



THE

CACTUS PATCH

QUARTERLY

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2012 Ranger Challenge

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About The Cactus Patch

The Cactus Patch Quarterly is an authorized publication for the Soldiers, Families and civilian employees of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). Its contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

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Highlights

On the cover



Soldiers show their tactical knowledge and strive to win the 2012 Ranger Challenge. (p. 10)

Responding to call of duty



Soldiers provide last-minute aid to a California cargo ship. (p. 6)

Facebook helps save life

Unit members notice fellow Soldier's warning signs. Via Facebook, battle buddies are able to find him and help him to seek care. (p. 7)

Recognition at Vikings game



Troops honored at Vikings game in honor of Veteran's Day. (p. 8)

Run marks Army Reserve Birthday



U.S. Soldiers, Marines, and Sailors participate in the Fort Des Moines 5K run/walk in honor of the Army Reserve's 105th birthday, at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, on April 25. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Sean Taylor, 203rd Public Affairs Detachment).

Servicemembers celebrate 105 years of the Army Reserve with a 5K run/walk

By Maj. Monica Radtke
103rd ESC Public Affairs Officer



Col. David Elwell, deputy commanding officer with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), presents a medal to Skyla for placing third in the dog division at the Fort Des Moines 5K run/walk in honor of the Army Reserve's 105th birthday, in Des Moines, Iowa, on April 25. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Sean Taylor, 203rd Public Affairs Detachment).

DES MOINES, Iowa – The 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), U.S. Army Reserve, hosted the Fort Des Moines 5K Run/Walk in honor of the 105th birthday of the U.S. Army Reserve on April 25.

The event was held at Grays Lake Park in Des Moines on the Kruidenier Trail. A sea of yellow and black could be seen as runners and walkers donning Army Reserve colors and attire made their way around Grays Lake.

Army Reserve Soldiers as well as Marines and Sailors from Fort Des Moines tenet units were among the participants. Staff members from U.S. Senator Tom Harkin's office also ran. Amy Beller, Outreach Coordinator for Sen. Harkin, sounded the horn to officially start the event.

The Iowa Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) sponsored the run/walk and also presented finisher trophies to participants.

Created in 1908 as the Medical Reserve Corps, the U.S. Army Reserve is an operational force that supports the entire United States military in training and in combat.

NEWS you can USE

Useful blurbs and noteworthy features



FORT DES MOINES, Iowa— Command Sgt. Maj. LeRoy Haugland relinquished responsibility of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) to Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Leak at a change-of-responsibility ceremony held at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Haugland began his service as the 103rd ESC senior enlisted advisor in May 2009.. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).



Col. John Waldron, left, Commander of the 206th Regional Support Group, Springfield, Ill., presents a t-shirt to Brig. Gen. Richard Hayes, right, director of the joint staff, Illinois National Guard. Brig. Gen. Hayes was the guest speaker during the 206th RSG's Dining Out on March 16, 2013. He spoke about the relationship between the National Guard and Reserve in the event federal Reserve Component forces are called up to assist the Guard. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kassidy Snyder).



Col. David Elwell, deputy commanding officer of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), presents a trophy to Amy Beller for placing second in the female civilian category at the Fort Des Moines 5K run/walk in honor of the Army Reserve's 105th birthday, in Des Moines, Iowa, on April 25. Beller is the outreach coordinator for U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Sean Taylor, 203rd Public Affairs Detachment).



The family of Marine Lance Corporal Jeffrey B. Beise, from Zimmerman, Minn., reflect on his life and service during the Freedom Quilts presentation on April 6. The family received a quilt sewn in honor of Beise during the event. Freedom Quilts, Inc., has collectively used miles of thread to sew more than 7,300 quilts since starting the organization in 2001. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Monica Radtke).

Before and After

Two Soldiers with the 103rd ESC took the initiative to live healthier and happier by changing their daily workout/eating routines. **Read the full story on p.13.**

Maj. DeMoris Dean

'My goal was to get my health in order [and] to use activities that I love to do.'



Sgt. Jeremy Manges

'Whether you want to stay in the Army or not, exercising isn't just for athletes. It's for everyone so they can live good, healthy, comfortable lives.'



Reserve responds stateside

Wis. Soldiers provide last-minute aid to Calif. cargo ship

By Capt. Dan Marchik
368th Public Affairs Detachment

MILITARY OCEAN TERMINAL CONCORD, Calif.- When the Black Eagle cargo ship came into port in San Francisco, they had a problem. The longshoremen who normally unload the ship were absent because of contract issues. The Army Reserve was called up and with only ten days' notice the 826th Ordnance Company from Madison, Wis., was on site ready to do the job.

The 826th normally issues and inspects ammunition, but this was a mission of a much larger scale—consisting of 1,250 containers of ammunition. The Soldiers were tasked with unloading the 20-foot-long steel containers from the ship, organizing it on trucks and getting it ready to move to its final destination on trains and trucks with assistance from another Reserve unit. The 826th had to do this on the same timeline as the experienced civilians who normally performed the job because of the ship's schedule. Once the ship was unloaded, it underwent inspection before being loaded again, which added additional pressure to get the job done quickly.

"It's a real good opportunity to come out here and not only show them we can do this job, but that we can do it quickly," said Staff Sgt. Scott Shearer.

The Soldiers, whose civilian jobs range from ballroom dance instructors to computer network technicians, left their civilian world to complete the mission. This was far different from previous missions the 826th has done in the past. Most of the Soldiers had never been on a cargo ship, much less unloaded one.

"Working the ship is a whole new experience for all of us," said Staff Sgt. James Lisk.

The 826th hit the ground running as soon as they arrived. Many of the Soldiers brought their civilian skills to work with them, like those with heavy machinery experience, and knowledge about hazardous materials. The ability to incorporate civilian skills into a military mission is essential for Army Reserve Soldiers as they support the active duty component of the Army.

"The Army Reserve provides flexibility and can deliver an on call capability to the total army mission," said Col. Robert Carlson, commander of the 646th Regional Support Group in Madison Wisconsin, the 826th's higher command. "Our Soldiers responded to this mission within a very short



Spc. John Watkins of Stevens Point, Wis., directs Sgt. Daniel Ward from Madison, Wis., as they place a container on a train car. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Dan Marchik).

time frame and had great support from their employers and Family members."

The Soldiers all agreed that the mission was a good experience and one that helped them see a bigger picture of the entire ammunition handling process. Spc. Anthony Harmon said the Soldiers obtained experience with equipment they don't normally use. They also worked with other units and civilian contractors, which made it more interesting and helped to build a more educated, capable unit.

"Being out here and just seeing a different aspect of what happens with ammunition outside what we normally do with it is still a good experience," said Harmon. "It definitely helps us understand the process of what goes on. Normally we only focus on [what happens] inside the ammunition supply point."

The 826th worked with the civilians on the ship as well as the 711th Transportation Company, Seaport Operations, from Vallejo, Calif. The 711th's mission started where the 826th's mission ended. Once the containers were off-loaded from the ships and placed on trucks, the 711th moved the containers to train cars for transportation to their final destination.

"We've been able to integrate pretty much seamlessly," said 1st Lt. Douglas Miller, commander of the 711th. "I think we work really well together."

Not only did the two units work together, but they also gained a better understanding

of each others' jobs.

"It's very good to get the two different types of units in here and just be able to share knowledge with each other on what their missions are and what our missions are," said Shearer.

Despite the excitement of a mission such as this, danger comes with handling ammunition. In 1944, the same location experienced one of history's most powerful manmade, non-nuclear explosions when a ship loaded with munitions exploded. The explosion killed 320 men, destroyed two ships and damaged buildings in 12 nearby towns. Maintaining the safety of everyone involved is top priority and where the Soldiers' civilian experience again comes into play. The HAZMAT training Soldiers receive in the civilian world can be passed on to other Soldiers to build upon training received in the Army.

The 826th overcame not only a somewhat unfamiliar mission, but also some of the worst weather that part of California had seen. They were able to take advantage of the time when the terminal was shut down due to weather by conducting other training.

"Everyone stayed really motivated during the mission," said Chief Warrant Officer David Laack, officer in charge.

The 826th completed the mission successfully and returned to their civilian lives with more experience and knowledge to use the next time they're called upon.

Facebook helps save Soldier's life

By Sgt. Rachel S. Krogstad
368th PAD

Editor's Note: Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

FORT MCCOY, Wis. -- Facebook is often criticized in the military for enabling operational security leaks, but recently it proved that it can also help save lives.

Facebook posts give Soldiers a look into their battle buddies' daily lives when they are not able to see each other every day. It is particularly helpful when Soldiers fear the stigma associated with asking for help during difficult times in their lives.

"Technology is not always the answer and creates its own set of challenges, but it can be a great tool; it can be a great help," said Col. Robert J. Carlson, commander of the 646th Regional Support Group, headquartered in Madison, Wis.

"There's no way I could have found him if it weren't

for Facebook," said 1st Sgt. Roe.

U.S. Army Reserve 1st Sgt. Roe recently received an email from one of his Soldiers before drill weekend; this email was a goodbye letter from a Soldier who thought he had nothing to live for.

Immediately, Roe attempted to contact Spc. Myer by phone; the phone numbers on record were turned off.

He then called police from the Soldier's hometown to find him; Myer's dad had recently kicked him out of the house. No one knew where he was.

During morning formation, Roe asked the other Soldiers in the unit if they had heard from Myer. Three young Soldiers in the formation answered that they had talked to him on Facebook within 48 hours.

Roe pulled the three Soldiers aside, and asked them how they had reached Myer. The Soldiers had been talking to him over Facebook.

They tried to use Facebook to reach out to Myer before

it was too late. He answered their messages and they were able to talk to him for over an hour. Myer's Facebook Locator was turned off, so they were not immediately able to find him. Roe coached the Soldiers in messaging Myer in an effort to prevent him from harming himself while they tried to get help.

Then Myer stopped messaging, and a chaplain counseled the three Soldiers. After many tense moments, he started messaging again and this time he did not disable the locator tool. They were able to pull the location and call local police. Myer was brought to the hospital where he was able to receive initial treatment and then he checked himself in to a behavioral health center.

Too often, Soldiers are found too late, but technology allowed the Soldiers to save their battle buddy, and to get him the help that he needed.

"The first sergeant did a great job, and the Soldiers did a great job," said Carlson. "It's

the Army Family, and we are a family. We take care of each other, and these guys definitely acted like a family. I'm proud of them."

The Army has been trying to eliminate Soldier suicide using the Ask, Care, Escort Program (ACE) to encourage Soldiers to make sure their battle buddies are getting help when they need it.

"Those of us who have been around a long time grew up when it was a problem to ask for help and it was considered a sign of weakness," said Carlson. "We are starting to see the younger generation understand that it's a sign of strength and that everyone needs help at some time in their life. The Army is focused on trying to understand, treat, and train us on how to prevent suicide. There is so much that is happening that is good that we're not talking about. Soldiers are doing good things every day that are preventing suicides and we need to talk about it."

US, Japanese forces train together

By Capt. Dan Marchik
368th Public Affairs Detachment

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash.- A fictitious attack on Japan formed the basis for Yama Sakura 63, an annual bilateral training event with the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and the U. S. Army Pacific (USARPAC). This year's exercise included the Army Reserve's 687th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB) from Wausau, Wis.

The 687th, which falls under the 646th Regional Support Group, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), was tasked to simulate the role of an ESC and provide corps level logistics, support operations and mission command of numerous combat service support units. The 687th ensured that Soldiers received the ammunition, food and all other needed materials for the simulated fight. The 687th ran the operation from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., and used a new computer simulation system, called WARSIM, to deliver supplies to units on the ground in Japan.

The computer system operates real time and interacts with the Battle Support and Sustainment System (BCS3), which adds to the reality of the exercise.

"You can't just answer a call for ammunition and say 'you now have ammunition' like before," said Capt. James Bundrick.

Supply requests are submitted through the computer system, routed to the responsible supply unit, and then arrive at the requesting unit. This exercise not only provides training in the Soldiers' military jobs, but also helps build the partnership between the U.S. and Japan, by assisting the Japanese forces without infringing on their sovereignty.

The computer systems used in the exercise are complex, so Soldiers received training before the mission. The WARSIM replicates battlefield events and is based on a Windows platform, so younger Soldiers' familiarity with technology helped them adapt rapidly to the system. The Soldiers quickly learned how to successfully integrate the system into the exercise.

The 687th received compliments from the officer in charge of the exercise facility

for their ability to jump right in and adapt to the addition of the new computer system.

"Most units would say 'Aw we're not trained on this,' but they jumped in and made it happen," said Lt. Col. Tim Sheridan, commander of the 687th.

The exercise is also helping the 687th work on their staff skills because they are playing the role of a command two levels higher, by acting as an expeditionary sustainment command.

"This gives them a broader picture of the operations they normally perform and helps them do their job better," said Staff Sgt. Aaron Caveny.

"We're a young battalion staff and it's the perfect starting point to where, if we were to do this again, we could really grow and develop our staff and get ready for our next deployment," said Maj. Michael Anderson, executive officer of the 687th. We're revising our battle drills and this is the perfect format for us to implement our changes and rehearse the battle drills."

See Exercise, 8



Soldier recognized at Vikings' game

By Sgt. Rachel S. Krogstad
368th Public Affairs Detachment

MINNEAPOLIS— The Minnesota Military Appreciation Fund (MMAF) honored two veterans during the Vikings' football game at the Metrodome on Veteran's day. Spc. Steven Solie, a Purple Heart recipient and an Oakdale resident, received a \$2,000 grant from the MMAF before the kick-off.

Solie is a member of the 644th Regional Support Group, based out of Fort Snelling, Minn. He served with the unit in Afghanistan from March 2011 to March 2012 as a truck driver.

He was given a Purple Heart for wounds he received when an improvised explosive device went off during a convoy from Kabul to Kandahar in June 2011.

His wife and children attended the game, and watched as he was presented with the grant on the field.

The MMAF is a non-profit organization that raises money throughout Minnesota for military members and their families. MMAF has been raising money and giving grants to Minnesota Soldiers since Sept. 11, 2001.

Spc. Steven Solie, a Soldier with the 644th Regional Support Group, was recognized during a Vikings' football game by the Minnesota Military Appreciation Fund. Solie received the Purple Heart Medal during a deployment to Afghanistan in 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rachel S. Krogstad).

TRiPS: Still saving lives

Mr. Thomas B. Nielsen
103rd ESC Safety & Occupational Health Office

The season of spring and summer travel is coming, and Soldiers driving to and from their destinations could encounter any number of hazards along the way. The Army's Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) risk assessment tool, found online at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center website, is a great resource to get Soldiers started safely on their summer getaways.

All Soldiers planning to drive a privately owned vehicle on pass, leave, temporary duty or permanent change of station travel orders outside their immediate local area are required to complete a TRiPS assessment before their departure date. The tool allows supervisors to review a Soldier's travel plans for potential safety issues and open dialogue on how to further mitigate risk, especially off duty.

TRiPS, originally released Army-wide in fiscal year 2004, has proven successful in helping reduce driving fatalities every year since its inception.

In FY 2010, active-duty Army fatalities while on TRiPS assessed travel was only 17 percent of total fatalities occurring outside of 150 miles from the installation, according to the USACR/Safety Center. It has been so effective that all the other military services have adopted it.

The key to the program's success is leader involvement. The tool provides leaders with important details about their Soldiers' plans, overall risk and options to mitigate hazards during specific trips. Armed with vital facts, leaders may then approve or disapprove the online assessment and request the Soldier alter his or her travel to reduce identified risks. This leader-to-subordinate interaction, fostered by TRiPS, is crucial to Soldier safety during long trips away from home station.

Despite its effectiveness, TRiPS is not intended to replace the supervisor's role in approving leave, nor should it become a check-the-block system to provide a paper trail after an accident. The intent is to empower leaders with the facts and bring them face-to-face with their Soldiers to better protect and inform them of driving hazards.

Soldiers can now take advantage of a new "comments" section added during the past year. With this enhancement, both supervisors and subordinates can convey thoughts not captured in the automated assessment. A motorcycle section has also been added for Soldiers riding motorcycles to their destinations.

Soldiers can find the tool at:

<https://safety.army.mil/>

New reserve center marks fresh start

By Maj. Monica Radtke
103rd ESC Public Affairs Officer

SAGINAW, Mich.- The 919th Transportation Company hosted a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Saginaw Army Reserve Center in November.

The reserve center is a Grow the Army (GTA) construction project, which is a transformation and re-stationing initiative of the U.S. Army. The \$12.9 million facility consists of two state-of-the-art buildings totaling more than 37,500 square feet, and will replace the existing center in Saginaw. The 88th Regional Support Command at Fort McCoy, Wis., oversaw construction.

The 919th Trans. Co. falls under the Army Reserve and activated on Sept. 16, 2009, in Bay City, Mich. The unit is responsible for loading and transferring cargo at air, rail and truck terminals. The 919th returned in 2011 from a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.



Congressional officials, locally elected officials, and Army Reserve leadership officially open the 919th Transportation Company's new reserve center with a ribbon cutting ceremony held in November. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Monica Radtke).

Exercise

Continued from 5

This type of realistic training in a joint and coalition environment was an effective way for the Army Reserve to prepare for supporting Combatant Commanders across the range of military operations. The 687th

was the only Army Reserve unit to participate in the exercise and it was able to work closely with the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) and Japanese counterparts. The exercise also included four Army Reserve officers: Lt. Col. Chris Walls, Lt. Col. Josef Sujet, Lt. Col. Robert Hovey, and Lt. Col. Travis Smith, all from the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expedi-

tionary), who served as Liaison Officers on the ground in Japan. They acted as the main point of contact between the Soldiers at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Japan and helped coordinate logistics planning and operations.

The Yama Sakura exercise began in 1982 with the goal of integrating U.S. and Japanese forces in planning and training as well as facilitate interop-

erability between the forces. Yama Sakura translated means "mountain cherry blossom," but the name also has roots in Japanese military history dating back to the early 20th century when a secret society of Japanese military officers called themselves the Cherry Blossom Society. The cherry blossom has also been used by the Japanese to inspire nationalism.



2012

Ranger Challenge



**By Sgt. Matthew Diehl and
Sgt. Emily Walter**
203rd Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DODGE, Iowa – Twelve teams of Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from nine different colleges and universities competed in a three-day, comprehensive tactical challenge hosted by the 3rd ROTC Brigade, Nov. 3, at Camp Dodge, Iowa. Both the male and the female teams from the University of North Dakota left with first-place trophies and bragging rights for their school’s ROTC program.

Trevor Schmitt, a fourth-year cadet from the male UND team, credited the team’s win to the members’ daily training. “[The team members] put their hearts and minds into it,” Schmitt said. “It’s real for us.”

The 12 teams were split into two categories: seven male teams and five female teams. Altogether, the teams represented nine differ-

ent Midwestern colleges and universities. For males, the University of Central Missouri and Iowa State University took second and third place, respectively. Coming in second and third place for the female teams were cadets from Northern Michigan University and Missouri State University, respectively.

The Ranger Challenge included 11 events that tested the cadets’ mental, tactical, and physical toughness. From conducting an Army Physical Fitness Test to engaging a theoretical enemy during the hand grenade assault course, the cadets proved their where-withal during a broad selection of challenges. Each team earned points based on their performance in each event; the UND teams accumulated 130 points by the end of the event.

Cadets are not required to participate in the Ranger Challenge, but Col. Dean Shultis, commander of the 3rd ROTC Brigade, said that it sets the competing cadets apart. “There are thousands of cadets who don’t compete [in the Ranger Challenge],” Shultis said to the Soldiers during the opening ceremony. “You are going to be better cadets.”

Shultis said that the Ranger Challenge provides an opportunity for cadets to interact with other schools’ ROTC programs and to put their knowledge to the test in a competitive environment.

“It’s about giving cadets and opportunity to challenge themselves above and beyond what they would get during their ROTC curriculum,” he said. “It’s about testing them mentally and physically to prepare them to be better lieutenants, better students, better leaders.”

Meghan Ripperger, a cadet from the female ISU team and a dietician major in her second year of ROTC, said that while the competition was physically and mentally taxing, it promoted a better sense of teamwork.

“[The competition] challenges our relationships but keeps us united at the same time,” Ripperger said.

Shultis said that the teams that showed a greater sense of team cohesion tended to perform most effectively during the Ranger Challenge events, whereas the teams that tried to execute the challenges quickly without planning together tended to stumble.

“Teams doing the best are putting a plan in place and adjusting as they go,” Shultis said. “Getting here is one thing, but then executing this higher level event and getting through it as a team creates a greater sense of accomplishment.”

In the end, Shultis said that sense of accomplishment was more important than whether the teams won or lost. He said that the teams worked hard to get to the challenge in the first place, and that alone represents each school and ROTC program well.

“It’s really an honor for these teams to get here,” he said. “Whether they won or not, [the experience] will stay with them beyond their years as a cadet and into their years as a lieutenant.”



ABOVE: Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from around the Midwest board a Chinook helicopter to kick off the Ranger Challenge held Nov. 3 at Camp Dodge, Iowa. The event was hosted by the 3rd ROTC Brigade, and challenged the cadets’ mental, physical and tactical strength. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).

TOP: Marquette cadets run to a point during the land navigation portion of the 3rd Reserve Officer Training Corps Brigade’s 2012 Ranger Challenge at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in November. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Rachel Krogstad).

TOP LEFT: A team of cadets work together to pull a Humvee on the medical evacuation course during the Ranger Challenge at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in November. The event was hosted by 3rd Reserve Officer Training Corps Brigade, and it challenged the cadets’ mental, physical and tactical strength. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).

BOTTOM LEFT: A cadet guards the perimeter of the medical evacuation course during the Ranger Challenge at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in November. The event was hosted by 3rd Reserve Officer Training Corps Brigade, and it challenged the cadets’ mental, physical and tactical strength. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).

Iowa leadership expresses support



Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds speaks at the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) winter ball in December in Des Moines, Iowa. Reynolds commented on the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act and its implications. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).

Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds comments on 2012 NDAA at winter ball.

By Sgt. Emily Walter
203rd Public Affairs Detachment

DES MOINES, Iowa— Iowa Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds attended the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) annual winter ball on Dec. 8 at the Des Moines Marriott Downtown Hotel, and commented on the new relationship between the Army Reserve and state governments as a result of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act.

“The Reserve component has been and will continue to be an asset to the state and country,” Reynolds said during her remarks as the guest speaker.

The 2012 NDAA stipulates that state governments may call upon Reserve forces to respond to stateside natural disasters. Because of this change, Reserve units are trying to increase state governments’ awareness of the Reserve’s capabilities. The 103rd ESC is no different.

“There is a large logistical footprint from the 103rd [ESC] in the Midwest,” said Brig. Gen. Arlan Deblieck, commanding general of the 103rd ESC. “We

have a large amount of capabilities, and we can help.”

Reynolds expressed her own desire to be involved with Iowa’s Reserve components. She said when she was invited to attend the winter ball this past summer at the Iowa State Fair, she was “extremely honored.”

“I think [the 2012 NDAA] is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge Reservists and the important role that they play,” Reynolds said. “Each of you tonight represents the embodiment of citizen-Soldier.”

Reynolds added that Army Reserve Soldiers’ expertise and ability to step up when called upon are important attributes in natural disaster response.

Because of the new addition to the 2012 NDAA, Reynolds said that it will take continuous interaction between the state government and the Army Reserve in order to reach the partnership’s full potential.

“The support, continuity, commitment and expertise that each of you provides... is imperative,” she said. “It takes a coordinated effort...you need all entities work-

‘The Reserve component has been and will continue to be an asset to the state and country.’

-Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds

ing together, or it’s not going to work.”

In the end, Reynolds made sure that each Soldier in attendance knew how important and respected he or she is in the eyes of the Iowa government.

“The governor and I know that each of you stands ready,” Reynolds said in closing. “It will be incredibly beneficial when responding to citizens’ needs.”

Troops shed pounds, inches with PRET

Soldiers struggling to pass the APFT attend two-week training that helps them learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle outside of drill.

By Sgt. Emily Walter
203rd PAD

FORT DES MOINES, Iowa – For some service members, the military’s initiative to downsize the number of troops has motivated them to take the Army Physical Fitness Test even more seriously than before. Many others have simply decided to improve their health in order to promote an active, healthy lifestyle.

Among them are Maj. DeMoris Dean, chief knowledge management officer and battle command officer with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and Sgt. Jeremy Manges, civil affairs noncommissioned officer with the 103rd ESC, are among those who have taken steps in the recent months to become healthy.

Manges attended the two-week, 103rd ESC-led physical readiness enhancement training (PRET) at Fort McCoy, Wis., in May. The purpose of the training event was to revamp Soldiers’ fitness and help them to meet the Army’s APFT and height/weight standards, while giving them the skills to maintain healthy fitness and nutritional habits.

“The reality is, even though we show up one weekend per month [for drill], we’re still Soldiers 24/7, 365,” said Staff Sgt. Jeana Ruopp, transportation logistics NCO with the 103rd ESC, who helped lead a platoon of Soldiers at the PRET. “You can’t train up in one weekend.”

Ruopp said that a couple Soldiers from her platoon lost over 20 pounds within the two-week training. Manges lost 15 pounds in that time, and said that he learned several valuable habits to improve his physical fitness level. He also said he improved his sit-up score on the APFT, which was the event that was the most challenging for him before PRET.

The PRET created a Facebook page called Warrior Endurance and Strength Training (WEST) as a tool to keep track of the participants’ progress after attending the training. Participants and platoon leaders can log on and use the page to post questions and advice for each other.

“We have a lot of Soldiers who just need a little bit of help, and just having a little bit of focus helps put them on the right track,” Ruopp said. “It’s an opportunity to build a support system who actually cares.”

Manges said he met people at PRET with whom he still stays in contact. He said that staying in contact is “helping make fitness part of [his] daily life and helping [him] stay consistent.”

Along with the people he met, Manges said his favorite part of PRET was the confidence that he could meet the standard.

“My favorite part was going into that final [APFT] knowing I was going to pass it,” said Manges.

Dean approached his health goals in a more unorthodox way than the PRET training event. Instead of focusing on losing weight, he said his family’s history of congenital heart problems and diabetes motivated him to learn how to be healthy in spite of that.

Instead of dieting, Dean said he ate whatever he wanted, but controlled his portions differently, thought more about what he ate and drank, and made smarter choices. By “revising what a ‘meal’ is,” Dean said he was able to cut down on how much he ate for each meal and increase the number of meals he ingested.

“My one meal that I would have [before] has turned into about five or six in a day,” Dean said.

It was all “truly a numbers game” with food, said Dean.

‘A lot of Soldiers just need a little bit of help, and having a little focus helps put them on the right track.’

-Staff Sgt. Jeana Ruopp

He didn’t focus on losing weight, but instead on shedding inches around his abdomen, because he learned that his current measurement at the time was considered medically risky. But he never made a specific workout plan, and said he only worked out when he could find the time between his civilian and Army careers. And his plan worked.

His goal was to lose 10 inches around his abdomen. He lost 11 ½ inches, and a little over 80 pounds.

“Weight was a by-product of what I wanted, which was inches off my abdomen,” Dean said. “It did it on its own...the physical fitness has naturally come into play afterward.”

In December 2011, Dean coupled his lifestyle-change with his longtime pursuit to raise funds to help others.

“My goal was to get my health in order [and] to use activities that I love to do...and make those into fundraisers to help people in my community,” Dean said.

As a result, Dean and a few of his former fraternity brothers from across the U.S. have taken their annual rest and relaxation vacation, during which they partake in their favorite outdoor activities, and established the Farst Foundation.

The purpose of the foundation, which is still in its infancy, is for Dean and his group to recruit team members and motivate them to participate in various fitness events, such as half and full marathons across the nation.

Dean said the Farst Foundation is represented in California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa and Washington, D.C. The Farst representative who attends and raises money from an event then gives the proceeds to a cause in their local area, such as supporting at-risk youths. Dean said a goal for the foundation is to expand up to 10 states in the next two years.

While Dean’s entire health plan was somewhat unorthodox, he is now within Army height/weight standards (for the first time in his military career, he said), and he said his medical risk levels have reduced; he no longer has to take hypertension medication and his blood pressure has decreased 10-20 points from before.

He said his goal now is to support the foundation and make sure the ideas behind it are spread into the public.

Both Manges and Dean said they want to take what they have learned about health and about themselves, and give the knowledge to others. Physical fitness is a focal point in the Army now more than ever. Manges said, along with further improving his own APFT score, he wants to motivate other Soldiers to follow suit.

“My goal is getting a chance to mentor other Soldiers and help them meet the standards,” Manges said. “Whether you want to stay in the Army or not, exercising isn’t just for athletes. It’s for everyone so they can live good, healthy, comfortable lives.”

Ceremony recognizes unit's enduring history

By Spc. Catherine Black
203rd Public Affairs Detachment

FORT DODGE, Iowa— Soldiers of the 875th Replacement Company and family gathered at the Private First Class Edwin J. Lemke Army Reserve Center in Fort Dodge for a casing-of-the-colors and inactivation ceremony in September. For the last 33 years, the 875th has specialized in military logistics by providing troops with needed supplies and equipment to successfully and effectively conduct missions at home and abroad.

The 29-Soldier unit deployed together in 1990 to Desert Storm, 2006 to Texas, and then to Georgia in 2010, and individually, several members were cross-leveled for other deployments since 2001. The 875th has also been very active within the community at home. They have participated in Frontier Days and the Dragon boat races in Fort Dodge and have reached out to adopt needy families during the holidays. Also, many members of the 875th belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion. Staff Sgt. Tamberlyn Steinbrink, the unit administrator and acting commander of the 875th, spoke at the ceremony and recalled how kin-like the unit is and always has been.

"Some people say they become like family during a deployment, but we were always that way," Steinbrink said. "We've watched each others' kids grow up."

Col. Gus Checketts, Support Operations Officer with the 103rd Sustainment Command, spoke to the Soldiers, family, friends and veterans gathered there. In remembering the beginning and history of the 875th, the Soldiers were reminded of the eb and flow of units with the Army's needs.

"We have to be looking at the current situation globally," Checketts said. "What are the needs? What are the requirements? What does the Army need?"

Checketts went on to describe the current shift in personnel within the Army.

"Each Soldier's contribution has not been without merit; it's not forgotten," he said. "Their service has been invaluable to our nation."

In preparation of the inactivation of the 875th, all current members have been transferred into new reserve units. Amidst the changing landscape of the modern Army Reserve, Iowa State Sen. Daryl Beall recalls some early history of the 875th, and reminded the unit that "Soldiers never die,



Two Soldiers with the 875th Replacement Company case the unit's colors during an inactivation ceremony held at the Private First Class Edwin J. Lemke Army Reserve Center in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in September. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Catherine Black).



Veterans watch the 875th Replacement Company inactivation ceremony held at the Private First Class Edwin J. Lemke Army Reserve Center in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in September. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Catherine Black).

they just fade away."

Also attending the ceremony were several veterans, who were represented by Tom Dorsey, Fort Dodge Veterans Council. The 103rd ESC is considering relocating a like-sized detachment of a company to fill the location of the 875th. The process, however, can take 1-2 years to complete.

From the very beginning in the Playmore Ballroom Basement, to the new Army Reserve Center, the 875th has worked together and played an integral role in the execution of many missions.

The 29 members of the 875th have all been reassigned to new Reserve units in preparation for the inactivation.



The Honorable Katherine Hammack, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment meets with Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlieck, Commanding General, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) during her visit to Fort Des Moines, Iowa on Oct. 3. Hammack made the stop during her Iowa trip to see a local Army Reserve Center and learn more about the capabilities and challenges the Army Reserve faces in updating its facilities and in energy conservation. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Monica Radtke, 103rd ESC Public Affairs Office).

Official helps Army save energy

Honorable Hammack emphasizes innovation and adaptation to increase efficiency.

By Maj. Monica Radtke
103rd ESC Public Affairs Officer

DES MOINES, Iowa— The Honorable Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army for installations, energy and environment, visited Fort Des Moines in October.

Hammack made the stop during her Iowa trip to see a local Army Reserve Center and learn more about the capabilities and challenges the Army Reserve faces in updating its facilities and in energy conservation.

"Dependence on fossil fuels and a vulnerable electric power grid jeopardize the security of Army operating bases and mission capabilities," Hammack said. "The impact of increasing energy prices is a decrease in the quantity and quality of training the Army can conduct, rather it is on our Reserve Installations, at National Guard training sites, or on our installations. Initiatives such as solar power, storm water management and water efficiency are positive steps toward addressing the challenges of energy security in the operational and garrison environments. Innovative and adaptive leaders, seeking ways to in-

crease energy efficiency and implement renewable and alternate sources of energy, are key to saving lives and increasing the Army's flexibility by reducing costs."

The 88th Regional Support Command (RSC), which is located at Fort McCoy, Wis., and oversees facilities across a 19-state region, including Fort Des Moines. Members of the 88th RSC Directorate of Public Works staff, Lt. Col. Ralph Thorn, chief of plans, and Scott Naeseth, certified energy manager, provided Hammack with an overview and tour of the command's initiatives and projects on the complex. Those initiatives included upgrades to mechanical systems and controls, a recently renovated arms room, and the rooftop, which was replaced as part of the National Roofing Initiative (NRI).

Hammack also met with Army Reserve leadership, including Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlieck, commanding general of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). The 103rd ESC headquarters is one of five Army Reserve tenet units located in the reserve center.

"We are appreciative of the 88th RSC's energy initiatives and renovations to our headquarters building," DeBlieck said. "The facility upgrades have greatly improved the work environment for our Soldiers and civilian employees as well as enhanced the ability to conduct our mission."

The 402nd Engineer Company (Sapper) is another tenet unit in the reserve center. Capt. Nicholas Sinclair, commander of the 402nd, spoke with Hammack about the unit's upcoming deploy-

'One of the top priorities of the Army is to ensure all installations reduce their energy consumption.'

- Hon. Katherine Hammack

ment to Afghanistan. The 402nd is also scheduled to move upon their return as construction is currently under way for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver rated facility on Fort Des Moines as part of the Grow the Army (GTA) program. "We are looking forward to training in the state-of-the-art facility once we get home," said Sinclair.

The construction project and updates to existing buildings are part of the Army's overall plan to reduce energy dependency, increase efficiency and adopt renewable and alternative sources to remain operationally relevant.

"One of the top priorities of the Army is to ensure all installations, to include Army Reserve and National Guard centers, reduce their energy consumption and use renewable energy resources," Hammack said. "Today's visit gave me the opportunity to see first-hand the efforts of the 88th Regional Support Command to create more resilient Army Reserve Centers in Iowa and the rest of their 19-state region."

2012 Best Warrior Competition

Soldiers compete in several different events to determine the 2012 “Best Warrior.”

By Sgt. Matthew Diehl
203rd Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DODGE, Iowa – The Soldiers’ spirits were high despite the frigid and blustery weather with temperatures in the low 20’s. They assembled at the starting line of the two mile run portion of the Army Physical Fitness Test, which would kick off days of grueling competition.

Seven Soldiers from across the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) competed in the 2012 Best Warrior Competition, Nov. 13-16, at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

Participants competed in junior enlisted and noncommissioned officer categories. Both tested Soldiers’ mental, physical, and psychological endurance. Pfc. Logan M. Walz, a cargo specialist from the 919th Inland Cargo Transportation Company, won the junior enlisted category. “I loved how it was just go, go, go the whole time, sometimes at three in the morning,” he said. “I’ve only been in the Army eight months and for me to win this means a lot.”

All Soldiers competed in events ranging from combatives, land navigation, weapons assembly, military operations in urban terrain and also a formal board with Command Sergeant Majors presiding.

“This is a Department of the Army competition,” said Command Sgt. Maj Arthur J. Leak, Command Sergeant Major, 103rd ESC. “It starts at the company level and goes through the battalions and brigades. Eventually the ultimate goal is for two Soldiers to be named the warriors of the year in the enlisted and noncommissioned officer divisions.”

The event is truly for enlisted and run by enlisted as the cadre consisted of senior enlisted members of the 103rd.

“This is an NCO driven competition. You will not go to any warrior event and find an Officer in Charge,” said Leak. “For best practical purposes the Officer in Charge is the highest ranking enlisted member.”

The winners of this year’s competition have more battles in front of them. Sgt. 1st Class Anthony M. Novak, a human resource specialist from the 103rd ESC and served as the combatives referee and cadre during the event, said “the next step for the winners of the competition at Camp Dodge is to compete in the event at the 377th Theater Sustainment Command and then at the United States Army Reserve Command level.”

All components of the Army force are represented in the challenge. “There are Soldiers from the Reserve, Guard, and active duty that ultimately will face each other in the end,” said Leak. “This is a total force event.”

Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Hartman, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the event spent three years as a drill sergeant and said one of the goals of the event was to push the Soldiers to their physical and mental limits to simulate a wartime environment.

“There is no Army regulation that covers the challenge,” said Hartman. “We have binders filled with lessons learned from previous competitions and have built on it every year.”

The Soldiers didn’t get many breaks during the day. That was one of the goals of the cadre.

“We had food catered and brought to the Soldiers and cadre stayed in the barracks,” said Hartman. “We are keeping the stress up, depriving them of sleep, trying to make it more like combat. There is no lull, it is all Army all the time.”

The contestant’s maintained their professionalism despite sleep deprivation and grueling challenges with virtually no down time.

“This year’s competitors far surpassed last year’s...there was more camaraderie,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Harder, cadre for the event. “We didn’t hear a single complaint from the Soldiers the entire competition.”

The following seven Soldiers made

it to the finish line with hard work and determination:

- Pfc. Akeela Jovon Al-hameed, 644th Regional Support Group (RSG), Fort Snelling, Minn.
- Spc. Patricia Ann Dempsey, 646th RSG, Madison, Wis.
- Spc. Cory Anthony Schmitt, 649th RSG, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Sgt. Francis Kojo Bour, 646th RSG, Madison, Wis.
- Sgt. Kyle Jordan Fox, 645th RSG, Southfield, Mich.

- Winners:
- Staff Sgt. Martin Perry Lyke, 206th RSG, Springfield, Ill.
 - Pfc. Logan Michael Walz, 645th RSG, Southfield, Mich.

The combatives portion was very popular among the Soldiers. “I really enjoy the competition aspect, said Spc. Patricia Dempsey, ordnance specialist with the 646th Regional Support Group. “You grow with yourself and as a team.”

The tasks the Soldiers were asked to do were not always traditional. They had to use a buddy to assemble weapons blindfolded and wrote a 500-word essay while wearing an M-40 nuclear, biological and chemical protective mask.

“These types of events are as realistic as we can get to actual combat,” said Leak. “If they can handle the pressures of this type of competition when they find themselves leaning in a foxhole downrange they know what the limits of their capabilities are. It’s important to me when you are tired in a combat situation you need to be able to find that inner strength to push through and still accomplish the mission.”

Staff Sgt. Martin Lyke the winner of the NCO division said he was motivated to participate in this years challenge because he wanted to improve himself and his warrior skills. “It’s very challenging to win,” said Lyke. “It just shows a lot of the hard work I’ve done pays off.”

Overall, the competition proved to be beneficial for the competitors and the cadre. “It was great to see NCO’s leading the way,” said Walz. Both Walz and Lyke will represent the 103rd ESC at the 377th TSC Best Warrior Competition in early 2013.



Soldiers assemble weapons while blindfolded during the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Best Warrior Competition in November at Camp Dodge, Iowa. The competition tested the Soldiers’ mental, physical and psychological endurance. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Diehl)

RIGHT: Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Hartman, noncommissioned officer in charge of support operations from the 103rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command demonstrates a cross-collar choke on a soldier during the 2012 Best Warrior Competition in November. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Diehl)

‘We are keeping the stress up, depriving them of sleep, trying to make it more like combat. There is no lull, it is all Army all the time.’

-Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Hartman



Spc. Patricia Dempsey from the 646th Regional Support Group, Madison, Wis., competes in the road march portion of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Best Warrior Competition at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in November. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Diehl)



Quilters honor fallen troops

Freedom Quilts, Inc., has made more than 7,300 quilts since 2001 for Families of fallen servicemembers around the U.S.

By Maj. Monica Radtke
103rd ESC Public Affairs Officer

“We will never forget” is a mantra that Betty and Dennis Nielsen, along with their crew of quilters, remember with each spool of thread they pull off the shelf. The group has collectively used miles of thread to sew more than 7,300 quilts since starting Freedom Quilts, Inc., in 2001. The volunteer organization, located on a rural farm outside Fonda, Iowa, toiled many hours to create personalized quilts for families of fallen service members located across the United States.

On April 6, Betty Nielsen, founder of Freedom Quilts, presented six of those quilts to Families of veterans who served in Vietnam, Iraq and/or Afghanistan during a ceremony held inside her makeshift shop. One of the presentations included the Family of Army Reserve Sgt. James Witkowski. Witkowski was posthumously awarded the Silver Star in November 2005 for his heroic actions while deployed to Iraq. His parents, Jim and Barbara, from Surprise, Ariz., made the trip to Iowa to accept the quilt, which pays tribute to their son.

Col. Robert Wiley, Support Operations Officer, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), U.S. Army Reserve, located in Des Moines, Iowa, was the keynote speaker during the event. “Memories are important to us. We can never forget these great Americans or the sacrifice their love ones endured. The Niensens and Freedom Quilts -- what a powerful and valuable service to our nation. We, as the United States military, cannot do the jobs without the support of organizations like Freedom Quilts,” he said.

The ceremony was filled with emotion and memories- one Family member spoke about the years spent to tirelessly locate her brother’s remains in Vietnam. Army Spc. Five Donald Grella,



Barbara and Jim Witkowski view the quilt made in honor of their son, Army Reserve Sgt. James Witkowski, during the Freedom Quilts presentation on April 6 in Fonda, Iowa. Sgt. Witkowski was killed in October 2005 near Balad, Iraq. He was riding in a convoy when it came under enemy fire and a grenade was thrown into his vehicle. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Monica Radtke).

from Laurel, Neb., was killed while serving in Vietnam. The helicopter he was on failed to return from a routine mission in December 1965, soon after braving enemy fire at the battle of Ia Drang. Grella and the three other crew members were listed as Missing in Action until their remains were recovered in October 2009.

Patriotism and desire to keep the memories of fallen service members alive is what drives Nielsen to keep sewing. “The quilts and the event serves as a reminder to the families that their loved one is not forgotten,” said Nielsen. “The quilts were sewn by volunteers committed to honoring troops and their families.”

Nielsen includes a hand written personal note to the service member’s family with every quilt. In fact, she has 200 quilts neatly folded on a shelf and awaiting shipment because she still needs to write letters to those families. “I write the letter when the time is right and the words come to me,” she said. Just like the quilts, the letters come from Nielsen’s heart.

Each quilt is unique and personalized. The quilts presented during the April 6 ceremony contained the Soldier’s favorite desert (one was apple pie), their portrait, hobbies, service emblem, to name a few. Nielsen gets to know each family and learns about the service member before designing the quilt.

In the process of developing the quilt, Nielsen inevitably forms relationships with the families. She mentioned the hours spent on the phone with families- listening to their stories and allowing the family to reminisce about their loved ones.

Nielsen shows no signs of slowing down. She is determined to keep the project moving forward and keep fallen troops’ memories alive. “Through the gift of a quilt, we strive to comfort these families and preserve the honor and memory of their loved ones,” she said.

Freedom Quilts, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the mission of comforting mourning families. To learn more about Freedom Quilts, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FreedomQuilts.

Unit shows capabilities



Representatives from the 103rd ESC speak with Iowa Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds about the Reserve’s capabilities. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Monica Radtke).

By Maj. Monica Radtke
103rd ESC PAO

The Army Reserve became more relevant to the state of Iowa since the passing of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2012.

Section 12304a of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) authorizes the Secretary of Defense to order Reserve Component forces to active duty in response to a state governor’s request for federal assistance in the event of a natural disaster or emergency.

In response to that, the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, hosted a capabilities brief on March 6 in order to give attendees an overview of Army Reserve Soldiers, units, locations and capabilities available to them in the event the National Guard identifies a need for additional assistance.

Attendees included Iowa Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds; Mark Schouten, Administrator, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Brig. Gen. Jonathan Ives, Deputy Commanding General, 377th Theater Sustainment Command, Belle Chasse, La.; Col. Steve Altman, the Deputy Commanding General-Maneuver, Iowa National Guard; Diane Wilson, Senior Operations Specialist, FEMA Region VII;

Col. Edward Manning, Defense Coordinating Officer, Defense Coordinating Element Region VII; and Col. David Elwell, Deputy Commanding Officer, 103rd ESC.

The 103rd ESC used the event to open a dialog and build a partnership with the event attendees. “It is imperative that we conduct the visit sooner rather than later because, as Hurricane Sandy recently demonstrated, a disaster or emergency can occur anywhere and at anytime,” said Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlieck, Commanding General, 103rd ESC.

The 103rd ESC oversees logistics units across a five-state region. Some of the units have equipment such as water purification systems, fuel supply systems and cargo trucks. Those resources could aid states in a time of a crisis.

The event included a discussion about roles, responsibilities, and procedures that are in place should the state of Iowa need help from federal Reserve Component forces.

“I appreciated the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the Army Reserve and the capabilities they have in Iowa. The event generated a good discussion between the state of Iowa, FEMA, the Iowa National Guard and the Army Reserve,” said Iowa Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds.

Troops take it to the kitchen

By Sgt. Rachel Krogstad
368th Public Affairs Det.

Fort McCoy, Wis.- The 826th Ordnance Company food service section prepared a meal for the U.S. Army Reserve Command level of the Philip A. Connelly Awards Program at Fort McCoy, Wis., on May 3.

The competition evaluates more than the four-man-team’s ability to cook. “It also evaluates how well they set up a tactical field kitchen site and the overall ability of the food service section,” said Sgt. 1st Class James Dennett, 377th Theater Sustainment Command.

“It instills professionalism; it gives food service some recognition for the hard work that they do,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Pamela Null, an Army food advisor who serves as one of the two judges traveling to individual unit competitions. “We evaluate them in ten different categories, including field food safety, food quality, site layout, and attitude.”

This year the judges at the USARC level are evaluating 14 units. The top four will move on to the Department of the Army (DA) level. The top four food service teams will be announced Aug. 1. The DA level competition begins in October and runs through December.

The Philip A. Connelly Award Competition is an annual evaluation by the Department of the Army, in conjunction with the International Food Service Executives Association, to recognize the skills and achievements of Army food service Soldiers.



Spc. Bryant B. Bille, food service specialist for the 826th Ordnance Co., serves soldiers during the Philip A. Connelly competition on May 3. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rachel Krogstad).

Unit showcases capabilities

By Sgt. Emily Walter
103rd ESC

SOUTHFIELD, Mich.— Soldiers with the 645th Regional Support Group hosted Army Reserve Day Feb. 23 at the Army Reserve Center in Southfield, Mich. The event provided the 645th RSG an opportunity to show local government officials and civilian organizations the Army Reserve's capabilities in Michigan.

As a result of the new National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law by the President on Dec. 31, 2011, the Secretary of Defense is authorized to call upon reserve component forces in response to a state governor's request for federal assistance with stateside natural disasters and emergencies. Because of this, the 645th RSG and many other units are showcasing the reserve capabilities, focusing on collaboration between the military components and civilian officials.

"As the [military] force structure becomes stronger, we'll have to rely on jointness," said Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBlicek, commanding general of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Des Moines, Ia., which oversees the 645th RSG. "All of us have capabilities to bring to the table. We just have to use them."

Soldiers from the 645th RSG and other local units, specifically the 300th Military Police Brigade, 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, 322nd Medical Company and the 486th Engineer Company, displayed the array of expertise in which their units specialize. They set up various stations in the reserve center's parking lot and inside center facilities. Some of the stations that the civilian attendees observed included a luncheon provided by the unit's mobile kitchen trailer, a combat medic demonstration, a water purification system, a large fuel truck, and a military engineer demonstration. This was all in an effort to increase awareness and foster collaboration between the civilian and reserve sectors.

"[Army Reserve Day] gave everyone an opportunity to see what we're all about, to meet some of our Soldiers, and to see some of our equipment," said Col. Keith Sousa, commander of the 645th RSG. "It's important for [government officials] to know what our capabilities are, and to ask for us if needed."

Sousa added that the unit's extensive planning with the help of several volunteers from outside units are what made the Army Reserve Day as successful as



Members of the 645th Regional Support Group host Army Reserve Day on Feb. 23 in Southfield, Mich. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).



Members of the 645th Regional Support Group host Army Reserve Day on Feb. 23 in Southfield, Mich. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).

it was. He noted that attendance for the event was good, despite being scheduled on a weekend. Participants also included Brig. Gen. Michael Stone, Assistant Adjutant General, Michigan National Guard as well as the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer for Michigan, Col. Dwaine Warren. Ultimately, the guard and reserve will work

together in disaster response and Army Reserve Day served as a platform to build a better relationship between the components.

"A lot of our politicians think [all military components] are all the same," Sousa said. "Overall, I think we achieved our objectives in displaying exactly what the Army Reserve does."

Summit addresses resiliency

By Sgt. Rachel Krogstad
368th Public Affairs Detachment

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (April 26, 2013) -- The National Research Summit on Reserve Component Military Families was held Thursday and Friday, April 25-26, 2013, on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler joined a broad mix of nearly 300 DOD, healthcare and civilian academic professionals from 30 states who met in Ann Arbor to discuss the need to work collaboratively to address the resiliency needs of Reserve and National Guard service members and their families.

"The skills, the best of what we have, should be brought to service for those who are returning home. When you are coming back as a member of Reserve or Guard, you aren't coming back to a military base," said Dr. John Greden, executive director of the University of Michigan Comprehensive Depression Center, and one of the summit leaders. "We worry about this, and care about it."

In the past decade of conflict, the DOD and its services have learned much about the needs in family situations, before, during, and after mobilizations, but Reserve component families have unique challenges that often cannot effectively be addressed the same way as an active component family's needs.

Reservists tend to live much farther away from military installations, where the bulk of resources are located that could help them.

"Sixty-three percent of military families live in the community. That includes reserve and active component. Yet, the majority of programs are on installations. That's a huge discrepancy," said Dr. Michelle Kees, conference chair, clinical psychologist at the University of Michigan, and spouse of a former National Guardsman. She works with military family initiatives at Military Support Programs and Networks, or M-SPAN.

"I'm a big supporter of the movement for resiliency programs, and integrating these programs into our communities and creating public-private partnerships. With our [Reserve component] families living in 4,000 communities nationwide, we can't just have programs on installations. We have to work with our community providers. We have to be able to work with our local area to build the supports and build the programs in place," she said.

This approach of involving communities in the care of their Reserve component service members and their families

not only addresses the needs of those individuals, but also creates opportunities for the community to become more involved with the U.S. military.

"Since we have a voluntary military force, a significantly smaller percentage of people are going to war compared to when we had a draft," said U.S. Army Reserve Lt. Col. Katherine White, summer term instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and a member of the University of Michigan Board of Regents.

"Before people came back [from war] and they knew others around them who had a similar experience, and now that's not the case. It's really important that the whole society is involved in understanding what's going on," said White.

Greden acknowledged that the geographic isolation is sometimes furthered by veterans not wanting to seek help from people who do not have first-hand experience of the situation they are coming from.

"I think one has to break through the protective barrier. I can remember being told to by the individuals who had been [deployed] early on, 'you haven't been there, you don't get it, and we take care of our own.' We started to say, 'let's use that instead of criticize it,'" said Greden.

This new concept of using internal trust led the Michigan National Guard and University of Michigan to start Buddy-to-Buddy, a peer-to-peer program, and integral part of M-SPAN.

Greden said the program trains Guard and Reserve current or former members to "become allies to bring people in who need help." This gives service members someone they can turn to for advice, and "if necessary to identify a place they can go for specific treatments for sleep disturbances, suicide risk, or other aspects. Putting all of that together, that program has been very helpful," said Greden.

In addition to Buddy-to-Buddy for service members, M-SPAN also provides current and former military members and their families with programs and networks that provide support groups, parenting and relationship training, and guidance for those entering civilian education.

"The family program that we're working with brings together the resources of spouses, partners, parents, [and] children. All of those people also do their own kind of struggling and our goal isn't just to say 'oh, let's help them,' the goal is to help the entire [family] unit," said Greden.

Distance from resources and other military families were not the only problems addressed during the summit. Chandler, the event's keynote speaker, discussed another key aspect in delivering support to Reserve

component families: the need to reduce stigma around service members asking for help with family and mental health issues. He used his own story of a rocket exploding in his room during a 2004 deployment and the effects it had on his personal life as an example of a common military story that needs to be addressed.

"There are several ways a person can react in this type of situation," he told the nearly 300 attendees. "In my case, I really turned off my feelings. I kept this inside me, knowing something was wrong. I became destructive, started to drink more, lost my connection with my family, and I made some bad personal choices."

After three years of destructive actions, he overcame the military's notorious stigma regarding behavioral health and sought help, "My relationship with my wife and kids greatly improved, and I stand here today a better husband, father, Soldier and person because of the counseling I received."

The planners of this summit and the Reserve component service members there said they are proud of the role Michigan and other states have taken. They hope the summit will encourage other states to develop more resiliency resources for their military families.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jean Isaac Odell, Michigan Army National Guard state family programs director, explained why her state has been so involved in getting community-based programs up and running.

"We do not have a military base, here, in Michigan. We are not active duty, but we do activate many Soldiers. This affects many families, and children throughout the state of Michigan. It's the best way for us to support our families, and our Soldiers, spouses throughout the state of Michigan and make better living conditions," said Odell.

"If we do this on a collaborative basis and we address the specific issues of concern that they care about, if we listen to the families, if we listen to the citizen-Soldier, [and] if we listen to the leadership, we're going to respond to the things that are more important. One of the compliments I heard from the leadership of the Michigan National Guard is that we have been very helpful to them. As long as we keep getting that kind of feedback, being called a force multiplier, things like that, I think we are ready to keep doing what we're doing, and I hope it's helpful," said Greden.

The summit participants and planners from M-SPAN stated they will use results of this event to encourage the development of similar and expanded programs in other states.

Blood drive helps save lives

By Chad Selweski
Macomb Daily

After receiving dozens of blood transfusions, monthly flushes of the artificial “port” in her chest, weekly spinal taps and daily medicines, 4 ½-year-old Jessica Ciani is finally near the end of her battle with leukemia.

Her mother, Army Reserves Sgt. Robin Ciani, knows quite a bit about battles, yet she anxiously awaits mid-April, when the two years of hospital stays and needles and pills and medical exams will be over and Jessica will be healthy and cancer-free.

What’s next for the Ciani family? They’re going to Disneyworld.

Thanks to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Robin and her husband, Mike, and Jessica and her brother, Michael, will finally take the vacation they’ve been waiting for.

For the second consecutive year, the Cianis, of Sterling Heights, are lending their support to the Clinton Township Blood Drive, one of the largest community blood drives in southeast Michigan, which is scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday.

A reliable blood supply was crucial to Jessica’s survival, particularly in the first weeks of her treatment. That’s a message that Robin wants to convey.

“Try to think about what families go through, imagine the kids who need blood like Jessica did,” said Sgt. Ciani, a 10-year veteran who works for the Army as a soldier and a civilian.

American Red Cross officials say only a small percentage of the population donates blood, and the excuses for not doing so never change – not enough time, or a fear of needles.

“It’s easy to think about yourself but if you think about others, if you put yourself in their shoes, you can get past the fear of needles or anything else – for the greater good,” said Mike Ciani.

The Clinton Township Blood Drive, which takes place at six locations, began in 2000 and has collected more than 5,000 pints of blood. This year’s goal is 410 pints.

The 14th annual event’s theme is “Salute Our Armed Forces.” With the help of local veterans groups, each donor will have an “Honor Card” sent on their behalf to a soldier overseas or a local disabled veteran explaining that a pint of blood was donated in their honor.



Macomb Daily photo by Ray J. Skowronek Army Reserve Sgt. Robin Ciani eagerly awaits the time when her 4 1/2-year-old daughter, Jessica, is deemed cancer-free. Sgt. Ciani is supporting the Clinton Township Blood Drive, which had a military theme this year.

The Red Cross of Southeastern Michigan must collect 900 pints of blood every day to maintain adequate supplies in the five-county area’s 43 hospitals. But the long winter this year has caused hundreds of pledged blood donors to cancel their appointments.

Red Cross spokesman Carmen Timm said snow days have also forced the cancellation of some school-based blood drives and widespread flu illnesses have also affected the number of blood donors.

In addition, the Red Cross has dealt with a long-term decline in donations due to Michigan’s economic downturn, which resulted in the closure of factories and businesses that used to host an annual workplace blood drive.

“Right now, we have an urgent need for Type O blood – that’s O-positive or O-negative,” Timm said. “You would not believe how much the weather has affected us in this area.”

For March, which is Red Cross Month, anyone who donates blood in southeast Michigan will be entered into a raffle for a free iPad electronic tablet.

Red Cross officials praise Clinton Township’s drive as a model for other communities because of the unified effort by township employees, hospitals, schools and the business community. Dozens of Red Cross nurses and personnel, plus approximately 60 volunteers, will take part in this week’s drive.

Potential delays in medical treatment are a constant concern when the blood supply is low, according to Martha Higgins, blood bank director for St. John Hospital in Detroit, who helped launch the first Clinton Township blood drive.

The public typically associates the need for blood with the operating room or emergency room. But Dr. Higgins said many children and adults – outpatients suffering from chronic illness – need blood on a routine basis.

Higgins said a blood shortage can affect those who suffer from cancer, leukemia, heart disease, sickle cell and other disorders that cause chronic anemia. In addition, premature babies in intensive care are among the biggest recipients of transfusions.



Succeeded Cadets from Saint John’s University participate in the hand grenade assault course as part of the Ranger Challenge, held at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in October. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Emily Walter).



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