 Soldiers out the door was very rewarding for us — we had a lot of support from the leadership and it went really smooth despite a lot of challenges.”

Personnel assigned to Wisconsin Air National Guard Headquarters received the “Administrative Employee of the Year” award for their direct contribution to mission readiness, improved recruiting efforts, mentorship of traditional guard members and a strong ethic of community service.

Col. Murry Mitten, director of staff, and Lt. Col. Brian Buhler, military personnel management officer — both for the Air National Guard — recommended the three-member team for the award because of the hard work and dedication they provide at the unit level.

“They are the ones that everyone call to get their questions answered,” Buhler said. “Their day-to-day job is pretty tough — they take care of the 2,200 men and women of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. These three folks who won the award work long hours to make everything happen and do it with a positive attitude.”

Senior Master Sgt. Connie Bacik, a recruiting and retention superintendent, accepted the award for the team and said, “We’ve done a fantastic job motivating our recruiters and retainers to bring quality people into the Air National Guard and maintain a high level of strength to complete mission requirements.

“It feels great to win the award,” she added. “[The GMFAA] is a great organization and it’s a [privilege] to be recognized among other federal agencies.”
Wisconsin Soldier receives MacArthur Leadership award

Sgt. Darron Salzer
National Guard Bureau

Wisconsin National Guard Capt. Bill Barthen was one of seven Army National Guard officers presented with the MacArthur Leadership Award from the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Foundation during a ceremony at the Pentagon May 7.

Barthen, a Waukesha native, is a training officer with the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion in Portage. At the time of his nomination, he was serving as the executive officer for the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team rear detachment, where he was responsible for personnel, operations and training, logistics and supply issues at the brigade level. He also coordinated with battalion-level officers and non-commissioned officers concerning those issues. He recently commanded Company E, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation.

Barthen has served more than 16 years in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and has deployed twice in the global war on terror. He volunteered to deploy with the Louisiana Army National Guard from August 2004 to October 2005, where he served on a Military Transition Team that trained the Iraqi Army in Baghdad. Barthen deployed again, this time as an executive officer with Troop E, 105th Cavalry, Wisconsin Army National Guard, to conduct convoy security missions out of Logistical Support Area Anaconda near Baghdad from June 2007 to June 2008.

The MacArthur Award recognizes company-grade officers like Barthen who demonstrate the ideals for which MacArthur stood — duty, honor, country. Barthen joins three recent Wisconsin Guard officers — Capt. Douglas Kolb, 2007; Capt. Josephine (Jerome) Daniels, 2006; and Capt. Scott Southworth, 2005 — who have earned the award. Each year, only seven National Guard Soldiers are chosen for the national honor, along with seven from the Army Reserve and 14 from the Active Army.

“IT’s awfully humbling to receive this award,” Barthen said. “Just being nominated was huge in and of itself, and I was quite shocked to learn I was the nominee for the state of Wisconsin.”

Leadership is what it will take to get the Army through the challenges of the 21st century, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Army chief of staff, said during the ceremony.

“The one thing that rings clear to us is that it’s going to take leadership and leaders of character and competence to chart our way through the challenges [ahead],” he said. “All of these award winners have demonstrated the tremendous quality that we’re privileged to have in our Army today.”

The Wisconsin Army National Guard received the Army Communities of Excellence Silver Second Place Award during a May 3 ceremony at the Pentagon. Pictured are, left to right: Maj. Gen. Raymond Carpenter, acting director, Army National Guard; Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard; Col. Mark Greenwood, chief of staff, Wisconsin Army National Guard; LuAnne Slegerek-Koon, strategic planner, Wisconsin Army National Guard; Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joe McGrath, 426th Regiment; Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Donovan, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team; and Gen. Craig McKinley, chief, National Guard Bureau.

Wisconsin Guard top finisher in Army Communities of Excellence

The Wisconsin Army National Guard continues its record of top finishes in the Army Communities of Excellence awards competition.

“We have a very fine quality organization, and being consistently recognized at the Bureau level means that our organization is not stagnant,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. “It really is, top to bottom, all the men and women who make up the Wisconsin Army National Guard. It’s not just one individual. Every Soldier in our organization has equal value — we just shoulder different levels of responsibility.”

The Wisconsin Army National Guard won a Silver Second Place finish this year, sixth in the Army National Guard. The state earned a Gold Third Place award last year (fourth overall), and a Silver 1st Place award (fifth overall) in 2008.

The ACOE Awards follow a 12-month evaluation in which Army, National Guard and Reserve installations are judged against Army priorities and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program criteria. Participants are not judged against each other. The assessment considers the overall quality of military environment, facilities and services.

Anderson said the ACOE award provides Wisconsin Army Guard leadership with an understanding of the organization’s direction.

“It’s a system of processes that allows an organization to look at itself in a critical way, which leads to a better organization overall,” he explained. “It reinforces our ability to look at ourselves and improve.”

The Minnesota Army National Guard was the overall winner under a category dedicated to the National Guard, and will receive a $400,000 cash prize. The Texas Army National Guard was named first place winner in the Gold Category, followed by Georgia and Iowa. The Arkansas Army National Guard finished ahead of Wisconsin in the Silver category.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard also received a monetary award for its finish. Anderson said that these funds are applied toward tangible benefits for Soldiers, such as new fitness equipment and machines for individual armories.

“I’m confident we have Soldiers who do not realize we are active in ACOE, but realize the benefits from it,” Anderson said.

Anderson accepted the award on behalf of Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, during a May 3 ceremony at the National Guard Bureau.
Leaders from the Wisconsin Army National Guard and 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s Family Readiness Group formally accepted an award for best family support program in the Army National Guard during the 2009 Department of Defense Reserve Family Readiness Awards ceremony at the Pentagon Friday (April 16).

Janell Kellett, 32nd IBCT volunteer and Family Readiness Group leader, and her group of more than 100 volunteers from across the 32nd Brigade were recognized for their “Moving Forward, Giving Back” campaign that directly contributed to the readiness and morale of both Wisconsin Soldiers and their families.

“This was a team effort, of course,” she acknowledged. “We’d like to thank the family program staff, and then our outstanding Wisconsin military leadership that worked tirelessly to take care of our families through the training and deployment.”

The annual awards program which recognizes the top family support programs for each of the seven reserve components was formally established in 2000.

In a coordinated effort, the 32nd IBCT family program and communities supported 18 family readiness mobilization briefings which spread critical information to nearly 2,800 Soldiers and their families. The FRG also closely worked with the Badger Yellow Ribbon program to raise morale and readiness by hosting 12 events during the 32nd Brigade’s 12 month deployment.

Kellett accepted the award on behalf of the Family Readiness Group but admitted that great family support must come from all levels.

Janell Kellett, the Family Readiness Group leader for the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Wisconsin National Guard, poses with a plaque she received on behalf of the Wisconsin Army National Guard during the 2009 Department of Defense Reserve Family Readiness Awards at the Pentagon April 16. Awards were presented to the top program from each of the seven Guard and Reserve branches. Kellett and more than 100 other volunteers supported family readiness and morale during the 32nd IBCT’s 12-month deployment by working closely with Wisconsin’s Yellow Ribbon and family programs.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue
Two retired Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers with a combined 74 years of military experience took their place of honor among 41 other individuals Sunday (May 2) during the 10th annual Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor induction ceremony in Witmer Hall at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison.

Retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Douglas H. Alfke of Jackson, Wis., and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Douglas E. Gehrke of Monona, Wis., both began their careers during the Vietnam War, and both retired in 2003 following decades of dedicated service to Wisconsin and their nation.

“Despite the difficulties put upon our service members during that time, these two men stood up for what they believed in and never stopped serving — first as traditional Guardsmen, and then full time,” said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, who led the induction with Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Alfke joined the 32nd Infantry Brigade in 1973 after service in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. His enlisted career culminated with his assignment as first sergeant of the Red Arrow Brigade Headquarters Company. Upon his later appointment as a warrant officer, he distinguished himself by providing leadership and mentorship to the brigade’s commanders, staff and Soldiers. Upon transfer to the State Headquarters, Alfke served as labor relations manager responsible for all Army and Air National Guard labor issues. He retired following a 34-year military career.

Gehrke served multiple tours in Vietnam as an artilleryman before joining the Wisconsin Army National Guard, where he enjoyed a long career in the logistics, intelligence and operations fields. He spent the last 10 years of his career in the area of training, and greatly impacted the deployment readiness of 64th Troop Command Soldiers. He retired from the Wisconsin Guard after a combined active duty and Guard career spanning 40 years.

Dunbar noted the recent return of more than 3,000 Wisconsin National Guard troops and also the approximately 500 Guard members presently deployed, and linked their present readiness to the mentorship of Soldiers such as Alfke and Gehrke.

“It is their hard work in areas of training, personnel, supply and operations that ensured the future success of our Soldiers when they began deploying in support of the global war on terror,” he said. “We owe them a debt of gratitude. None of these accomplishments would be possible without the legacy left behind by Soldiers such as Chief Warrant Officer 4 Alfke and Command Sgt. Major Gehrke — outstanding Soldiers who made a difference.”

Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor gains two new members


At Ease earns top honors in DoD competition

At Ease Express, the official publication of the Wisconsin National Guard, received a Thomas Jefferson Award May 14 as the best web-based publication in the U.S. military for 2009 during a Communicators of Excellence Awards ceremony at Fort Meade, Md.

Lt. Col. Jackie Guthrie, public affairs director for the Wisconsin National Guard, was joined by Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, in accepting the award.

“This is a tremendous honor for our public affairs team,” Guthrie said. “Many people put in a great deal of time and effort for each issue of At Ease, and it is very rewarding for that combined effort to be recognized at this level. However, our readers remain the most important judges as to whether At Ease is succeeding in telling the story of the Wisconsin National Guard.”

At Ease has won several Keith L. Ware awards in its more than four-decade history, but this marks the publication’s first Department of Defense-level award. A newsprint publication for much of its tenure and a magazine-format periodical between 2002 and 2009, At Ease converted to a web-only publication in July 2009.

In December of last year, At Ease revised its format to become more interactive. Online readers could view more photos per page as well as open video files, and still had the option of reproducing pages on personal printers.

At Ease Express, the official publication of the Wisconsin National Guard, has won several Keith L. Ware awards in DoD competition.
Veterans Job Fairs slated

Upcoming Veterans Job Fairs are listed below. For additional events, visit: [http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/jobfairs/](http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/jobfairs/).

**Veterans Job Fair, Milwaukee**

**Date/time:** Thursday, September 16, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
**Location:** Milwaukee VA Medical Center, 5000 W. National Ave., Rm. 3435, Milwaukee  
**Contact:** Greg Williams, 414/389-6293; or, [Stanley Kogutkiewicz](tel:262/695-7790), 262/695-7790.

**Relationship workshops planned**

Military families are the backbone of our nation and its military. They provide support and encouragement to our deployed Soldiers. The nation’s leadership recognizes this vital contribution and wants to help married couples reunite after long periods of separation.

The Wisconsin National Guard is pleased to announce a series of marriage enrichment weekends over the next several months. The method of instruction being used is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) developed at the University of Colorado and widely used throughout the U.S. Armed Forces as part of the Building Strong and Ready Families (BSRF) initiative. The class is designed to assist couples with reintegration and reunions by enhancing communication skills. Education will include icebreaker activities and will blend instruction and practical exercises.

Opportunity is given for couples to discuss with qualified instructors issues that may have arisen during their separation or since their return from mobilization. This is not marriage counseling, but an educational opportunity to learn new or improve upon existing communication skills. It is also a time to share success stories with other couples who have experienced separation through mobilization. The brochure and registration form will be mailed to all service members with family members who have returned from mobilization.

The State Family Program will administer the PREP weekends and our Army and Air National Guard chaplains who have been trained in PREP will instruct. Commanders are authorized to send Soldiers in an IDT status.

There is no cost to the service members for these weekends. The Family Program will contract the hotel and all meals and ensure the travel vouchers are completed to reimburse the spouse for mileage. A credit card is required upon check in for incidentals. Questions may be addressed to Carolyn Morgan in the Family Assistance Center.

**Veterans Job Fair, Sparta**

**Date/time:** Wednesday, June 16, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
**Location:** Army National Guard Armory, 602 E. Division St., Sparta  
**Contact:** Rickie Larson, 608/785-9363; or, [David Wolf](tel:608/785-9363), 608/785-9363.

**Veterans Job Fair, Green Bay**

**Date/time:** Wednesday, June 16, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
**Location:** Army National Guard Armory, 800 North Military Ave., Green Bay  
**Contact:** Michael Mack, 920/448-6776; or, [Brian Marquardt](tel:920/448-6778), 920/448-6778.

**Veterans Job Fair, Platteville**

**Date/time:** Thursday, July 15, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
**Location:** Army National Guard Armory, 475 N. Water St., Platteville  
**Contact:** Tim Murphy, 608/741-3523; or, [Dale Belke](tel:608/741-3523), 608/741-3523.

**Veterans Job Fair, Wausau**

**Date/time:** Thursday, July 15, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
**Location:** Army National Guard Armory, 833 S. 17th Ave., Wausau  
**Contact:** Gary Albrect, 715/261-7726; or, [Don Masterson](tel:715/261-7725), 715/261-7725.

**Veterans Job Fair, Oshkosh**

**Date/time:** Wednesday, August 18, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
**Location:** Army National Guard Armory, 1415 Armory Place, Oshkosh  
**Contact:** David Williams, 920/929-3923; or, [Curtis Sattler](tel:920/968-6874), 920/968-6874.

**Veterans Job Fair, Rhinelander**

**Date/time:** Wednesday, September 8, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
**Location:** Army National Guard Armory, 1136 Military Rd., Rhinelander  
**Contact:** Gary Albrect, 715/261-7726; or, [Don Masterson](tel:715/261-7725), 715/261-7725.

**Veterans Job Fair, Madison**

**Date/time:** Thursday, September 9, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
**Location:** Edgewood College, Deming Way Campus, 1255 Deming Way, Madison  
**Contact:** Mike Beck, 608/242-4910; or, [Eric Benson](tel:608/242-4881), 608/242-4881.

**Veterans Job Fair, Milwaukee**

**Date/time:** Thursday, September 16, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
**Location:** Milwaukee VA Medical Center, 5000 W. National Ave., Rm. 3435, Milwaukee  
**Contact:** Greg Williams, 414/389-6293; or, [Stanley Kogutkiewicz](tel:262/695-7790), 262/695-7790.

**Services, hours for Retiree Activities Offices**

The Retiree Activities Office (RAO) provides guidance and information to retirees and spouses of retirees, of all ranks and services. The RAO provides information on military status, TRICARE, military ID cards, survivor benefits, death reporting and much more.

Retirees may provide an e-mail address, to include first name, middle initial, last name, retired military grade and branch of service to widma.retiree@wisconsin.gov to be added to the RAO’s e-mail data base. The RAO also has a website that provides a lot of information for retirees and can be found at [http://dma.wi.gov/retirees](http://dma.wi.gov/retirees).

The Madison RAO is located at Joint Force Headquarters, 2400 Wright Street, Room 160, Madison, Wis., 53704. The RAO is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:30 to 11:30 a.m. except on holidays. Their phone number is 608-242-3115, 1-800-335-4157, ext. 3115, DSN 724-3115. Contact the RAO with questions or for assistance.

The Milwaukee RAO is co-located with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, General Mitchell Air National Guard Base, 1835 E. Grange Ave, Bldg 512, Milwaukee, Wis., 53207. Their phone number is 414-944-8212. Their e-mail address is rao.128arw@ang.af.mil. The Milwaukee RAO is manned by volunteers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

**USO Youth Camp fund-raiser set**

The USO of Wisconsin is sponsoring a 100-round Sporting Clay Event at the Milford Hills Gun Club, W5670 French Road, Johnson Creek, Wis. on Sunday, 11 July. Lunch will begin at 10:30 a.m. and shooting will begin at 11 a.m. A dinner and auction will follow the shooting event.

All proceeds from this event will go to sponsor military children to the Wisconsin Army National Guard Youth Camp in August through the USO of Wisconsin Youth Program. Our goal is to pay 100 percent of the registration fees for the campers.

Auction items will include: Shotgun, wildlife painting, 16-bird pheasant hunt, autographed Green Bay Packer football, and a sports ticket package.

Make check payable to: USO of Wisconsin, Inc. 750 Lincoln Memorial Drive Suite 303, Milwaukee, Wis. 53202. For more information, call the USO of Wisconsin at: 414-271-3133, Milford Hills Gun Club at 920-669-2249 or [donald.grundy@us.army.mil](mailto:donald.grundy@us.army.mil).
Silhouetted against an overcast sky, two Soldiers with the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 724th Engineer Battalion mount a Browning M2 machine gun to a High Mobility Multi Purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) prior to a training mission. The 724th deployed to Iraq in April. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Brian Jopek