



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Weekly News for National Guard Families

Index of Articles

Note: Topics below are now bookmarked! Click on the underlined topic below to link to the pages on that topic.

READINESS

Inside Urban Combat Training with the Local Army National Guard

BENEFITS

Proposed Assistance for Families of Deployed Soldiers

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

Employers Must Adjust as Military Depart, Return to Job; Welcome Back, Soldier

HEALTH ISSUES

N.H. Guard Counseling Program Gaining National Attention

GENERAL

Newman's Own Awards Presented at Pentagon

Fourth of July Excitement Is Just a Phone Call Away for Deployed Troops

Jefferson: Model Club's Kits Arrive in Iraq

National Guard and Labor Ready Launch Partnership to Offer Flexible Employment Opportunities to Guard Members

Websites:

National Guard Family Program Online Communities for families and youth:

<http://www.guardfamily.org/>

<http://www.guardfamilyyouth.org/>

TRICARE website for information on health benefits

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>

Civilian Employment Information (CEI) Program Registration for Army and Air National Guard, Air Force, and Coast Guard Reserve

<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/esgr/index.jsp> (Note to those viewing this page in Word or PDF format: You may have to copy this address and paste it into your browser's address window.)

Cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve who are currently on active duty

<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2004/d20040331ngr1.pdf>

Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) contains links and information about schooling, distance education, scholarships, and organizations devoted to the military family

<http://www.militarychild.org/>

Militarystudent.org is a website that helps military children with transition and deployment issues. It has some great features for kids, parents, special needs families, school educators, and more—even safe chat rooms for kids.

<http://www.militarystudent.org>

Disabled Soldiers Initiative (DS3)

This website provides information on the new DS3 program. Through DS3, the Army provides its most severely disabled Soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up.

<http://www.armyds3.org>

Have an article, announcement, or website that you'd like to share with the National Guard Family Program Community? Send your suggestions in an e-mail to Michelle.Bohlen@ngb.af.mil.

Inside Urban Combat Training with the Local Army National Guard

WSLS NewsChannel 10

June 22, 2005

By Dan Reany

In a mockup city, right on base at Fort Pickett, local guardsmen put their classroom and rifle range skills to the test.

"It's a lot of good training, especially for the situations that most of the Army units are engaged in now, with Iraq and Afghanistan," says Sgt. Carl Cline.

The troops are going through MOUT training, military Operations in Urban Territory. It's a simulated city on base, complete with blown up Jeeps, crumbled buildings, street signs, and 'natives,' other guardsmen dressed -- in this case -- as Iraqis.

During a standard patrol, one of the locals tells them about some troublemakers in a shantytown down the road.

Once out there the very first shots from a sniper immediately cause confusion and chaos. Insurgents are all around them in fortified sheds. The soldiers take cover, and work their way toward the shanties trying to get inside. They duck for cover as the insurgents inside poke their rifles out peep holes and start firing.

One runs out of ammo and tries to surrender, but no one sees him, so he grabs some clips and disappears, but gets hit just a few seconds later. Soon, some well placed grenades allow the soldiers to get inside the buildings.

After all the Iraqis are dead or captured, everyone's critiqued right on the battlefield. "Don't just go bound across and leave an uncleared building in your rear. You don't know what's in there," says Capt. Mike Peterson.

Individual movement is praised, but throughout the exercise, communication was lacking. They also missed a spider hole and tunnel system (designed after special forces soldiers brought back stories about them from Afghanistan) but leaders say for new recruits, they did well.

"So there's always improvements. It's a learning lesson for all of us," Cline says.

"As far as I'm concerned it's the most important kind of training we can get," says Sgt. Charlie Armentrout. "Because if we do get deployed to another area where we're doing this kind of combat, we're not going to learn how to do that just by being on the rifle range. We have to actually experience it and practice it on our own."

In this kind of battle, firing blanks and essentially playing lazer tag takes down the pressure quite a few notches. "But if you stop to think about it, it's a pretty intense reality check afterwards knowing that it could have been for real and that the two guys that they pretended to kill really could have been dead out on the battlefield today," Armentrout

says.

Luckily, in this simulated village, life and death are just part of the training.

BENEFITS

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Proposed Assistance for Families of Deployed Soldiers

WTVY

23 June 2005

MONTGOMERY— A state representative has asked Governor Bob Riley to include a bill aimed at providing assistance for families of guardsmen and reservists deployed overseas among items to be considered in a special session later this summer.

Rep. Jack Williams, R-Vestavia Hills, said the agenda for the special session should include a bill to create a voluntary checkoff on Alabama income tax forms to provide assistance to families of **Alabama National Guard** and Reserve members deployed overseas. "Many of these families take drastic pay cuts when they are called to active duty. I think it is imperative that as these men and women risk their lives we should be looking for ways to ease their mind about family matters back home," Williams said.

Similar legislation was introduced earlier this year by Sen. Gerald Dial, D-Lineville, and Rep. Terry Spicer, D-Elba, but it died on the final day of the regular session. "If we wait until next year's regular session we will postpone helping these families by another year," Williams said.

Riley has said the special session will likely start in mid-July, and the agenda will include the General Fund budget and a bill to give state employees a four percent raise and switch their paychecks from every two weeks to twice a month.

HOMEFRONT: DEALING WITH DEPLOYMENT

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Employers Must Adjust As Military Depart, Return To Job; Welcome Back, Soldier

The Lansing State Journal

June 27, 2005

By Barbara Wieland

In late 2003, Tony Davis told his boss that he wouldn't be coming to work for awhile - a very long while.

Davis, who works for DeLau and Daughters Concrete in Perry, was called to active duty in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

As a member of the **National Guard**, Davis, 33, set aside his construction tools to become a guard of some of the world's most talked about prisoners. He left for Guantanamo in December 2003 and returned 11 months later.

"I was happy to be out of there," said Davis, a father of two. "I took two weeks off and went back to work."

His job was waiting for him - thanks to federal law and a supportive employer.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act forbids employment discrimination against military service men and women.

The law protects the 153,136 National Guard and reservists who are currently on active duty.

Employers must allow guardsmen and reservists to return to their jobs if they're called to active duty for fewer than 90 days.

If the assignment is longer than that, employers must offer the men and women their former job or one comparable to it.

Companies that run afoul of the law usually do so unintentionally, said Maj. Robert Palmer, a U.S. Air Force reservist and a spokesman for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

The agency, a part of the U.S. Department of Defense, explains the federal law to business owners. It also mediates disputes between companies and returning guardsmen and reservists.

"Ninety to 95 percent of the time, they just don't understand the law," he said.

Among the more common mistakes a company makes: Forcing a worker to use vacation time to cover military service and not resuming health benefits as soon as an employee returns to work.

Last year, 900 volunteer mediators refereed 6,000 disputes between military workers and their companies, Palmer said. About 5,700 of them were settled. The others could end up in court.

Staff Sgt. Davis didn't have any problems when he returned from Guantanamo. He resumed his job as a concrete laborer and has since been promoted to foreman.

"I couldn't ask for a better boss," Davis said. "I didn't have to beg or plead with him. He doesn't fuss over my monthly drills."

Company owner Tim DeLau said it wasn't easy to be without a crucial employee for nearly a year. It meant extra work hours for him.

Still, the law alone didn't direct his DeLau's actions.

"I'm a very patriotic individual myself. My whole family is," he said. "It's important to

me that we support our people in the service."

There's also an upside to having a guardsman as an employee, DeLau said. Workers with military experience can bring a sense of discipline to the job.

Home Depot says it benefits from employees who serve in the military. The home improvement chain was recognized last year by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve for its treatment of military employees.

At Home Depot, reservists and guardsmen are given a pay differential to make up for the wages they lose when on active duty. And health benefits for the employee and their family continue uninterrupted.

Home Depot's store leadership program, a fast track to management positions, is heavily populated by workers who spend some of their time in uniform. About 52 percent of the program's 1,050 participants have a military background.

"These are people who drive results," spokesman Yancey Casey said. "They have the ability to inspire and lead."

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

Employers who want help understanding the rights of military employees can contact the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve at (800) 336-4590 or visit www.esgr.org.

- Is a military employee protected from unlawful discrimination by an employer?

Yes. Protection against demotions or dismissals exists.

- Can an employer refuse to allow an employee to attend scheduled drills or annual training?

No. Employees must be excused from work.

- Is prior notice to the employer required for leave of absence for military duty?

Yes, unless precluded by military necessity.

- Is an employer required to pay an employee who is on military leave of absence?

No.

- What if an employee is injured or incurs a disability during military duty?

The deadline for reinstatement at work may be extended for up to two years for persons who are recovering because of a disability incurred during military service and employers must make reasonable accommodations for the impairment.

- What job position is an employee returned to after military leave of absence?

Except with respect to persons whose disability occurred in military service, the position into which an employee is reinstated is determined by priority, based on the length of service. The rules are:

Service of one to 90 days:

- (a) In the job the person would have held had he remained continuously employed, so long as the person is qualified for the job.

(b) If the person cannot become qualified, in the position the person was employed on the date of the commencement of the military service.

Service of 91 or more days:

(a) Same as for service of one to 90 days.

(b) If the person cannot become qualified, in the position the person was employed on the date of the commencement of the military service or which nearly approximates that position.

- How does military service affect employee status or seniority in the work place?

An employee must be considered not to have been absent from the work if the only reason for that absence was service in a uniformed service.

- Does an employee accrue vacation or medical/sick days from the employer while on military leave of absence?

No.

HEALTH ISSUES

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

N.H. Guard Counseling Program Gaining National Attention

The Union Leader

June 27, 2005

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — A counseling program launched last winter for returning members of the **New Hampshire National Guard** and their families is winning praise — and attention — from national officials.

Organizers of "Operation Welcome Home" — an initiative by the New Hampshire National Guard that coordinates a host of public and private agencies to provide one-on-one counseling to veterans returning to civilian life — plan to travel to New Jersey this week to explain how the program works to Guard officials at the national level. The program could become a national model for returning guard members across the country.

"They're going to send it out as training materials," said Lt. Col. Deborah Carter, human resource officer for the New Hampshire National Guard.

Tim Beebe, manger of Veterans Affairs centers in the Northeast, believes New Hampshire's program is pioneering the use of individual counseling for guard members.

"This was the first site in the country that an entire state militia, we could say, has been demobilized on an individual basis like that," he said.

Of more than 800 guard members who returned last February and March from overseas duty, about 140 are getting help, said Caryl Ahern, a counseling coordinator at the VA center in Manchester.

Preparations for Operation Welcome Home already were taking place when Tech. Sgt. David Guindon, 48, of the New Hampshire Air National Guard, committed suicide last August, one day after returning home from a six-month tour in Iraq. But Guindon's suicide made the Guard acutely aware of the need for returning soldiers to have a safety net awaiting them on arrival.

"David's suicide clearly took everything up a notch," Carter said.

Soldiers returning from war zones face a number of obstacles, from dealing with post traumatic stress, to finding a new job or place to live. Their families also can struggle with readjusting to life with a parent or spouse who has been gone for a long time.

The New Hampshire National Guard developed a network of resources, including contacts at the state Division for Children, Youth and Families, the Red Cross and the State Employee Assistance Program to help soldiers ease into civilian life.

Part of the program's goal is to make veterans feel comfortable seeking counseling, Beebe said, especially for those whose troubles may not appear until months after returning home.

"Most folks were really glad to be home and that was sufficient, that they were out of the war zone, and out of harm's way," he said. "For some folks exposed to traumatic events over there, I think the soldiers are understanding that, try as they may, it doesn't seem to be going away."

GENERAL

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Newman's Own Awards Presented at Pentagon

By Rudi Williams

American Forces Press Service

Courtesy of DefendAmerica.mil

6-21-2005

WASHINGTON – Eleven volunteer organizations that reach out to help improve the quality of life of military families took home between \$2,500 and \$10,000 today to help them continue their work in military communities.

The money was awarded during the sixth annual Newman's Own Awards ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes.

"Today we will award \$50,000 in grants to recognize 11 exceptional programs designed to meet the needs of our military community and enhance the quality of life for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen," said master of ceremonies David Coker, executive director of Fisher House Foundation.

"The Newman's Own Award was developed to increase awareness of the many private

organizations throughout the Department of Defense, and their volunteers, who distinguish themselves through service in their local military communities," Coker noted.

The award is sponsored by Newman's Own, Inc., the Fisher House Foundation and the Military Times Media Group.

The "Newman" in Newman's Own is actor Paul Newman, who uses the company to sell pasta sauces, salad dressings and other products to support worthwhile causes.

The sponsoring organizations have donated \$282,000 in grants – ranging from \$500 to \$10,000 – to 76 volunteer organizations, said the ceremony's host, Charles S. Abell, deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. This year, 11 out of 177 organizations that submitted nominations received between \$2,500 and \$10,000.

"Of the many worthwhile programs under consideration, the judges chose 'Operation Helping Hand,' a program of the Tampa Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, to receive the largest – \$10,000 – grant," Abell noted. "Operation Helping Hand provides assistance to the families of the very seriously wounded and injured personnel receiving treatment at the James A. Haley Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Tampa, FL.

"The programs sponsored by the other 10 organizations being honored here today cover every aspect of family support – from deployment kits, to home makeovers to help disabled veterans, to spouse scholarships and video postcards," Abell said. "But they all share one common thread: a desire to improve the quality of life for those who serve and their families."

Abell said 11 organizations received grants, but that doesn't mean the 166 organizations that didn't garner any money lost anything. "To the contrary, they too have gained," he said. "The very process of having to assemble a proposal forces these volunteer organizations to meet and discuss their ideas and to put their thoughts on paper. It gets them focused and makes them think about what they are trying to accomplish and how they will go about meeting their goals and objectives.

"It makes them consider the resources available," Abell continued. "The proposal process forces a cost-benefits analysis. And it generates increased visibility in each community as others learn that organizations like Newman's Own, the Fisher House Foundation and Military Times are willing to support their efforts.

The winning entries demonstrate the unselfish dedication of America's servicemen and women, and their families, Abell noted. "This unselfishness is also demonstrated in the initiatives of Newman's Own, the Fisher House Foundation and Military Times," he added.

Abell said the history of the Newman's Own awards demonstrates a long-term commitment to the well-being and quality of life of military personnel and their families.

For example, Fisher House's support for military families keeps pace with family needs, Abel said. "Right now, five new facilities are preparing to open to support military families whose loved ones are receiving treatment in military hospitals," he said. "In addition, the foundation's complimentary airline ticket program has become an important adjunct to the services provided by the Military Severely Injured Center in Arlington

(VA)."

The top prize of \$10,000 went to Operation Helping Hand, which provides peace of mind for deployed servicemembers who were seriously wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan. The program also benefits the family members who stay with them during their treatment at the James A. Haley VA Medical Center. The assistance provided relieves the families of many burdens, allowing them to focus on their loved ones recovery, according to the award citation.

The second highest grant of \$7,500 was garnered by "Homes for Our Troops," with headquarters in Taunton, MA. Homes for Our Troops builds specially adapted homes and modifies existing homes to meet the unique needs of newly disabled veterans returning home from the global war on terror.

Four recipients received \$5,000 grants:

- "The Law Enforcement Equipment to Iraq Program" is a program of the Black Sheep Volunteers, Clever, MO. The Black Sheep Volunteers collect used law enforcement equipment, including body armor, shoes, helmets, face shields and the like to send to the U.S. military to help the mission of training and equipping the Iraq security forces.
- "Video Postcards from Home" is a project of Bravo Company Family Readiness Group, 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, **Maryland Army National Guard**, Silver Spring, MD. Last January, more than 130 members of Bravo Company boarded buses to begin an 18-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the global war on terror. The family readiness group seeks to produce and distribute a series of six "video postcards" with support messages from community leaders, businesses, and schools – combined with messages from their families.
- "United Through Reading," a program sponsored by the Family Literacy Foundation of San Diego facilitates supportive relationships for children through families and friends reading aloud to them. Its focus is more than 175 deploying ships and Navy/Marine Corps units, permitting military parents and other family members to stay connected with their children by reading aloud on videotapes that are mailed home.
- The "Family Readiness Group" from 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, Fort Campbell, KY, is an all-volunteer force providing support for servicemembers and families during pre-deployment, deployment and redeployment. Assistance is provided in many forms, including deployment handbooks, care packages, and "trauma teams" designed to provide emergency family support during critical times.

Grants of \$2,500 were given to:

- The Scott Air Force Base, IL, and St. Louis area chapters of "Operation Homefront," established to provide assistance with day-to-day issues for military families facing adversity. They have helped with home and car repairs, food assistance, vision care and many other needs in a grass-roots effort to ease the burden of deployment - especially for members of the National Guard and Reserve.
- "Angels of Mercy," a program of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 270, McLean, VA, is a program that supports wounded and injured Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom servicemembers and their families. Auxiliary members visit patients

at Washington's Walter Reed Army Medical Center at least once a week, bringing them clothing and comfort items, providing home cooked meals to the wounded combatants' families and hosting special events.

- "Kids Serve Too" is a program of Salute Our Services in Reston, VA, that fosters awareness of the challenges that military children face, including programs to help children of deployed soldiers to remain active in extracurricular activities by providing grants to keep them involved.
- The "Key Spouse Program" at Dyess Air Force Base, TX, provides support for military families by creating and nurturing a conduit of information and referral between the military's chain of command and spouses and families. Outreach programs include training in financial management, parenting, and ASIST -Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training – to better identify potentially troubled individuals, as well as aid for families in emergencies.
- "Spouse Scholarships" is a program of The Pinnacle Foundation in New Orleans that provides educational assistance to the spouses of servicemembers through grants for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the pursuit of post-secondary education. Their goal is to assist military spouses as they enhance their lives and those of their families.

Also participating in the ceremony were Winston Fisher, Fisher House Foundation executive vice-chairman; Tom Indoe, chief operating officer of Newman's Own; and Tobias Naegele, Military Times Media Group editor in chief.

Visit Fisher House Foundation; [click here](#).

Fourth of July Excitement Is Just a Phone Call Away for Deployed Troops

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Courtesy of AAFES

6-21-2005

DALLAS, TX – For service members deployed to Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, the only fireworks they want to hear on the Fourth of July will be the soothing sound of a loved one on the other end of the telephone line.

“A phone call home, when you’re thousands of miles away, delivers thrills and excitement that even the best fireworks display can’t match,” said the Army & Air Force Exchange Service’s (AAFES’) Chief of Corporate Communications LTC Debra Pressley.

Troops placing calls from any of AAFES’ 65 phone centers in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom don’t need a holiday to pick up the phone. In fact, just last month service members using Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone Cards logged more than 12 million minutes in AAFES call centers in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

While Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone Cards offer the lowest rates from Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom (as low as .19 cents a minute for calls between Iraq and the United States), deployed troops always appreciate America’s support in

making a connection from the front lines to the home front, especially on a holiday.

“It’s tough to be deployed on days that you would traditionally gather with your friends and family,” said LTC Pressley. “Regardless of location, holidays don’t feel the same if you can’t share them with friends and family.”

Through the “Help Our Troops Call Home” program, any American can help troops celebrate Independence Day with their loved ones by sending a Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone Card to a specific deployed service member or to “any service member.”

Phone cards addressed to “any service member” are distributed via the American Red Cross, Air Force Aid Society, the Fisher House Foundation, and the USO. To date, AAFES along with its charitable partners, have distributed more than 60,000 Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone Cards since the “Help Our Troops Call Home” program began in April 2004.

The “Help Our Troops Call Home” initiative allows any American to make a direct contribution to the morale of troops who find themselves far from home.

Visit AAFES online and find out more; [click here. Click the “Help Our Troops Call Home” link or call 800-527-2345 for more information.](#)

Jefferson: Model Club's Kits Arrive in Iraq

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

The Peninsula Daily News

June 27, 2005

By Jennifer Jackson

PORT HADLOCK -- In May, members of the North Olympic Peninsula Modelers Society sent several large boxes of model kits, paints, books and magazines to soldiers in Iraq.

Last week, they received proof that their gift arrived in good shape -- photographs of smiling servicemen holding the kits.

“The guys were really excited,” Staff Sgt. Tim Kosak wrote to Larry Speelman.

Kosak is a member of the 103rd Armored Regiment of the **Pennsylvania National Guard**.

Speelman is the president of NOPMS, a group of model makers from Sequim, Port Townsend and the surrounding area who meet twice a month at the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding in Port Hadlock.

Many members are veterans who have experienced the tedium of life in a war zone. Hearing that Kosak was ordering models through a Quilcene hobby supplier, Rick Sullivan, NOPMS members culled their stashes and collected 65 kits.

An article describing their efforts, “Model Club Puts Hobby on Front Line,” appeared in the Peninsula Daily News on May 10. It prompted people to stop by the Mini Mania

hobby shop in Port Hadlock and donate more than \$200 for more models, supplies and expenses, Speelman said.

As a result, 80 kits, plus paints, brushes, cement, tools and how-to books, were sent to Iraq.

``All I can say is, WOW!" Kosak wrote when he heard the boxes were on their way.

``What you have amassed is more than we could ever imagine. I only hope we can do justice to the kits that and the rest of the club are sending."

National Guard and Labor Ready Launch Partnership to Offer Flexible Employment Opportunities to Guard Members

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Labor Ready, Inc

23 June 2005

TACOMA, Wash., -- Labor Ready, Inc. (NYSE:LRW) and the **Army National Guard** are teaming to offer flexible work opportunities for members of the Guard through Labor Ready offices nationwide.

Information about work available through Labor Ready will be posted at National Guard armories across the country. Recruiters will also refer soldiers and their families to local Labor Ready branches. In return, National Guard recruiters will visit Labor Ready offices to speak to temporary employees about joining the Guard.

Recruiters will be at more than 700 Labor Ready branches in the U.S. and Puerto Rico on June 24 to launch the program.

Congressman David Reichert represents the eighth district of Washington state where Labor Ready is home-based and is a leader on National Guard employment issues.

"This is a wonderful partnership that will help Guardsmen in the state of Washington and across the country," said Congressman David Reichert. "After successfully passing my own amendment in the Americans in Uniforms Act to study employment difficulties faced by reservists, I am pleased to see that Labor Ready will be offering additional job assistance to these men and women so honorably serving our country."

According to Labor Ready President and CEO Joe Sambataro, the partnership will also benefit businesses who hire temporary employees.

"Our more than 300,000 small and mid-sized business customers across the country have a tremendous need for quality workers. National Guard members and their families are a valuable and welcome resource for them, and we are proud that we can put Guard members and our customers together for everyone's benefit," said Sambataro.

Army National Guard Col. Richard Guzzetta, Chief, Recruiting and Retention added, "The Army National Guard is very enthused to work with Labor Ready. Both Labor Ready and the ARNG are in the business of employing people and have the common

focus of providing Americans with good jobs. We believe this will have a positive impact on our recruiting efforts and we are very anxious to see just how great the impact will be."

Labor Ready and the National Guard have already established a partnership on the racetrack. Labor Ready is a co-sponsor of NASCAR's No. 16 car, the National Guard Ford driven by Greg Biffle.

End

[Back to Table of Contents](#)