



NORTH DAKOTA **GUARDIAN**

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TACTICALLY & TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT

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Soldiers with the Devils Lake, North Dakota-based 3662nd Maintenance Company finished the demilitarization of an M2A2 Howitzer in St. Thomas, North Dakota. The historical piece of military equipment now serves as the featured display in St. Thomas' Veterans Memorial Park. The Soldiers completed the process during their scheduled drill weekend last month.



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Military survivors, widows and families of fallen heroes were able to partake in the Survivors of Heroes Retreat at Holbrook Farms in Minnesota this month. The retreat is an all-expense paid getaway provided by husband and wife team — and fellow N.D. Air National Guard members — Lt. Col. Matthew Brancato and Lt. Col. Micaela Brancato.

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NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

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On the Cover



Senior Airman Sophie Miller, of the 119th Civil Engineer Squadron, takes aim at a target from a prone position using an M-16A2 rifle at the North Dakota National Guard Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Match July 12 at Camp Grafton South rifle range near Devils Lake, North Dakota.

Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp, 119th Wing

GUARD POSTS

Dispatches from the N.D. Guard Family

THE AIR FORCE INSPECTION SYSTEM

AIRMEN CAN EXPECT POSITIVE IMPACT FROM NEW CHANGES

If you haven't heard, the Air Force is overhauling its inspection system. Gone are the days of ramping up for the big compliance inspection, relaxing for 18 to 24 months, and doing it all over again. The Air Force issued Program Action Directive 13-01 on June 17, 2013, followed by the revised Air Force Instruction 90-201, "The Air Force Inspection System." These two documents direct significant changes to the Air Force Inspection System (AFIS) and will impact Airmen and civilians across the Air Force. The following is a short overview of what you can expect at the N.D. Air National Guard as we move forward with implementing the new system.

One of the more significant changes in the new AFIS is a reduction in the size of the Command Inspection Team. Commanders no longer have to spend their time and resources preparing for a more than 100-person Inspector General Team rolling onto base to inspect resources and compliance. Gone are the days of an inspector sifting through your specific checklist item by item and then writing you up for not having a current appointment letter. There still will be a command team that visits the base every 48 months or so, but the team will be much smaller, and its focus will be significantly different. In addition, the terminology has changed. A Consolidated Unit Inspection now is a Unit Effectiveness Inspection.

Another important change within the new AFIS is the Base Wing Commander's Inspection Program (CCIP). The CCIP was designed to give more power to wing commanders by allowing them to run their organization's inspection system. Now, wings will be able to focus on mission readiness and improving mission effectiveness every day,

rather than concentrating on inspection readiness. CCIP now involves a continual assessment of four major graded areas: managing resources, leading people, improving the unit and executing the mission.

Since command teams have scaled back their influence, the primary role of inspecting has been delegated down to the wing level. Wing inspector general shops are charged with implementing the CCIP, inspecting units within the wing and reporting back to the wing commander. What does this mean to you? Instead of the command team you are used to seeing every 24 months, you now will see a much smaller Wing Inspection Team that will periodically visit your unit for a few days and inspect the unit's CCIP.

Airman to Inspector General Sessions also now will be part of inspections. The two-part sessions will consist of a survey and a face-to-face interview. The interviews may be conducted one-on-one between an individual and an inspector general team member, or between groups of Airmen with a common thread, such as all of a wing's junior noncommissioned officer or company-grade officers. This interaction between the Inspector General Teams and unit members is designed to solicit feedback on how the unit believes they are performing in the major graded areas. This will help guide the team when investigating further.

In regards to the use of the web based software program, MICT (Management Internal Control Toolset), we will continue to use it as we have over the past year. Some important differences will include commands having to periodically pull data and reports from MICT during the entire 48-month inspection cycle. This means that we will be using MICT on a more frequent basis, but in smaller



LT. COL. KEVIN D. GAEU

119th Wing Director of Inspections

increments of time. The MICT should be used as a tool for Airmen to identify and report issues to their chain of command.

Finally, implementing the new AFIS here at the N.D. Air National Guard will require some manning adjustments to our inspector general shop and exercise program. The inspector general still will oversee both complaint resolution and inspections, with AFIS falling under inspections. The Exercise Evaluation Team will morph into the Wing Inspection Team, which will require manning adjustments and accepting additional responsibilities beyond exercises. Specifically, the team will deal with conducting inspections. The complaint resolution tasks of the inspector general remain. I would like to thank all the Hooligans in advance for embracing these changes. This is a unique opportunity to improve your unit at every level in a more efficient manner. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin D. Gaeu".

SUNNY DAYS

MILITARY YOUTH GO OUTDOORS FOR ANNUAL YOUTH CAMP

By Spc. Cassandra Simonton,
116th Public Affairs Detachment

Two Military Youth Camps (MYC) sponsored by Operation: Military Kids and the North Dakota National Guard's Child and Youth Program took place July 27-31 at the 4-H Camp near Washburn, North Dakota. The event was open to children whose parents are members of any branch of the U.S. military. MYC I was open to children ages 8 to 11, while MYC II was held for youth ages 12-15. About 70 children and 12 North Dakota Guardsmen from both the N.D. Air and Army National Guard served as squad leaders for the camps.

"For me, it's a way to give back to the Guard by mentoring these kids while they're young," said Tech Sgt. Dave Hogue, of Joint Force Headquarters.

MYCs involve activities that are associated with a typical kids' camp, while focusing on the unique aspects of children who are raised in a military environment. The events give the youths opportunities to form lifelong bonds with other military children.

"Everyone should have to camp once in their lives," said MYC Camp Chairperson Erica Hewitt. "It teaches them independence, self-reliance and resiliency."

The camps are led by 4-H counselors, as well as the volunteer Guard squad leaders. Squad leaders are assigned to assist and communicate with the children on a more personal level and provide leadership.

"The service members are amazing role models for them to see (and are aware of) what their parents are going through," Hewitt said.

The camp curriculums focused on topics such as self-confidence, problem solving and stress management. Campers also developed leadership, cooperation and communication skills through team-building activities.

The children also enjoyed activities ranging from cooking and mud pit obstacle courses to archery and water slides. They were involved in many educational activities, as well, engineered to build trust, solve conflicts and enhance verbal communication. The children also were able to spend a day on the water at the McDowell Dam Recreation Area, east of Bismarck, North Dakota, where they spent time paddleboating, canoeing and swimming.

Children in military families often face unique challenges with having one or both parents gone for an extended period of time. Between deployments, annual trainings and special missions, there are many cases in which a military parent can be gone several times a year.

"Camp is great for getting away from home and meeting actual military kids who know how it feels when their dad's gone or if their mom is gone," said Emily Morton, an 11-year-old camp attendee. "Sometimes I feel sad when he's (her father, who serves in the N.D. National Guard) gone. I'm the oldest, so a lot of the responsibilities fall to me. But, I'm very proud of what he has done for his country."

Emily's father, Staff Sgt. Kurt Morton, of the 188th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, was one of the volunteer squad leaders at the MYC. He said the opportunity to volunteer at MYC will greatly help his leadership skills, and teaching teamwork to children had



Helaena Preister crawls through a mud pit obstacle course at Military Youth Camp, which was held July 27-31 at the North Dakota 4-H Camp near Washburn, North Dakota.



Staff Sgt. Kurt Morton attempts to cross an obstacle course at Military Youth Camp. Morton was a squad leader for the camp, and his daughter, Emily, was a youth participant. About 70 children and 12 squad leaders participated in camp this year.



A Military Youth Camp participant takes advantage of the water slide that was set up for campers. In addition to water recreation, campers participated in cooking, mud pit obstacle courses and archery.

an entirely different set of challenges than when working with adults.

“I really enjoy these kids and getting to work with them,” Morton said. “They get to see a side of the military most kids don’t, and I get to learn more about the art of patience.”

During the campers’ time at McDowell Dam, they received a visit from Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general, who addressed the group while they dined on Meals Ready-to-Eat, or MREs, during lunch.

“What is most important is that our children meet and interact with other military children to know that they are not alone,” he said. “The kids enjoy talking to service members and getting an opportunity to ask their questions. I always enjoy conversing with them one on one. It is important to have someone available to answer their questions.”

The N. D. National Guard has held a number of military-specific camps throughout the summer, such as a fishing camp and a band camp, which also featured military personnel as squad leaders.

For more information about the N.D. National Guard Child and Youth Program, visit <http://bit.ly/NDNGYP>. ■



1st Lt. Renee O'Connor conducts flag ceremonies with attendees at Military Youth Camp. Campers said the Pledge of Allegiance and participated in flag-raising and lowering ceremonies every day during the 5-day camp near Washburn, North Dakota.



Pvt. Cassandra Sattler participates in a “blindfolded trust” exercise with her squad at Military Youth Camp. The curriculum at camp focused on growth in areas such as self-confidence, problem solving and stress management to enhance leadership, cooperation and communication skills.



North Dakota Adjutant General David A. Sprynczynatyk visits with campers July 30 at McDowell Dam, east of Bismarck, North Dakota, during Military Youth Camp.

ANSWERING THE CALL

Medical Professional Compelled to Make Transition to Military Service

By Maj. Penny Ripperger,
119th Wing

There is no question that Dr. Erik Holten is a professional in the healthcare career field. An internal medicine physician at the Fargo Veteran Affairs (VA) Medical Center in North Dakota, he has 20 years of medical experience and some extraordinary skills. With all his accolades and experience, it might surprise people that this busy man raised his right hand and joined the U.S. Air Force one week before his 49th birthday. He didn't do it for the money. He obviously didn't do it for the retirement. He did it to serve his country, and his inspiration was his patients.

"It was probably 15 years ago when I was at MeritCare (as a primary care internal medicine outpatient physician with the clinic in Fargo), and a Guardsman was a patient of mine. He told me that I was a patriot and should consider being in the North Dakota Air Guard. He gave me the information and I put it aside and didn't really think about it," said Holten.

Years later, when he started at the Fargo VA, he worked with a panel of patients that largely consisted of Vietnam veterans. This experience changed his life.

"(Working with) these vets was a real eye-opener for me. I would look through their radiology reports and the surgeon dictations from the field and go through the information with them. Every one of them would just shrug their shoulders and say, 'it was a horrible time, but I made it home and 60,000 didn't.' It was a very humbling experience for me to serve these people and it made me think of that Air Guard guy from MeritCare," Holten said. "I called him 10 years later and told him I was interested in joining the Guard."

When the surprised Guardsman asked what changed his mind, Holten explained that he realized these Vietnam veterans were real servants to their country and they inspired him to want to make a difference.

"If I can in some way, and in a much smaller capacity, serve in my profession, that will fulfill my personal need to serve my country," Holten said.

To enter into military service, he submitted his application for Commissioned Officer Training, which he attended at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. Holten had the option to go to a two-week boot camp for "hard-to-recruit" professionals, or a more in-depth four-week boot camp. Without missing a beat, he opted for the four-week training, a rare decision for professionals with intense work schedules.

"Most physicians go to the two-week course, but I researched it quite a bit and felt that the longer course would give me the more comprehensive training that I needed to better understand the military," he said.



Maj. Erik Holten, of the 119th Medical Group, demonstrates suturing procedures on a pig foot during training June 3 at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base in Fargo, North Dakota.

In his class, about two-thirds of the trainees were nurses; there were only two physicians and the rest were lawyers. Because of his credentials and professional experience, the National Guard Bureau assigned Holten the rank of major, and he outranked all the other students and most of the teachers.

"It was mostly uncomfortable, most of the time," he said.

Holten was affectionately nicknamed the 'most chronologically-advanced trainee,' and he probably felt that way with the constant running and 0430 marching each morning, a skill that he confessed he was terrible at.

"They pulled me out of some of our formations, because I was keeping my entire flight behind," he laughed.

There also was a great deal of academic work, which proved to be more difficult than he anticipated.

"We had to take tests on operational warfare tactics. It was about as interesting to me as reading a phone book," Holten said.

However, a part of the training that he did find fascinating was

the sharp contrast between the lawyers and the physicians in the group.

“The lawyers were by far the sharpest academic students with topics like warfare tactics,” Holten said. “When I was given a command to march, I would have to sit and think for ten seconds what an ‘About, face (command)’ was, where the lawyers would be able to react immediately.”

Holten explained how medical professionals generally are trained to take multiple sources of information and thoughts and bring them together to make a decision later.

“For me, it is a totally different mentality; to act immediately and not ask questions. Through my years of medical experience, I’ve been trained to think things through methodically,” Holten said.

Another experience that threw the doctor for a loop was preparing for inspections. Holten had been advised to get his shirts pressed at a dry cleaner, and did so, prior to training. While everyone stressed and ironed to prepare for an inspection, Holten felt confident that his pressed shirt was ready to go.

“I show up for the inspection, and the drill instructor looks at me, smiles and says, ‘I hear you’re from North Dakota. Tell me, what is the predominant military presence there?’ I tell him, ‘Sir, it’s about 70 percent Army.’ Then he says, ‘I know that North Dakota is all about the Army. I can look at you and tell. How do I know that, major?’ When I didn’t have an answer, he had me walk down the aisle with him, and I realized that my shirt had two creases going down the front — Army style,” Holten said.

The drill instructor explained to Holten that he was in the Air Force now and, in the future, he must tell the dry cleaner to press his shirts the Air Force way, not the Army way.

“Then the drill instructor said, ‘And I know you went to a dry cleaner, because a man like you would never know how to iron his shirts!’ ... and he was right,” Holten said.

Holten has a sense of humor about all of his experiences and, perhaps due to his rank and age, he was treated a bit differently from the other trainees, but there is no doubt that he didn’t push himself.

“I received an Outstanding Performance Award and I’m not really sure why. I think they gave it to me because they knew I was trying so hard not to fail,” he joked.

He theorized that at the end of the day, the true test of the training was examining how a person responds to failure.

“If a trainee doesn’t have the gumption to keep going after they fail, then they shouldn’t be there,” he said. “They would put so much work on your plate that there was no way you could succeed at everything. You had to learn how to react to failure. The entire experience was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me that I learned a great deal from.”

Joke or not, Holten has that Outstanding Performance Award framed and hanging proudly in his office at the Air Guard in Fargo, where he serves as the 119th Wing physician. It is sure to be the first of many prestigious awards to come for this inspirational and dedicated doctor. ■



Maj. Erik Holten, of the 119th Medical Group, right, leads a medical team attending to simulated injuries on a state-of-the-art human patient simulator mannequin June 3 during training at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base in Fargo, North Dakota. The mannequin was fully capable of simulating normal bodily processes, such as breathing and having a heartbeat.

BRINGING HISTORY

3662nd Maintenance Company Soldiers Do



An M2A2 Howitzer was transported to St. Thomas, North Dakota, demilitarized and placed for display July 19 with the help of the Devils Lake, North Dakota-based 3662nd Maintenance Company Soldiers.

*Story by Sgt. Jennifer Joyce,
116th Public Affairs Detachment*

*Photos by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Arnold Zins,
3662nd Maintenance Company*



3662nd Maintenance Company Soldiers use a 7.5-ton Iroan crane to unload the M2A2 Howitzer from a landoll trailer.

Thanks to the help of North Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers, residents and visitors are now able to enjoy the expansion of a park featuring a historical relic in St. Thomas, North Dakota, a small town of about 330 people nestled in the northeastern corner of the state.

Soldiers with the Devils Lake, North Dakota-based 3662nd Maintenance Company finished the demilitarization of an M2A2 Howitzer, a historical piece of military equipment, which now serves as the featured display in St. Thomas' Veterans Memorial Park. The Soldiers

completed the process July 19-20, during their scheduled drill weekend.

Demilitarization means that military equipment is rendered inoperable, but kept in a pristine condition. This process begins immediately when the equipment arrives at its designated location. The process for an M2A2 Howitzer, which was a standard piece of field artillery in World War II, includes equipment transport, securing all moveable parts, removing paint from any parts that need to be welded and final placement of the equipment.

The howitzer initially was delivered to Grand Forks, North Dakota, from the Anniston Army Depot, a U.S. Army facility in Alabama that stores, maintains and restores military equipment. North Dakota's field maintenance shop



3662nd Maintenance Company Soldiers used welding equipment to ensure that all moving parts were secure before the M2A2 Howitzer was put on display.



Pvt. Shawn Baker, of Jamestown, North Dakota, wears a smock and weld helmet while operating welding equipment. The protective gear, issued to welders in the 3662nd Maintenance Company, is flame-retardant and protects against UV light.

Spc. Eric Trusdell, of Northwood, North Dakota, uses an angle grinder to remove paint from an M2A2 Howitzer. Paint removal is one of the steps in the demilitarization process, which must be completed before field artillery can be put on display. During the process, Soldiers also secured moving parts of the Howitzer, including the anchoring, recoil and elevation system. The purpose of the process is to ensure that display equipment does not pose a health or safety threat to observers while it is on display.

RY BACK TO LIFE

demilitarize an M2A2 Howitzer in St. Thomas

employees used a tractor, a landoll trailer and a 7.5-ton lorain crane to load and transport the howitzer from Grand Forks to St. Thomas.

The process to acquire historical military equipment can be lengthy, but is made much simpler with the help of local military assets. The St. Thomas American Legion submitted a request for historical equipment to the Aniston Army Depot. When the request was approved, the N.D. Army National Guard was notified. The 3662nd Maintenance Company was assigned to the demilitarization process because the unit has the equipment and the trained personnel needed to complete the work. The unit started the planning and equipment staging processes during their annual training in June.

Demilitarization missions are not new

to the N.D. Army National Guard. Over the years, communities throughout the state have acquired historical military equipment with the help of National Guard resources. The entity which requests the display items ultimately is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of any equipment they acquire, though they are able to request resources, such as paint, from the N.D. National Guard.

Col. Darcie Handt, N.D. National Guard joint chief of staff, said that these types of missions are valuable to Soldiers and to North Dakota communities.

“These missions allow Soldiers to perform the technical skills required for their military positions and they help our communities display our military heritage,” he said. ■



Spc. Eric Trusdell uses an angle grinder to remove paint from a part of the M2A2 Howitzer that will be welded during the demilitarization process.



3662nd Maintenance Company Soldiers secured all moving parts of the M2A2 Howitzer in order to finalize the demilitarization process.



Soldiers with the 3662nd Maintenance Company completed the demilitarization and assisted with the placement of the M2A2 Howitzer on July 20 in St. Thomas, North Dakota. The St. Thomas American Legion was able to acquire the Howitzer for the Veterans Memorial Park by submitting a request to the Aniston Army Depot. The 3662nd conducted the planning process and equipment staging for the demilitarization mission during their annual training in June, after the St. Thomas American Legion's request was granted.



Pvt. Shawn Baker and Spc. Eric Trusdell help sling load a demilitarized M2A2 Howitzer on July 20 so it could be transported to Veterans Memorial Park in St. Thomas, North Dakota, where it will continue to be displayed.



3662nd Maintenance Company Soldiers used a 7.5-ton lorain crane to place and position the M2A2 Howitzer on a concrete slab at the Veterans Memorial Park in St. Thomas, North Dakota, where it will be permanently displayed.

Military Marksmen Continue Winning Streaks During State, Regional Competitions

Story and photos by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp,
119th Wing



Master Sgt. Brian Rook, of the 119th Wing, fires his M-16A2 rifle at the North Dakota National Guard Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Match July 12 at Camp Grafton South rifle range near Devils Lake, North Dakota.

Fifty-two of North Dakota's best military shooters began this year's National Guard Marksmanship Program competition cycle July 11-13, starting with participation in the Annual Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Match at the Camp Gilbert C. Grafton southern training area near Devils Lake, North Dakota. Following state competition, qualifying marksmen traveled to Camp Guernsey, Wyoming, for regional matches, where a North Dakota team comprised of both Army and Air Guard members took first place for the third year in a row.

After securing first place scores in rifle and pistol contests, along with a "3-gun match" and the "General George Patton Match," a four-person 817th Engineer Company (Sapper) team, from Jamestown, North Dakota, produced a dominant aggregate team score to come out on top during state competition. The unit has won the contest every year for the past 30 years.

"The impressive showing by the 817th is a testament to its strong tradition of excellence, led by Sgt. 1st Class Gary Varberg (who has been an outstanding competition shooter and now is a coach), and their unit-level support and command emphasis on marksmanship,"

said Tech. Sgt. Josh Von Bank, of the N.D. Air National Guard's 119th Wing in Fargo, North Dakota.

Additionally, the 119th Wing team had a strong showing with a second place finish in the pistol contest and third place in the rifle contest, while the 815th Engineer Company (Horizontal), which has detachments in Lisbon, Edgeley and Wishek, North Dakota, finished the opposite. The team took second place in the rifle match and third in the pistol.

According to competition planners, "the Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Match is held to promote battle-focused marksmanship training and to enhance overall marksmanship proficiency. The event also is designed to test and improve the capabilities of the state's National Guard forces in a tactically-oriented environment."

In addition to team competitions, individuals vie for top honors, competing in a variety of matches using M9 pistols, M16 rifles and combat shotguns.

Sgt. Evan Messer, of Fargo, a member of the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper), was the overall individual top gun for the

second year in a row, with Sgt. Andrew Maley, of Fargo, also a member of the 817th Engineer Company, coming in second. Sgt. Tyler Goldade, of Jamestown, and a member of the 815th Engineer Company (Horizontal), placed third.

“When he gets his game face on, nobody can beat Evan Messer. He doesn’t have a weakness. He’s one of the best in the country,” Von Bank said.

Three shooters from the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper) earned Distinguished Marksmanship Badges. Messer now has badges for both rifle and pistol, as well as Spc. Tyrel Hoppe, of Horace, North Dakota, a member of the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper). Spc. Levi Harrington, of Bismarck, North Dakota, also a member of the 817th received his Distinguished Marksmanship Badge in rifle competition. Shooters earn the recognition by achieving top scores over several state, regional and national competitions. According to the official homepage of the U.S. Army, less than 1 percent of all Soldiers in the history of the U.S. Army have earned the badge.

Upon completion of the state match, the N.D. National Guard established joint teams — both Army and Air — for the regional marksmanship contest July 26-29 at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming. The assembled “alpha” team was comprised of the top four shooters from the state competition. Team members for this year’s competition were Messer, Goldade, Maley and Tech. Sgt. Charles Welle, of Fargo, a member of the 119th Wing.

The “alpha” team took first place at the regionals competition in

the “General George Patton” match, the “rifle covering-fire” match and the “overall team” category for the third year in a row. The shooters now have qualified for the U.S. Army Small Arms Contest at Fort Benning, Georgia, which serves as the national competition for U.S. military marksmanship.

Earlier this year, the North Dakota team took fourth place overall at the U.S. Army Small Arms Contest in Fort Benning, and third place in 2013. They qualified for the 2013 and 2014 contests by winning in the previous years’ regional competitions, and qualified again this year based on their regional win.

The future looks bright for North Dakota’s marksmen, as novice shooters Sgt. Josh Bucklin, of Hazelton, North Dakota, a member of the 815th Engineer Company (Horizontal), and Spc. Bryce Solie, of Fertile, Minnesota, a member of the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper), each captured a first place finish in the “individual novice” category at the regional competition.

The N.D. National Guard benefits from its members training and shooting in marksmanship competitions, and both Air and Army shooters are encouraged to participate.

“Soldiers and Airmen gain knowledge and expertise in the weapon systems we’re using (during competition), and they enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow competitors. Units gain highly-trained marksmen who can bring their expertise back to the unit level to help train others,” said Lt. Col. Stephen Herda, state marksmanship competition coordinator and full-time environmental program manager for the N.D. National Guard. ■



Sgt. Matthew Cobb, of the 164th Engineer Battalion, takes aim at a target from a prone position using an M-16A2 rifle at the North Dakota National Guard Adjutant General’s Combat Marksmanship Match.



Calm On the Water

Military Survivors Work through Grief at Retreat Created by North Dakota Guardsmen

*Story and Photos by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp,
119th Wing*

Five strong women traveled from different parts of the country July 31 - Aug. 4 for a relaxing and rejuvenating retreat experience. It was the end result of a three-year renovation project created by two inspirational members of the North Dakota National Guard for military survivors.

Survivors of Heroes Retreat on Holbrook Farms is an all-expense paid getaway designed for military survivors, widows and families of fallen heroes who have lost their loved ones in combat or training accidents. The experience provides them an opportunity to get away and spend time with people who have gone through similar tragedies.

Husband and wife team — and fellow N.D. Air National Guard members — Lt. Col. Matthew Brancato and Lt. Col. Micaela Brancato provided the relaxing location for the retreat by opening up their five-bedroom home on a 47-acre maple syrup farm on Holbrook Lake, Minnesota. They have poured themselves into providing an incredible Minnesota lakes experience for the spouses of military members who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The idea for the retreat began several years ago for the Brancatos. The couple met at the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1998 and were married in July 2000. The seeds for their retreat project were planted when Matt lost a co-worker in his unit while at his first U.S. Air Force assignment to Italy as a young lieutenant. He was asked to help the widow gather her belongings and move, which had a strong impact on his life. Then, Matt's roommate from the Academy was killed in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2011. Two months later, a good friend of Micaela's from Fargo, North Dakota, Sarah (Ziegler) Merwin, lost her husband after he was killed in an F-16 accident.

Sarah told Matt and Micaela that spending time with her family in the Minnesota lakes country helped her through the grieving process.

"That's when we realized how we wanted to help survivors; by providing a therapeutic place for them to relax at the lakes," Micaela said.

The inspirational couple have had unexpected help from many volunteers for the project.

"People often tell us they want to support the military, but don't know how. This became a vehicle, an avenue, for them to give something back to those who have

served their country by helping the survivors and the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice," Matt said.

On the first full day of activities in August, the retreat group made a 10-minute drive to neighboring Lake Maud to enjoy some boating activities at Micaela's parents' lake home. There, they enjoyed the use of jet skis and all sorts of water toys, as well as a peaceful sandy beach.

The women who attend the retreat are suffering through various levels of the grieving process. But they also are strong, resilient women and are able to help one another through their hardships.

"I really enjoy the fact that the community came together to do this for us. They want to honor us," said Tami Imlay, whose husband, Capt. Francis D. Imlay, died in an F-15 crash in Southwest Asia on March 28, 2012.

Merwin's (Ziegler) husband, Capt. Eric Ziegler, was killed in an F-16 crash during a training flight near Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. She is an Air Force Academy graduate who served seven years in the U.S. Air Force and was a captain working as an aircraft maintenance officer at the time of her separation from service.

Dana Lyon also is a captain in the U.S. Air Force, an Air Force Academy graduate and a top-level Division I athlete and U.S.

Above: Paddleboard instructor Jess Stuewe, left, teaches Holbrook Farms Retreat guests yoga and paddleboard techniques on the calm water at Holbrook Lake, Minnesota. **Right:** From left, Sonia Cazarez, Tami Imlay and Leigh Giglio practice maneuvering paddleboards during a retreat for widows of U.S. Military members who lost their lives while serving their country.

Olympic trial javelin thrower. She lost her husband, Capt. David Lyon, on Dec. 27, 2013, when he was struck by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. They were deployed together in the U.S. Air Force at the time of the tragedy.

“It has been constant chaos in my life since I lost Dave. It’s been very hard to pick up the broken pieces of (my) heart,” she said.

“It is hard being away from my children for this. They are worried I won’t come back,” said Imlay, who is now a single mother to a six-year old son and a four-year old daughter. She explains that as a result of having lost one parent, the children are now concerned their remaining parent might also not come back when she leaves them for a trip.

It’s a sentiment that is shared by survivor Leigh Giglio, who lost her husband, Capt. Nicholas Giglio, on Oct. 15, 2009, in an F-16 training accident. She also has children ages six and four.

“I am so thankful for all of the volunteers (working with Matt and Micaela) in the community and the military,” Giglio said. “Military people really take care of each other, and I am so appreciative of the support.”

Many of the women survivors stay connected through a social media site on facebook.com created to support widows of fallen heroes. The site also has served as a way to share experiences and has greatly contributed in the coordination of the retreat opportunity.

“I’m here with folks that have shared experiences, who can say, ‘this is how I did it, this is how I made it. Hey, be aware this is what’s coming up.’ We each have a little bit of an identity crisis from losing our husbands. For me, it was all I ever knew of love,”

Lyon said. “It’s so good to be around people in such a relaxing environment, who are trying to help without trying to fix things. Let me figure out whatever this loss means for me. I can sit and relax, and if something comes to mind, I can ask them, ‘well, how did you deal with this?’”

“I am grateful for this experience. It makes me feel like I am not forgotten,” said Sonia Cazarez, whose husband U.S. Marine Cpl. Robert Cazarez was killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan on March 30, 2012.

“It’s a time to relax and rejuvenate ... come with an open mind, and at a very minimum, you’re going to have an opportunity to relax and eat great food,” Lyon said when asked what she would say to others contemplating the opportunity in the future.

Activities are designed to be spa-like and include paddleboarding, motorized water sports, yoga classes, massages, a pontoon tour of a neighboring lake, dining out at some popular local spots and listening to guest speakers. A professional chef even came in to prepare a nice dinner at the retreat.

“This is one of the neatest teaching experiences yet, just because of the great people and the purpose of the retreat,” said paddleboard instructor Jess Stuewe, who led a peaceful paddleboarding and yoga lesson one morning on the glass-like surface of Holbrook Lake.

N. D. Air National Guard member Lt. Col. Teresa McDonough felt compelled to contribute a pontoon ride on a neighboring lake to enhance the retreat experience. The retreat planners are hoping to host groups of survivors about three times each summer in the future, and would like to add more events and activities.



“There is no pressure for anyone to come here. We just want to offer it up free of charge. We have activities planned, but there are no requirements,” Matt said. “They (the survivors) don’t have to take part if they don’t want to. We just want to provide a relaxing retreat where they can come and connect with others. We want them to feel that this is their home, and they can return if they want. We feel that they have earned that.”

“I want to thank the people who are making this retreat possible. There are a lot of survivors out there that could use something like this,” Merwin (Ziegler) said.

“These survivors taught me more about strength and resiliency than I could ever imagine,” Micaela said. “Since their tragedies, they’ve been surviving. Holbrook Farms Retreat is a place where they can just take a break from that and ‘just be,’ knowing that they are not alone and that many people care about them. The focus is not as much about the deceased, but on them.”

For more information about Holbrook Farms Retreat, email holbrookfarmsmn@gmail.com or visit the website at www.holbrookfarmsmn.com. ■



Above: Sarah Merwin, left, and Capt. Dana Lyon, U.S. Air Force, ride a water tube pulled by a boat driven by husband and wife team Lt. Col. Micaela Brancato and Lt. Col. Matthew Brancato, both of the 119th Wing, on Lake Maud, Minnesota. Below: The hand-carved front door of Holbrook Farms Retreat and welcome mat invites guests to enter for a relaxing vacation in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. The Brancatos operate the retreat to offer relaxation and reverry for widows of U.S. Military members who lost their lives while serving their country.



Emergency Response

North Dakota's Civil Support Team Responds to Chemical Fire

By Sgt. 1st Class Mike Jennens, 81st Civil Support Team,
and Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen, Joint Force Headquarters

It was about 2 a.m. when 1st Sgt. Robert Scharnowske, of North Dakota's 81st Civil Support Team (CST), got a phone call alerting his unit about an emergency in Williston — a hub in western North Dakota's Bakken oil patch. There's a reason National Guard CSTs are on stand-by 24/7. Emergency managers in Williams County had an urgent need for the highly-specialized unit's assistance. In the early hours of July 22, a fire broke out at the site of an oil field supply company in an industrial section on the east side of town. The warehouse, according to state records, "stored dozens of chemicals."

CSTs support civil authorities at a domestic chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear high-yield explosives (CBRNE) incident site by identifying CBRNE agents/substances, assessing current or projected consequences, advising on response measures and assisting with appropriate requests for additional follow-on state and federal military forces. By 6:15 a.m., the 81st CST Soldiers were on their way to Williston from the unit's headquarters at Fraine Barracks in Bismarck, North Dakota.

"They (N.D. Department of Emergency Services) typically will do a

conference call on a HAZMAT (hazardous materials) incident, and we will almost always be included on that," said Lt. Col. Steven Hedrick, 81st CST commander. "In this case, there were some capabilities that we could bring to bear at the incident. We went ahead and said, 'we are available and this is pretty much right up our alley.'"

Hedrick said that state HAZMAT teams are equipped to take mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the impacts of hazardous materials, while CSTs have more capabilities in detecting them. The unit is equipped with a full, state-certified laboratory in one of its vehicles to provide sophisticated analysis and detection capability.

"There were a lot of very toxic materials in that warehouse. In this case, there was a potential that the products of combustion could be hazardous. And, so that was the big difference — you had a lot of unknowns," he said.

Once on the scene in Williston, the 81st CST dispatched two of its members into the contaminated area to collect air and water samples for analysis and to send to the N.D. Department of Health's state lab. Prior to the unit's arrival, Williams County emergency managers had ordered a half-mile voluntary evacuation. The Soldiers, too, had to take precautions before proceeding with their mission. Sgt. Leroy Filler and Staff Sgt. William Miller, both CBRNE noncommissioned officers for the unit, were tasked with going into the smoke-affected area to retrieve the air sample.

"We were backed off a little ways (when we arrived); there were a bunch of buildings in the way of the view of the fire (from where we were located). With the way the weather was, it (the smoke plume) was going straight up for the most part," Filler said. "The commander didn't want to take the risk (of going in right away), because some of those barrels were still exploding. We had to make sure our ducks were in a row before we rushed right into it."

After emergency managers completed an incident action plan to contend with the blaze, Filler and Miller were able to complete their air sample mission. The 81st CST then continued to monitor the situation and provide information to the incident commander and the mayor of Williston. As the fire continued to burn, the unit also gathered water and soil sample for additional analysis.

As this issue of the North Dakota Guardian goes to print, the fire's clean up still is ongoing. According to a July 23 news release from the N.D. Department of Health, state personnel continue to test for a variety of substances and continue to update the public.

"We understand people are concerned about possible harm. So far we have not found anything that causes us great concern, but we will follow through with testing to make certain public health is protected" said Dave Glatt, environmental health section chief for the N.D. Department of Health.

By 9:00 p.m. on the day of the incident, the 81st CST had been released by the incident commander after concluding detection and monitoring.

"This was exactly the type of event that we train for," Hedrick said. "We were able to use our knowledge and equipment to help a community during a stressful and potentially very dangerous situation." ■



Sgt. Leroy Filler, with the 81st Civil Support Team, wears a Tyvek suit with a self-contained breathing apparatus to retrieve an air sample from the immediate area of the chemical fire in Williston.

GUARDIAN *Snapshots*

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Photo by Staff Sgt. Brett Miller, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

Sgt. Tyler Flom, of Fargo, North Dakota, receives his awards during a Freedom Salute ceremony held July 20, at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota, that honored Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery Regiment for their service during Operation Noble Eagle in Washington, D.C.



Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Joyce, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

First Sgt. Ken Baer, of Garrison, North Dakota, welcomes Sgt. Carol Kauk to the Fort Hood, Texas, area Aug. 8, where she will conduct the demobilization process before returning to Piedmont, South Carolina, where she resides. Kauk is among the first group of 814th Medical Company (Area Support) Soldiers to return from the unit's Afghanistan deployment.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp, 119th Wing

Senior Airman Michael Lampman, left, and Senior Airman Matthew Schlothhauer, both of the 219th Security Forces Squadron, take a defensive posture during a training scenario July 15, at Camp Gilbert C. Grafton, North Dakota. The Airmen performed annual training requirements for their assigned mission of missile field security at the Minot Air Force Base, near Minot, North Dakota, during their annual training.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp, 119th Wing

Staff Sgt. Katherine Robbins, of the 119th Medical Group, administers care to superficial abrasion on the forehead of Tech. Sgt. Aaron Weaver, of the 219th Security Forces Squadron, July 15, during a training scenario at Camp Gilbert C. Grafton near Devils Lake, North Dakota.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp, 119th Wing

Staff Sgt. Charles Cunningham, of the 119th Services Flight, prepares the lunch meal July 15, for Civil Air Patrol cadets at the 2014 Joint Dakota Cadet Leadership Encampment at Camp Gilbert C. Grafton, North Dakota.

Share your photos!

Submit your photos to be considered for inclusion in the N.D. Guardian!

Email high-resolution photos to Sgt. Jennifer Joyce, N.D. Guardian editor, at jennifer.m.joyce2.mil@mail.mil.



State Medical Detachment Honored for 'Excellent' Immunization Record

North Dakota's State Medical Detachment this year again touted a superior record of immunizing Soldiers in the North Dakota Army National Guard and ensuring medical readiness across the force. The unit received a "Certificate of Excellence" at the National Guard Bureau (NGB) Medical Training Conference in Camp Dawson, West Virginia, for being the first medical team in the nation to complete 90 percent of its flu vaccination mission before a Dec. 15 deadline. This is the fourth year in a row the State Medical Detachment has earned the award.

Col. Brian Keller, deputy state surgeon for the Medical Detachment, said the unit does a lot of pre-planning and coordination to make sure members of his staff are available in unit locations across the state to administer flu vaccinations to Soldiers.

"Mostly we complete our vaccinations during the November (drill) weekend, when all the units are training. The Medical Detachment then will drive to each location and immunize the Soldiers," he said. "It's dual cooperation between us and the units, because the units, if they don't have their Soldiers there, then it doesn't matter where we go. It's a big help that the units cooperate with that."

Flu vaccinations are critical to supporting the N.D. National Guard's mission statement of providing "ready units and individuals." Soldiers need to receive vac-



Courtesy Photo

Col. Anne Naclerio, chief surgeon for the Army National Guard, second from right, presents a "Certificate of Excellence" to staff of the N.D. Army National Guard's State Medical Detachment for its superior flu immunization record for 2013. From left, are Capt. Stan Brown, human resources specialist; Lt. Col. Todd Schaffer, state surgeon for the Medical Detachment; Naclerio; and Col. Brian Keller, deputy state surgeon.

inations annually to maintain immunity as the flu virus mutates.

"We want our Soldiers to have vaccinations so their bodies can build up the immunity toward the flu virus. We (the National Guard) are the first military responders during state emergencies. If our service members were down with the flu, we couldn't respond," Keller said.

The State Medical Detachment also earned second place during the conference for overall medical readiness, which includes completion of Soldiers' periodic health assessments, annual dental exams

and annual vision screenings. The unit was only .2 percentage points, using an aggregate score, behind Hawaii's medical unit, which took first place.

State surgeons, occupational health professionals, state dental officers and core military medical personnel annually attend the NGB Medical Training Conference. While there, they receive new training, updates and procedures for helping Guardsmen meet medical requirements to perform their state and federal missions. ■

Local "Out of the Darkness" Walks Scheduled Throughout the State

In observance of Suicide Prevention Month in September, North Dakota National Guard Resilience, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention (R3SP) personnel encourage Soldiers and Airmen to take the opportunity to promote awareness in their communities.

Six Out of the Darkness Community Walks are schedule to be held throughout North Dakota next month and are open to the public.

"Soldiers and Airmen should consider participating in the walks to raise awareness about suicide as part of Suicide Prevention Month," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shelly

Sizer, R3SP manager. "The community walks serve as an opportunity to support suicide prevention efforts, raise awareness and to walk with those that have been impacted by suicide."

Out of the Darkness Community Walks, sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), are held in various locations across the country each year to promote suicide prevention education, outreach and awareness. The events also provide opportunities for those affected by suicide loss to honor their loved ones.

According to the AFSP, the suicide rate among U.S. military members is one suicide per day, a rate that has drastically increased over the past two years.

Upcoming Community Walks

Sep. 13 – Minot, North Dakota
 Sep. 13 – Dickinson, North Dakota
 Sep. 13 – Williston, North Dakota
 Sep. 19 – Bismarck, North Dakota
 Sep. 21 – Fargo, North Dakota
 Sep. 28 – Valley City, North Dakota

For more information about the Out of the Darkness Community Walks, or to register for an upcoming walk, visit www.outofthedarkness.org. ■

Chaplains' Corner:

Life-Giving Memories

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David Johnson,
Joint Force Headquarters

It was a great November weekend! My family and I went to Devils Lake, North Dakota, to be with my brother and his family for a weekend of hunting. It was the first year that it wasn't too cold to have my boys out with me all weekend. The sun was shining and we had a successful hunt. Again, it was a great weekend!

After a long drive home on Sunday, I checked my messages and had a call from Command Sgt. Maj. Harley Schwind. I called him back right away, and he told me that the 164th Engineer Battalion had been alerted for possible mobilization — a unit in which I was a member. This didn't change the great weekend I'd just had ... but it did give me a lot to think about!

Suddenly, that weekend meant a whole lot more than it already had. I started to think about how I wouldn't get that weekend next year and about all that I would miss because of deployment. As members of the military, you know what I'm talking about — missed events, months and, in cases, a year or more of being away from your family. You understand the commitment, the service and the sacrifice it takes to be a part of the military. You also understand that in this work, your family and loved ones serve right alongside you.

You've not chosen an easy profession and you know that because of that profession, "time" with loved ones is very precious. But, when we get home from our time away, sometimes "life happens" and we may take time with loved ones for granted for a lot of reasons.

For all of us in this line of work, my challenge is this: think about the next day, week or month. How will you connect with the ones most important to you in your life? If you don't have a



Courtesy Photo

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David Johnson embraces his sons Isaac, Micah and Caleb at the Bismarck Airport on May 3, 2008 upon return from his deployment with the 164th Engineer Battalion.

plan for it, why not? If you do have a plan for it, excellent! I found a quote recently that said, "Remember the little things in life, for one day you will look back and realize that they were the big things." The older I get, the more this rings true for me.

These "little things" take place in simple ways: eating a meal as a family at home or at your favorite restaurant, enjoying the outdoors and a variety of events/activities, attending worship or praying together as a family, and so on. And, as we do these things, we make memories that last. If you think about it, these memories, (while we are on mission, going through a difficult time or just reflecting back on life) have a

way of sustaining us in unique ways until we can return home again to create new memories.

As you and your family serve our state and nation, I pray that memories of home, faith and family sustain you in and through all that you face!

Blessings,
Chaplain Johnson

"...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." — Philippians 4:8 ■



Photo by Spc. Zachary Schuster, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

D.J. Wallace holds his son during a ceremony held Aug. 3 at the Global War on Terrorism Memorial in Bismarck, North Dakota. The event was held to honor the fallen veterans of the North Dakota the North Dakota National Guard's 957th Engineering Company. Multiple events were held over the weekend to commemorate the unit's ten-year anniversary of their deployment to Iraq. Look for the full anniversary story in next month's issue.