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# PLAINS GUARDIAN

VOLUME 54 No. 1 *Serving the Kansas National Guard, Kansas Emergency Management, Kansas Homeland Security and Civil Air Patrol* JANUARY 2011

## Tafanelli selected as 34th adjutant general of Kansas

Brig. Gen. Lee Tafanelli was selected as adjutant general by Governor-elect Sam Brownback on Dec. 10, 2010.

“I am humbled and honored that he chose me,” said Tafanelli, adding that the honor was “bittersweet.”

“I have really enjoyed representing the people of my district in the House and to give that up is not easy.”

Tafanelli received recognition as major general by the Kansas Senate Jan. 27, 2011. He was sworn in as adjutant general Jan. 28 in the Kansas Senate chambers.

As adjutant general, Tafanelli will be charged with guiding the preparation and training of over 7,700 Kansas Army and Air National Guard citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. As the director of Kansas Emergency Management, he is also responsible for directing and coordinating state and local government agencies when emergencies and natural disasters strike in the state. In addition to the part-time Soldiers and Airmen, The Adjutant General’s Department includes about 2,300 full-time State and Federal employees. Tafanelli will also serve as the director of Homeland Security for Kansas, where he will work to ensure security in the state is a top priority. For budgetary and administrative purposes, he is responsible for the Civil Air Patrol.

Tafanelli has been a member of the

Kansas National Guard for over 30 years. He assumed the position of assistant adjutant general of the Kansas Army National Guard July 19, 2010 and was the commander of the Kansas Army National Guard. Tafanelli previously served as commander of 69th Troop Command and the director of operations for the Kansas Guard.

He joined the Kansas Army National Guard in 1980 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers through Pittsburg State University’s Reserve Officer Training Corps program in 1982. Tafanelli has served in a wide variety of command and staff positions as a traditional Guardsman, Active Guard and Reserve and Active Duty Soldier at the company, battalion, brigade, state headquarters and Department of the Army level. In 2005 he was deployed with the 891st Engineer Battalion (Combat) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In 1999, Tafanelli received a master’s degree in Environmental Planning and Management from Kansas State University and is a 2008 graduate of the U.S. Army War College. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Combat Action Badge, Parachutist



**Brig. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, adjutant general-select, takes his oath of office Jan. 28, 2011, in a brief ceremony in the Kansas Senate Chambers. the oath was adminstered by the Honorable Lawton Nuss, chief justice of the Kansas Supreme Court. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)**

Badge and Air Assault Badge.

Prior to becoming the adjutant general, Tafanelli was a state representative for the 47th District in the Kansas Legislature. He also worked at Kansas State University as a

program coordinator for the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center.

Tafanelli and his wife, Tammy, live in rural Ozawkie with their two children, Nicholas and Francesca.

## Kansas sends off third Agribusiness Development Team to Afghanistan

**By Steve Larson  
Public Affairs Office**

Members of the Kansas Agribusiness Development Team #3 Afghanistan received a rousing send-off during a deployment ceremony Nov. 23, 2010, at the Kanss State University Recreation Center

in Salina.

“This will be the third team we’ve sent to Afghanistan with this mission,” said Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, the adjutant general. “Our first two teams have made great strides in building relationships with the people of the area, showing them how they can improve their agricultural production and, consequently, the quality of their lives. I have every confidence that this team will continue to build on those relationships and be true mentors to the Afghan people.”

“There is no one tyrant in Afghanistan, but there is a tyrannical group there that seeks to not let the Afghan people choose their own way forward,” Bunting told the crowd of family and friends. “So what America has always done is and what Kansas has always done is we find brave men and women that put on the uniform of their country and they go where we send them to do the great work.”

“That’s what this third Agribusiness Development Team will do and were immensely proud of them,” said Bunting.

“A year ago, it seemed like this day was going to be forever coming,” said Lt. Col. Howard Wheeler, commander of the team. “And now... we realize that time has really flown by quickly and we hope that the next year flies by just as quickly.”

Wheeler explained the mission of the team is to assist the Afghan people in developing new farming techniques and sustainable crops to help improve the Afghan economy.

“It’s a challenging mission and it needs a special team of warriors,” said Wheeler. “That special team of warriors stands right next to you. They’re a team that only the Na-

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## “Home for the holidays” a dream come true for Kansas Soldiers

**By Steve Larson  
Public Affairs Office**

It was a holiday story with a Hollywood ending: Soldiers return home just in time for Christmas.

Approximately 170 Soldiers of the Kansas National Guard’s 226th Engineer Company returned home from Afghanistan Dec. 23, 2010. A brief ceremony was conducted for the Soldiers in Hangar #600 at the Salina Municipal Airport, where throngs of families and friends gave them a ringing and heartfelt welcome.

Given the sometimes changeable nature

*“This is the best Christmas present we could ever give to the families of these fine Soldiers.”*

**Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting**

of military schedules and the availability of transportation, it was not always certain whether the Soldiers would make it back to Kansas in time for the holidays.

“This is the best Christmas present we

(Continued on Page 5)



**Soldiers of the 226th Engineer Company and 891st Engineer Battalion are greeted by senior leadership of the Kansas National Guard as they step off a jet at the Salina airport Dec. 23, 2010. The Soldiers had been on a one-year mission to Afghanistan. (Photo by Sharon Watson, Public Affairs Office)**

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# Guardsmen headed for fourth deployment, second mountaintop

*Editor’s note: In the September 2010 issue of the Plains Guardian was an article about Capt. Aaron “Ike” Isaacson and his involvement in an expedition to climb Mount Lobuche in Nepal with the “Soldiers to the Summit” program in October 2010.*

*Isaacson will be in training throughout this year for a second climb, this one up Mount Vinson, the highest mountain in Antarctica. That climb is scheduled for January 2012, shortly after he returns from a fourth deployment to Afghanistan.*

*Below is an edited version of an article about Isaacson and the Wounded Warrior’s “Soldiers to the Summit” program that appeared in Foundation’s magazine prior to the 2010 climb. Reprinted by permission.*

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**By Rachel Gladstone, Staff Writer  
Foundations magazine**

What is it that makes an ordinary man extraordinary? Is it the way he handles major life events? Or is it something he’s simply born with?

According to those who know him best, for Capt. Aaron Isaacson of the Kansas Army National Guard it’s a combination of these things that make him an exemplary Soldier, a steadfast friend, a loving son and a remarkable man.

But if you were to ask him the same question, he would tell you that it’s about adhering to his principles, which include devotion to his country and an unwavering desire to help others whenever possible.

Isaacson has been patriotic almost all his life. Hailing originally from Hugoton, Kan., he felt the first stirrings of patriotism as a child.

“I’ve always had [these inclinations],” he recalled. “When I was six years old, I wrote a letter to President Ronald Reagan in crayon to say I was sorry they were saying bad things about him in the news. And he actually sent a nice note back. I’ve always been interested in serving one way or another.”

Isaacson went on to become a Boy Scout and an Eagle Scout. After high school, he attended Washburn University, graduating in 1999 with a degree in business administration. Then, something terrible happened: 9/11. The attacks on America had such a profound effect on Isaacson that he felt he had no choice but to join the military. He jumped at the first chance for deployment.

“There was a real change in him after 9/11,” John Isaacson, Aaron’s father, told Foundations. He said that Aaron really wanted to serve his country, so he enlisted

with the only Kansas unit that was immediately sending troops to the Middle East at that time. “He made it clear to them that if they were going to put him behind a desk, he wasn’t going to join.”

In 2004, Isaacson deployed to Iraq as a member of a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Kansas City, Kan. It was there, in the Al Anbar province, that he suffered the first of several serious injuries he would sustain in the coming years. Those wounds earned him his first Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.

He deployed for a second tour to Iraq, serving with the 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry in Baghdad as an infantry platoon leader. In 2007, Isaacson deployed for a third tour, this time to Afghanistan as a member of Embedded Training Team #4.

It was there that Isaacson sustained his third injury and was awarded his second Bronze Star.

Fortunately, none of Isaacson’s injuries were life threatening. But, their aftermath will affect him for the rest of his life.

“The main thing is that I just can’t hear people any more. Sometimes that’s good,” he laughed, “but most of the time, it’s not—especially when I’m spending time with my family. The doctors tell me it’s only going to get worse.”

In light of this news, and the fact that he gave a year of his life to the recovery of his broken leg, one might wonder how he stays as positive as he does. His family chalks it up to an indomitable spirit and a great attitude.

“I think that a lot of it has to do with Aaron’s personality, and the strength he draws from our family and his fellow Soldiers. They depend on one another for their lives,” Isaacson’s mother, Robin, told us. “I think that with Aaron, as an individual, [his service] just continues to make him a stronger person. When you are met with things you have to go through and you wonder if it’s humanly possible to survive them—and then you do—I think you come through it that much stronger.”

As far as Isaacson is concerned, his resilience hinges on his ability to unflinchingly face the truth about his life.

“You have to keep going,” he mused. “You just can’t stop. Some days I have to inspire myself to get up, but I do it. It comes and goes in waves, I guess. On those days that you don’t want to get up, you have to put one foot in front of the other. And you have to keep a sense of humor—my sense of humor really carries me through.”



**Capt. Aaron Isaacson proudly displays the United States flag on top of Mount Lobuche, Nepal. Isaacson, a member of the Kansas National Guard, climbed the peak in October 2010 with a group of Wounded Warriors as part of the “Soldiers to the Summit” program. (Photo by Didrik Johnck/Johnck Media, LLC)**

In addition, Isaacson feels the people around him have helped him focus on the positive aspects of his life.

“Of course, I have aches and pains like anybody. But from a mental perspective, as long as I’m around my buddies who were [deployed] with me as much as possible, I’m OK. That’s the best way for any Soldier to get by after returning home,” he continued. “[Your fellow Soldiers] know what you’re thinking and what you’ve experienced, and it makes sense to them. It doesn’t really make sense to anybody else. I’m definitely a different person [than I was], and I don’t think that will ever [change]. But it’s never going to hold me down. Helping people and the love I have for my country inspire me to continue to serve.”

Isaacson’s faith has also been a constant for him, even when he had doubts about his day-to-day activities overseas.

“I’ve always been a Christian,” he shared. “It’s really trying sometimes, though. On my first tour, I brought a Bible with me and always went to church. But then I stopped going to church. I did some deep searching to see what was going on with that. I had stopped praying and everything.”

“It wasn’t because I stopped believing,” he continued. “It was almost like I was try-

ing to not let God see what I was doing over there. I subconsciously thought that if I avoided [religion], maybe God wouldn’t notice the things I was doing in combat arms. But I worked out of that.”

“My faith has always kept me going in the right direction. It especially helped when I was recovering from my broken leg. During that year, I had a lot of time to think about my faith. It’s been renewing.”

After his stint in the hospital in 2009, Isaacson returned to Topeka, Kan., and got a job working as the legislative liaison for the Kansas adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting. In addition to this new job, Isaacson plans to redeploy to the Middle East in 2011.

But, he admits, sometimes it’s great to take a break, too.

“My family has a farm out in the country, and I like to get away from everything and just work out there. It gives me a chance to think. It’s great to be able to take some time to block myself off from everything. I’ve come to appreciate the simple things in life, like being on the farm and watching the sun go down. And, I love spending time catching up with friends and family.”

Although Isaacson has seen his share of

**(Continued on Page 10)**

# Battalion prepares Burundian soldiers for peacekeeping mission

**By Staff Sgt. Heather Stanton  
Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa**

A three-officer team from the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137 Infantry, Kansas National Guard, serving with Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa recently returned from Burundi where they worked alongside the Burundian National Defense Force in a command post exercise.

The exercise was the capstone of a U.S. Department of State-sponsored Command Staff Operations Course. During the five-week course, battalion commanders and staff learn the NATO military decision making process, according to James Cobb, U.S. State Department program country manager for Burundi. During the exercise, the BNDF used what they previously learned in a scenario similar to what they may experience during their upcoming peacekeeping mission.

“If you look back through history, staff work probably gets more soldiers killed on the battlefield than an actual engagement, (more) than poor tactics decisions,” said Lt. Col. Gregory Mittman, 2-137 commander. “Poor staff work can lead large numbers of soldiers down a totally wrong path with no options. If we continue to help them refine their staff work, ideally they’ll be able to minimize their own casualties and try to lessen the suffering on innocent populations.”

During the exercise, the BNDF battalion worked as though they were in position at their deployed location, Mittman said. They were given rudimentary orders from brigade telling them they were going to proceed as a brigade and what their role would be. With

the order, they used the Military Decision Making Process--analyze the situation, figure out the best course of action, “wargame” the course of action, make a final decision and execute that decision.

Though a language barrier was an obsta-

cle during the week-long exercise, the biggest obstacle to overcome was that the BNDF staff officers and soldiers lacked the fundamental understanding that would be inherent to an American Soldier at that rank, Mittman said.

“(For the exercise) we don’t have a communications director. The operations and intelligence directors were just picked from the ranks,” Mittman explained. “In our military, those people would be specifically branched and tracked that way.”

Overcoming this obstacle was a slow process, but the soldiers powered through it.

“You try to teach through it,” Mittman said. “Sometimes you don’t realize there is a problem. You go through and ask questions and you find out there is a very basic piece of information missing that is causing a lot of problems. You go back and try to fix it and go on through. It’s trial and error.”

The CJTF-HOA Soldiers provided a military presence their U.S. State Department counterparts did not necessarily possess.

“All of the (U.S. State Department) instructors have a wealth of experience and are all very competent,” Mittman said. “But the fact that someone is here wearing the uniform brings some legitimacy. (It says) ‘Here is real-time information straight out of the ranks of the U.S. military’.”

The U.S. military partners with the U.S.

**(Continued on Page 10)**



**Burundian National Defense Force Captain Commander Jean Claude Bizoza, the chief of staff during the Command Post Exercise, gives the morning situation report to the BNDF command staff and the U.S. Army partners during an exercise in Burundi. Three Soldiers from the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry travelled to Burundi to partner with the BNDF for the exercise and share best practices for the Burundian’s upcoming deployment. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Stanton)**



# Lee takes charge of 169th CSSB

The 169th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion has a new commander. A change of command ceremony was held Dec. 5, 2010, in the Olathe, Kan., Army National Guard armory. The new commander, Lt. Col. David E. Lee, took command from Lt. Col. Thomas J. Foster. “I am both humbled and honored at the opportunity to serve as battalion commander of the 169th CSSB,” said Lee. “I take the privilege of command very seriously,” Lee continued. “As the integration process begins into command, I immediately realize the outstanding quality of staff, company commanders and Soldiers that Lieutenant Colonel Foster has trained and mentored over the past 30 months of command. To that I am grateful and pledge to continue the strong leadership and technical skill building that he and his predecessors have established and maintained over the long history of the battalion.” Lee brings with him a wide range of knowledge to the command position that he feels will help ensure his success. His diverse background started when he enlisted with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 891st Engineer Battalion, as a wire systems installer in 1985. In 1989, he

received his commission and served with 891st Engineer Battalion. During his tenure, he served in various positions including communications and electronic officer, platoon leader, reconnaissance officer, executive officer, company commander and logistics officer. Lee had served as operations officer of the 287th Sustainment Brigade, during which the unit deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2001, Lee transferred to the 169th Corps Support Battalion, deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the support operations officer in 2005. Upon return from the deployment, Lee served as the assistant support operations and training officer for the 287th Sustainment Brigade. “This has been the best military position I have ever had and I have been blessed to be the commander of the 169th CSSB,” said Foster, who had been the battalion’s commander since July 2008. “I truly love this battalion and the Soldiers that make it great. It is a sad day to give up command, but, Lieutenant Colonel Lee will do a fantastic job during his command here at the 169th CSSB.”



**Lt. Col. David E. Lee addresses members of the 169th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion during the ceremony that marked his assumption of command of the unit Dec. 5, 2010. (Photo by Spc. Robert Havens, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)**

# Chaplains serve God and Country

**By Chaplain (Col.) Don Davidson  
State Chaplain**

The Chaplain Corps was established prior to the Revolutionary War when General George Washington requested the assistance of his minister for the welfare and morale of the Soldiers. Since then, chaplains have served in every conflict and been with Soldiers on every field of battle. In today’s Army, the Chaplain Corps consists of chaplains, chaplain assistants and chaplain candidates. Chaplains are commissioned officers who are endorsed by a specific denomination or endorsing agency. Currently, chaplains are Christian, Islamic, Jewish and Hindu, along with the various sub-groupings within those faiths. The Army establishes basic requirements to become a chaplain; each denomination or endorsing agency may add to those basic requirements. The Army requires that a chaplain be a graduate of an accredited seminary or theological school with a master’s degree in divinity, theology or its equivalent; ordination, accreditation or licensing within their individual grouping; meet physical and age standards and be endorsed. Some denominations require active participation and leadership in the local religious community for one or two years before commissioning and others also re-



**Chaplain (Col.)  
Don Davidson**

quire graduation from counseling courses such as Clinical Pastoral Education. Chaplains serve all members of the military community within the tradition of their own faith group. Chaplains will seek to provide pastoral care and support to every Soldier and every military family. However, in some cases, they may refer to another chaplain who may be better enabled to provide that support because of their specific denominational ties. A good example might be that a Baptist chaplain would defer to a Roman Catholic chaplain for the pastoral care of a Roman Catholic Soldier or family. Chaplains are not commissioned to evangelize for their individual faith traditions, although when they conduct a service or provide counseling they do so within the context of their educational and spiritual convictions. Saying this in another way, I would never try to convert a Soldier to the Episcopal faith, yet when I lead a service or provide counseling I do so as an Episcopal priest. My obligation as a chaplain, however, is to provide support and care for every member of the military and I will do so to the best of my ability. The Army chaplaincy as a corps is secular, that is, it has no one religious doctrine or theology and chaplains are dedicated to protecting the religious freedom of every military member, including their right not to profess a specific faith or creed nor be forced or harassed to do so. Chaplains, no matter of rank, should be addressed as “Chaplain,” “Rabbi,” “Father” or “Imam.” Chaplain candidates are full-time students

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# JAG officers attend 21st annual legal conference in Topeka



**Maj. Jared Maag, staff judge advocate, 190th Air Refueling Wing, Topeka, was one of several speakers at the Kansas National Guard 2010 Judge Advocate Legal Conference, held at the Washburn University School of Law. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bill McGinnis, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)**

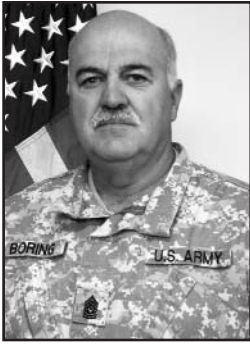
**By Sgt. 1st Class Bill McGinnis  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

More than 50 past and present members of the Kansas National Guard’s Judge Advocate General’s Corps and civilians who practice military law gathered together at the Washburn University School of Law Oct. 2 and 3, 2010, for the 21st Annual Kansas National Guard 2010 Judge Advocate Legal Conference. The conference was arranged by Lt. Col. Matt Oleen, command judge advocate, 635th Regional Support Group; Maj. Jared Maag, staff judge advocate, 190th Air Refueling Wing; and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Indulis Dambro, legal administrator, Joint Forces Headquarters, Staff Judge Advocate Office. “This is the 21st year we’ve hosted the Kansas National Guard Judge Advocate General’s Corps Conference and this year we had our largest turn out ever,” said Oleen. “We had a great turnout, due largely to the efforts of Chief Dambro.” Oleen said Dambro is scheduled to retire in 2011 after 40 years in the Army and 34 years in the JAG Corps.

# 635th RSG has change of authority

**By Maj. DeAnn Barr  
GPJTC Public Affairs**

A change of authority from Command Sgt. Maj. Manuel R. Rubio, Jr. to Command Sgt. Maj. Edward A. Boring, 635th Regional Support Group based in Hutchinson, Kan., took place on Dec. 5, 2010, at the Great Plains Joint Training Center in Salina, Kan. Boring assumes the position with 36 years of military experience. “I’m looking forward to the opportunity to work with a different type of brigade,” said Boring. “I’ve been an engineer my entire career in the Guard. This is going to be a new experience for me.” After one year in the position, Rubio departs his post with no regrets. “It’s been a year of experience for me,” said Rubio, now serving with the Recruiting Command in Topeka, Kan. “Up to this assignment I’ve been a maintenance logistician. This was an eye-opening experience for me to see how field artillery and their rich tradition operate.” Boring enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1971, serving four years of active duty as an aviation structural mechanic. He then entered the Kansas Army National



**Command Sgt. Maj.  
Edward Boring**

“The conference provides 12 hours of continuing legal education, which every attorney in Kansas needs to stay licensed,” said Oleen. “While the conference is focused on the needs of judge advocates and civilians who practice military law, it is open to all licensed attorneys.” During the conference, participants heard from specialists in various legal fields of expertise, such as ethics, current legal issues in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operations, Sharia law, how America prosecutes unprivileged enemy belligerents accused of violating the Laws of War, cyber attacks and other current legal issues. Participants were also invited to a formal dining-in at the Ramada, in downtown Topeka and an informal social at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard to honor retired judge advocates, as well as three former judge advocates who received special recognition for their contributions to the Kansas National Guard JAG Corps. They were retired Brig. Gen. Jonathan Small, retired Col. Ed Wiegers and retired Lt. Col. Randy Mettner. Guard as a squad leader for Detachment 1, Company B, 891st Engineer Battalion. Boring is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving as first sergeant with Company B, 891st Engineer Battalion. His previous assignment was as command sergeant major for the 891st Engineer Battalion. Boring is a retired captain of the Kansas Highway Patrol with over 26 years of service. He currently works for the U.S. Department of Transportation as a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Program manager. His awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Good Conduct Medal, Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with four oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal with two bronze stars, Armed Forces Reserve medal with “M” device and hour glass, Iraqi Campaign Medal with bronze service star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Kansas Commendation Ribbon with bronze oak leaf, Kansas Homeland Defense Service Ribbon, Kansas Emergency Duty Service Ribbon with two sunflower devices, Army Meritorious Unit Award, the Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal and many other awards. Boring and his wife, Twilla, live in Cherryvale, Kan. They have one daughter and a son, Sgt. Edward Boring II, 891st Engineer Battalion. They have four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



# A different world calls for different strategies

**By Maj. Gen. (KS) Lee Tafanelli**  
**The Adjutant General**

When I joined the Guard in 1980, the Cold War was still very hot and the world looked a lot different than it does today.

If you don't remember the details of 1980 (or weren't born yet), here's a quick run down. The Phillies beat the Royals in Game 6 of the World Series, the first Pac Man videogame was released and Dallas was the most popular show on TV.



**Maj. Gen. (KS)**  
**Lee Tafanelli**

Japan surpassed the United States as the largest producer of automobiles and 3M introduced something called the Post-It note.

Around the globe, the Soviets were in Afghanistan, 52 American embassy hostages were still being held by the Iranians, a Polish electrician named Lech Walesa was leading a pro-reform strike in communist Poland, Iran and Iraq kicked off an eight-year war, Mount St. Helens erupted and CNN was launched. Operation Eagle Claw to rescue the American hostages in Iran failed, resulting in a massive military review and the eventual development of Special Operations Command and the push for something called "joint." There were two superpowers, but no Facebook, Twitter or smartphones. Former California Governor Ronald Reagan was elected president and the twin towers of the World Trade Center dominated the New York skyline.

We live in a very different world now. And the changes that happened in the past 30 years are nothing compared to what's coming. The future geopolitical chess board will look very different. Changes in bioengineering, nanotechnology, energy production, robotics and hundreds of other fields will be nothing short of remarkable. We are at a historical moment in time. What we do over the next several years will have a massive impact

on the lives of Kansans, both living and yet to be born. Because of this, we need to make our time and our efforts count.

I believe in shooting straight with you, so here's the situation we are facing. Both Europe and the United States face massive long-term fiscal challenges. China's economic and military power is rising much quicker than most experts expected. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are winding down, but a sizeable number of other regional conflicts are heating up. Many crafty non-state actors are testing us in ways we are unfamiliar with and poorly equipped, organized or trained to defend against.

Additionally, the surge of money pushed for homeland security and defense efforts after Sept. 11 is receding rapidly. Secretary of Defense Dr. Robert Gates has called for \$100 billion in defense cuts over the next five years, and there are likely more cuts and tough decisions ahead.

Even with all these challenges and budget cuts, there will be small, but attainable, niche areas of military, emergency management and homeland security-related importance that Kansas can seize. We will have to be willing to make bold moves, be adaptive and be at the top of our game. Competition for these missions and resources will be intense, so we will need to push very hard and get used to planning, working and living in an ever-changing and chaotic environment. This is nothing new for Kansans. It is our perseverance of past difficulties that has made our state great, and will bind us together as we work through future challenges.

No matter the challenges ahead, our mission is clear. Whether at home or abroad, we will always answer the call with trained professionals ready to meet any state emergency or federal mission. We have done it since 1855 and we will continue to do it.

I want you to know that we have a strategy to address the challenges above. It is based on four key focus areas:

1. Threats and trends – understanding as best we can the long-term economic, national security and geopolitical trends and threats that we will have to contend with.

gram. He brings with him a vast amount of experience and knowledge to his new assignment that will improve recruiting for the Kansas Warrant Officer Corps.

I had the pleasure of visiting the 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation (Assault) in Topeka and met with the warrant officer aviators. I met the full-time staff, which consisted of 10 warrant officers. I was informed about the four types of Aviators--maintenance, safety, tactical operations and instructor pilots. Any of the aviators can cross train on the four positions with the proper education and training.

I was impressed with the number of hours that are placed on maintenance to keep all of their aircraft ready to fly at any given notice. The National Guard warrant officers have the same requirements of flight time as the Active Duty, so they have to constantly keep up with their flying and simulation requirements to stay current with flight regulations.

A few months ago, I went to watch the 108th in action at the Smoky Hill Weapons Range, where they were conducting weapons qualifications on the Black Hawk helicopters. It was pretty impressive to see how they fly and fire their weapons. The 108th will deploy this year, which will be the second time that this unit has deployed to Iraq. They deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2006 to 2008 and have been involved in many stateside deployments, such as Hurricane Ike 2008 and the winter storms of 2009. Anyone interested in becoming an aviator can contact me or Warrant Officer 1 Jes-

(Continued on Page 5)

2. Organizational structure – examining how we are currently structured to see if it makes sense and is sustainable given the threats and trends.
3. Interagency culture – examining how we can enhance our capabilities by working with other agencies, educational institutions, nongovernmental organizations and private industry.
4. Individual development – examining how we can best prepare our people for the future.

The four focus areas are integrally tied together. If there is a change in one focus area, it affects the others. For example, long-term economic stress (trend) could result in changes to how an agency is structured (organizational structure), which could result in the need for the agency to work closer with private industry to provide a needed capability (interagency culture), which could result in the need for new or different types of training for our people (individual development). We will push hard on all focus areas, but I wanted to explain my thoughts about individual development as it relates to the future.

It's impossible to accurately and consistently predict what's coming, even if you're relatively skilled at forecasting future trends and threats. Even if you're fairly accurate in your forecasts, certain unpredictable events (e.g. Sept. 11, economic recessions, future large-scale attacks), can change everything in an instant.

## Soldier to Soldier Professional Development: The key to a successful career

**By Command Sgt. Maj. James Crosby**  
**1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment**

What is it that drives ordinary people to join an organization that promises you trips to exotic places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa and Egypt? In many cases, it's benefits such as the GI Bill, insurance, part-time income or just an opportunity to serve your nation and the state of Kansas. Whatever that reason is, I firmly believe that Soldiers join our organization to succeed. I don't think we just wake up one morning and decide, "I think I will intentionally fail today, just to see what happens."

With that said, we are failing. We're failing on the promise we make to our-



**Command Sgt. Maj.**  
**James Crosby**

selves and, more importantly, our Soldiers by not being the best noncommissioned officers we can be to help our Soldiers fight and survive, not only on the battlefield, but in life. While deployed to Afghanistan last year with the Kansas Agribusiness Development Team # 1, I had an opportunity to visit with my Soldiers about why many of them weren't "fully" qualified for promotion. Since our team was comprised of members from 17 different units within the state, I received a pretty good sampling of "reasons." Here are just a few of them that led the way:

These questions are daunting, but much more knowable than guessing about future world events, politics and economic dynamics. By thinking about these questions and moving ahead in developing the type of Soldiers, Airmen and state employees we will need, no matter the circumstances, we can best position ourselves and the people of Kansas for success.

Please know that I will need your ideas and your help in shaping our future. If you have any ideas on any of the four focus areas that I mentioned above, I would appreciate hearing them.

Thanks for all you do for our state and nation.

(Continued on Page 5)

## News to start the year off right

**By Command Chief Warrant Officer 4 Hector Vasquez**

I hope every Soldier and their families are having a good start to the year, especially the men and women who were away from their loved ones protecting this great nation of ours. For the people back home, please send an e-mail or card to someone who is deployed away from home and let them know they are not forgotten.



**Command Chief**  
**Warrant Officer 5**  
**Hector Vasquez**

Now that winter is here, please remember to continue to exercise because it is easy to gain a few pounds during the holidays. The average person gains 11 pounds from Thanksgiving through the New Year. It's a lot easier to maintain then starting an exercises program all over again. So, the New Year is a great way to start the year off right by getting in shape. I would like to take this opportunity to announce the selection of our new warrant officer recruiter, Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Bonham. Bonham comes from the Recruiting and Retention office out of Topeka. He has performed the duties as the marketing and advertising noncommissioned officer for Kansas since October 2009 and is also the senior drill sergeant for the Recruit Sustainment Pro-

## PLAINS GUARDIAN

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# New lighting improves outlook for aeromedical evacuation patients

**By Tech. Sgt. Emily F. Alley**  
**190th ARW Public Affairs**

The KC-135s of the Kansas Air National Guard’s 190th Air Refueling Wing fly diverse missions all over the world. They carry cargo, refuel other aircraft and for the last several years have also participated in aeromedical missions—airlifting medical patients out of the Middle East and flying them to the United States.

However, the dark, sparsely windowed interior of the planes lack modern lighting. “The plane has flown for 50 years with almost no lighting in the cabin,” recalled Lt. Col. Lee Grunberger, who first researched the idea of improved lighting.

The light improvements started in 2008 when Grunberger was on an aeromedical evacuation mission to Afghanistan and asked medics what could make the mission better. When they suggested lighting, he began to do research and discovered new LED lights, which had been installed in RC-135s. By the time he ordered lights, they had improved in color quality and brightness to the point that doctors will be able to not only see patients, but recognize skin tones, such as paleness or bruising, in true colors.

After researching the lights, Grunberger approached Air Mobility Command. He told them how he sought to bridge medical needs with maintenance capabilities. “We helped set specs,” said Grunberger. “We talked to people who set policy for the KC-135 at Tinker, the National Guard

Bureau and Headquarters, Air Mobility Command.” The 190th ARW Maintenance Squadron supported the testing and installation, even making suggestions to the manufacturer that will improve the lighting kit for other aircraft. Grunberger stressed these are fleet-wide improvements, not just for the 200 KC-135s in the Air National Guard. “The innovation is a result of the hard work from the Maintenance and Operations squadrons here,” said Capt. Marci Solander, deputy commander of Maintenance, “and represents a culmination of many dedicated individuals going above and beyond in their efforts to ensure the unit remains ready.” A few active duty bases have begun to benefit from the lighting kits. However, months before they received them, the 190th was flying generals into Afghanistan on aircraft already equipped with the lights. The 190th ARW flew the first aeromedical evacuation combat mission with new lighting into Bagram, Afghanistan, in July 2010. Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, Kansas adjutant general, and Brig. Gen. John Owen, Air Mobility Command National Guard assistant to the command surgeon, accompanied the flight at the invitation of the 455th Medical Group commander in Bagram. When the patients were loaded, the medics noticed the difference. While it is certainly a benefit at night, even daytime loading and unloading of patients is different, with less risk of tripping and snagging.



**Ground and air crews prepare to load patients on to a KC-135 from the 190th Air Refueling Wing at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. The jet has been equipped with new light packages that improve visibility in the hold, resulting in better care for military personnel being medivaced to hospitals. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Emily Alley)**

“And when you’re coming out of Bagram, you’ll have patients in critical condition,” Grunberger reflected. Senior Master Sgt. James Spurlock, the boom operator during the July flight, said the medical personnel were impressed with the lighting. They had experienced the old lighting and said the improvement was outstanding. The design also gave the medics more control. They can dim them when the patients need to sleep. The 190th has plans for more innova-

tions. In the future, an improved layout can provide more space for medical crews. The current layout can be cramped when a doctor, respiratory technician and nurse, in addition to other medical personnel, are all at work in the aisles. Grunberger plans to work with Air Mobility Command to install litters that mount closer to the sides of the cabin and may expand aisle space as much as 40 inches. They will also save 2,000 pounds in weight compared to the current palletized system.

## Key to a successful career

**Continued from Page 4**  
Currently, the fully qualified Noncommissioned Officer Education System rate in the state stands at less than 55 percent. You have to look no further than Army Regulation 600-8-19, Promotions and Reductions, to think that I am not being up front when I give you the 55 percent rate. After all, it clearly states that a sergeant doesn’t have to attend the Warrior Leader Course in order to keep his rank. Nor does a staff sergeant have to attend the Advance Leader Course to maintain his rank. It’s the same with the Senior Leader Course for our sergeants first class.

The only “required” attendees are those who currently hold the rank of sergeant major or command sergeant major. That is the only conditional promotion that is still maintained in the Army National Guard today. However, what the regulation does tell you is that in order to be eligible for promotion to the next higher grade, you must be “fully qualified.” So, I ask you this: Where do we draw the line between qualification and inefficiency?

I share all of this for only one reason: To

get you to understand whatever your reason is, it’s incumbent upon you, the Soldier and Leader, to handle your career. I could’ve asked that question to 100 noncommissioned officers who aren’t qualified and gotten 100 different answers, but is it the answer that matters or is it the end result? You, and you only, are the keeper of your career. Should there be a senior noncommissioned officer there to coach, teach and mentor you? Absolutely. However, if there is not one, be the kind of Soldier I see in the Kansas Army National Guard today--bright, innovative, articulate and, above all else, motivated. Someday, one of you is destined to be the replacement for the sergeant, staff sergeant, sergeant first class, master sergeant, first sergeant, sergeant major or command sergeant major of your current formation. Do it the right way by being proactive in your approach to attending school. Your actions do make a difference! If you have questions about NCOES or schools, contact your squad leader or platoon sergeant and get the right answer. Be proactive, get qualified!

## News to start the year off right

**Continued from Page 4**  
sica Davis at (785) 861-3889; jessica.l.davis4@us.army.mil. The Kansas Regional Training Institute in Salina is hiring an Active Duty Operational Support position for Training, Advising and Counseling Officer/Instructor, as well as assisting with operational/accreditation support. The position is for 365 days and the rank for the position is chief warrant officer 2 to chief warrant officer 4. Anyone interested in the position can contact Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Smith at (785) 822-6688; michael.william.smith@us.army.mil.

School slots have been reduced and the Army National Guard is losing reserved Warrant Officer Senior Course seats due to Soldiers not completing their paperwork in the time allotted. It appears that the Distance Learning Phase 1 is on a schedule and completed within a specific time allotted by Warrant Officer Career College. When Soldiers are enrolled into Distance Learning Phase 1, they should immediately contact the blackboard Point of Contact to be enrolled, etc. Even if Soldier is in a wait status

for Phase 2, he should enroll into the Distance Learning Phase 1 and complete it. If they have not completed Distance Learning Phase 1 and a late cancellation comes in, he will be passed over on the wait list to the first Army National Guard Soldier who has completed Phase 1. If you know you are within a two years of becoming eligible for promotion, you need to place your name in for your school. Fiscal Year 2011 is already full and the National Guard Bureau is already taking names for Fiscal Year 2012, so you have to be proactive in your career to be promoted in time. Along with your schooling you all should be updating your Individual Personnel Electronic Records Management System records on a yearly basis. It was brought to my attention that we have a bunch of warrants who haven’t reviewed your records. In order for you to have the best chances of a promotion, it is imperative that you have every school, awards and promotions uploaded into your IPERMS. Many promotions are now conducted solely by looking at your IPERMS, so make sure your records are current and reviewed at least annually.

## Soldan selected as chief of staff

Col. Alan K. Soldan, operations director for Joint Forces Headquarters Kansas, Kansas National Guard, has been selected as the new chief of staff for the Kansas Army National Guard (Joint Forces Headquarters Kansas – Land Component). He replaces Col. John Andrew, who is taking the position of chief of staff for the 35th Infantry Division, Fort Leavenworth. Soldan, of Topeka, assumed his new po-



**Col. Alan Soldan**

sition Jan. 15, 2011. “Col. Soldan is a seasoned, combat-experienced officer who thoroughly understands the missions of the Kansas National Guard both at home and in the international arena,” said Maj. Tod Bunting, the adjutant general. “I’m confident he’ll continue his proven record of success in this new leadership position.” “It is an honor to be chosen for this challenging position and have the opportunity to serve the citizens of Kansas, our Soldiers and the leadership of the Kansas National Guard in the new role,” said Soldan. In 2006 Soldan commanded the 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment when the battalion deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

## E-mail will keep retirees better informed

In an effort to keep our retirees better informed on what is happening in the Adjutant General’s Department, the Public Affairs Office has put together an e-mail distribution list. Individuals on this distribution list will receive agency news releases, death notifications to retired Guard members, invitations to changes of command, deployment

or welcome home ceremonies, etc. If you would like to be added to the list please e-mail your request to Jane Welch at jane.e.welch1@us.army.mil. Also if you are a retired Guardsmen and are not receiving a copy of the Plains Guardian at your home please contact the Public Affairs Office at 785-274-1190 to be added to the mailing list.

## Soldiers arrive home for the holidays

**Continued from Page 1**  
could ever give to the families of these fine Soldiers,” said Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, the adjutant general. “They did a superb job in Afghanistan and now they deserve some quality family time.” The Kansas National Guard leadership wanted to make sure the Soldiers and families were reunited as soon as possible. “This will be the shortest ceremony anyone’s ever seen,” said Bunting as he took the podium. “I mentioned that to your Soldiers when they got off the plane. They said they were fine with that and I’m sure you are, too.” A resounding cheer showed the crowd’s agreement. “This is a great day in Kansas,” Bunting continued. “We are immensely proud of our families that made the sacrifice (to be here, because) the greatest combat engineers

you’ve ever seen in the world are standing right in front of you here right now.” Once again, the crowd expressed their agreement with a chorus of cheers and applause. “On behalf of the governor and three million people in Kansas...” said Bunting, “we’re glad they’re home for the holidays.” Directing the first sergeant to bring the unit to attention, Bunting concluded, “God bless you and God bless America! 2-2-6 Engineers, dis-missed!” The unit, headquartered in Augusta, and augmented by Soldiers from the 891st Engineer Battalion, headquartered in Iola, deployed in December 2009. While in Afghanistan, the Soldiers constructed, repaired and maintained vertical infrastructure, including base camps and facilities, for other units deployed to that nation.



# Officers say training at Crisis City is “big bang for the buck”

**By Maj. DeAnn Barr**  
**GPJTC Public Affairs**

Six deputies from the Pottawatomie County Sheriff’s High Risk Warrant Team conducted their monthly tactical training at a wide array of training venues at Crisis City and the Great Plains Joint Training Center in Salina, Kan., Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 2010.

During the two-day training event, team members were able to receive all their handgun, long-rifle and spotter training. Multiple outdoor facilities on the 40,000 acre complex were utilized for dry-run drilling on diverse terrain.

“We took advantage of the long range shooting opportunities here,” said Buck Peddicord, training officer for the Pottawatomie Sheriff Department. “It’s not often we have the opportunity to shoot outside of 400 meters and today we shot at 800.”

After completing their rifle range training, the six traveled a short distance to the Collapsed Structure Rubble Pile and conducted an exercise scenario within one of the tunnel systems. The Collapsed Structure Venue is a large engineered rubble pile with underlying tunnel infrastructure that simulates a collapsed building. The team had one minute to formulate an entry plan and the scenario ended with the safe egress

of all six teammates, including a simulated injury with a tourniquet.

Immediately following the completion of the first scenario, the team traveled two miles within the complex to practice Urban Mount Operations at one of the Urban Assault Courses. The team simulated clearing all 36 buildings and honed the skills practiced the day prior in a new setting.

“This kind of training is a big benefit to us,” said Petticord, who planned all the exercise scenarios. “We have been able to utilize many venues here that enhance our training and have not traveled far between each one. It’s big bang for the buck. The hard quarter billets by the range were free of charge, so all we are out is some gas on travel and the range fee, which was nominal and covered our ammunition. We have found the service to be outstanding and we didn’t even get into the Walt Disney World inside with computers and classrooms.”

The team also took advantage of the Technical Rescue Venue, a five-story structure suited for high rise rescue operations, rope rescue, military and law enforcement search and extraction operations, and shoring operations. They used the tower to exercise approaches with the ballistic shield.

Because of the heavy rail traffic through the county, the officers concluded their



Members of the Pottawatomie County Sheriff’s High Risk Warrant Team assist each other out of the tunnel system on the Crisis City collapsed building venue. The scenario included a simulated injury to one of the officers. (Photo by Maj. DeAnn Barr)

training at the rail venue, using the upright BNSF engine. The rail venue also includes an overturned boxcar and tanker, as well as an upright boxcar containing a simulated methamphetamine lab, an upright fertilizer car, passenger car and chlorine car.



Pottawatomie County Sheriff’s Office deputies practice approaches and search procedures at the Urban Assault Course. The team simulated clearing all 36 buildings, many of which were multiple stories. (Photo by Maj. DeAnn Barr)

## Annual parade a reminder of Veterans Day’s Emporia origins

**By Staff Sgt. Curtis Brown**

United States service members and their family members understand the sacrifices made by veterans during their terms of service, but what do people really know about how Veterans’ Day began? The answer may surprise many people. The Soldiers of Company D, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment know the answer is close to their home, home station, that is.

In 1953, Alvin King and the Emporia Chamber of Commerce began a movement to change the official recognition of Armistice Day, the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month recognized to honor those who served during World War I, to Veterans Day in an effort to honor the service of veterans of all conflicts.

King’s efforts to recognize veterans was assisted by Kansas Rep. Ed Rees from Emporia, who worked with supporters on the House of Representatives Bill 7786 (HR7786). Veterans Day was officially a day of recognition when President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a native of Abilene, Kan., signed HR7786. The city of Emporia held its first Veterans Day parade Nov. 11, 1954.

Kansas Army National Guard Soldiers stationed at the Emporia Armory have participated in the parade since that first

one in 1954. Although Company D, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment is currently deployed in support of the Joint Task Force in the Horn of Africa or preparing for deployment to Afghanistan, Soldiers from the rear detachment ensured that the unit was represented in the parade. Two Company D Soldiers, Staff Sgt. Curtis Brown, Topeka, and Pvt. Chris Cates, Salina, came together with 1st Sgt. Steve Harmon to participate in the Veterans Day Parade.

“Emporia is our home,” said Cates. “The community has been there for us and even though Company D is not actively drilling here, it’s our home and we haven’t forgotten them. They have always shown us their support for us. This is the least we could do.”

Harmon, who works for Flint Hills Technical School in Emporia, was asked to participate by the Boy Scouts Troop 156 and Cub Scout Pack 156.

“The Kansas National Guard serves a national and state mission. The state mission is helped by building the relationship with our home communities,” said Brown. “When Kansans have the chance to meet the people who are in the Guard during a time of celebration and remembrance, it helps build the trust needed for the Guard to succeed in times of crisis or deployment.”

## Chaplains serve God and Country

**Continued from Page 3**

in seminary or theological school. They are commissioned and, in some cases, provided with tuition assistance for their education as a way to give them an introduction to military life. They are not chaplains, should not be addressed as chaplain nor are they permitted to function as chaplains. Currently the Air Guard does not have a chaplain candidate program.

Chaplain candidates are supervised by the state chaplain and attached to a unit under the mentorship of an experienced chaplain. Our hope is that all of our chaplain candidates will someday become chaplains once they have graduated from their secular and military education and have received ecclesiastical endorsement from their individual faith traditions.

Chaplain assistants are the reason that

chaplains are able to do what they do. Rarely does a chaplain travel without an assistant. Soldiers and noncommissioned officer chaplain assistants function with chaplains as a Unit Ministry Team. Because chaplains are not permitted to carry or use any weapon, the chaplain assistant functions as the chaplain’s bodyguard. The chaplain assistant also functions as the administrator for the field or garrison chapel.

We are blessed in the Kansas National Guard with an amazing group of chaplains, chaplain candidates and chaplain assistants. We have a significant shortage of chaplains, more than 50 percent in both Army and Air. If your minister, rabbi or imam would be interested, please ask them to contact me ([don.davidson@us.army.mil](mailto:don.davidson@us.army.mil)) or Maj. Tim Button ([timothy.button@us.army.mil](mailto:timothy.button@us.army.mil)) for more information.

### KANSAS NATIONAL GUARD 2011 Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Championship Match



Rifle - Pistol

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Kansas Regional Training Center, Salina

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TSgt David Salinas (785) 608-3685 [david.salinas@ang.af.mil](mailto:david.salinas@ang.af.mil)



# Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting offers his last remarks as adjutant general

In his final farewell to the men and women of the agency he led for seven years, Maj. Gen. Tod M. Bunting, the adjutant general of Kansas, expressed his pride at their accomplishments, shared his hopes for the future and offered some advice on life.

Bunting’s final address is printed here.  
\*\*\*\*      \*\*\*\*      \*\*\*\*

I thank you all for honoring Barbara and me with your support. We have truly been honored to serve and the last seven years have been an incredible experience for us. We are staying here in Kansas and will be your biggest fans.

To attempt to cover all those who deserve special recognition or to even cover the true highlights we have had these last seven years would far exceed available space and time. So with apologies now to any I miss, I will at least try. I am confident, though, I have been sincere with my personal acknowledgment to all who have served so superbly. But just in case, I stop now and say simply – Thank you.

I was honored to serve Governor (Mark) Parkinson, Governor (Kathleen) Sebelius and five other governors during my military career.

I have offered one bit of advice to young men for years. It can be modified for women, but as I am a man, I can only speak to my brothers in the room. After wisely choosing your parents, a decision of mine that was truly a blessing and in my opinion the best parents ever, I needed to find a bride. Here is what I did and you should copy.

Find an incredible woman with occasional lapses of judgment and time yourself accord-



Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting offers words of humor, advice and farewell in his final address as adjutant general of Kansas on Jan. 8, 2011 at Nickell Armory in Topeka. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)

*“Never stop leading or innovating. The playbook will always be outdated – make your own. If the legal office is not on oxygen, you are not leaning forward enough.”*

ingly. No one means more to me or has done more for me than Barbara and I thank God every day for her, and I ask that you offer her some solace for that lapse in judgment.

I served my first six years as TAG with a great battle buddy in Command Sgt. Maj. Steve Rodina and a superb Command Chief Warrant Officer with Mark Jensen. My current battle buddy, Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Haworth, has been more than equal to the task of looking after me, but most importantly, looking after you. I wish him all the best. I had two great battle buddies and they made all the difference. They were in charge; I was responsible. It all worked out quite well.

Our Warrant Officer Corps is an asset beyond measure. The Air Force made a big mistake years ago when they stopped having warrants. Chief Jensen was a key part of our team and his expertise in safety and all things warrant officer made this organization safer and much more capable.

Soon to be Chief Warrant Officer 5 Hector Vasquez is continuing the great service of our command chief warrant officers and I enjoyed working with him and wish him well. Managing the warrant officers is no small feat, but I know he is up to the task and already making a huge difference to our readiness.

Our executive staff of Tracey Talley and Debbie Doyle are invaluable to our entire agency and these great women made working here every day enjoyable – crazy at times - but still enjoyable. I thank them both and will miss them immensely.

We are the oldest state agency and started, actually, as a territorial agency. I was honored to serve as the 33rd adjutant general, leading an agency of the world’s finest Soldiers and Airmen, and an emergency management/homeland security team of the most devoted state and federal employees. Everyone who works for our agency is a patriot who puts Kansas and, when called, the nation ahead of themselves. I am proud of all of you.

Barbara and I harbored the dream, some may call it a hallucination, that we might serve as TAG when we were not at war or had no open disasters. Such was not to be. We wish General Tafari and Tammy all the best as he becomes our next TAG and will now pray and hold to the dream that they, and all of you still in service, may serve in a time of peace and calm.

I cannot begin to recount a few of your accomplishments until I note the 11 heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our state and nation during these current wars:

- Sgt. 1st Class Clint Wisdom
- Sgt. Don Allen Clary
- Sgt. Derrick Lutters

- Master Sgt. Bernie Deghand
- Spc. John Wood
- Sgt. Jessie Davila
- Spc. Dusty Carroll
- Sgt. 1st Class David Berry
- Sgt. 1st Class Travis Bachman
- Sgt. Courtney Finch
- Spc. Ronnie Schmidt

We know the days, we remember them, and we can best honor them by living our life to the fullest each and every day. You would do me a great honor if you would remember that part of my comments if you choose to remember anything at all.

I know I am going to do that. In fact, I will likely live it up enough to cover a few of you while you are thinking about how to live it up.

No moss is going to grow on me and none ever has had a chance to grow on anyone in our agency.

Nature sure as heck never goes quiet for long and today’s world has called us forward like at no other time.

We have sent thousands of warriors down range, and every formation was at strength, all performed superbly, no one had to come help us out, and their accomplishments are legendary: Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, all of Europe basically, Egypt, Horn of Africa, the Southwest border, and Central and South America.

We built a strong partnership with Armenia, and trained and conducted exercises in South Korea and much of the Far East. We even went to California to fight fires.

Our emergency management teams, including many of our public safety partners, were quickly on the scene and did great work during many hurricanes and storms/contingencies in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Arizona.

We were the rock for our fellow Kansans in 2007. Hope is not a course of action, but I think we can all agree that we need 2007 to be the record year for storms and never approach that type of “whupass” being opened on us by Mother Nature again.

We are leaders in public safety training, and the Eisenhower Center and Crisis City already make our state safer and our responders better trained. I fully expect each will grow in time and be the finest of their kind in the nation.

We were the first with EMEDS (Expeditionary Medical System) and deployed before we unpacked it. We are innovators and leaders in air evacuation. We fly people halfway across the world on 50-year-old tankers that hospitals would not put on an elevator.

We are the Resiliency Center for the nation. While others talked, we acted. Flash Forward is real, it is not a concept. It will only get better.

Our Airmen have been a key part of the intelligence mission around the globe, some having been mobilized for over three years. We have the nation’s largest STAR-BASE program with four sites. We are a premier state for building turbine engines and rebuilding trucks and trailers. Our Counterdrug and our Civil Support teams are recognized for excellence.

We have the finest Premobilization Training and Evaluation Team in the National Guard – no brag, just fact. We have improved from six months at mobilization station to 11 days. Keep going.

We have the finest Honor Guard and Military Funeral Honors Team. We have the best military band in the world – and we are ready to prove it. We are one of only three states with a Mounted Color Guard.

We now have incident management teams and task forces/search and rescue in every region of the state. Our leaders at the local levels made that a reality. They did it with little more than a go forth, do good, do what works for you.

Never stop leading or innovating. The playbook will always be outdated – make your own. If the legal office is not on oxy-

(Continued on Page 10)



Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, Gov. Mark Parkinson and members of the senior leadership of the Kansas National Guard watch as a two-star flag, a symbol of the adjutant general’s rank and authority, is furled and cased in honor of Bunting’s retirement as adjutant general of Kansas. (Photo by Jane Welch, Public Affairs Office)

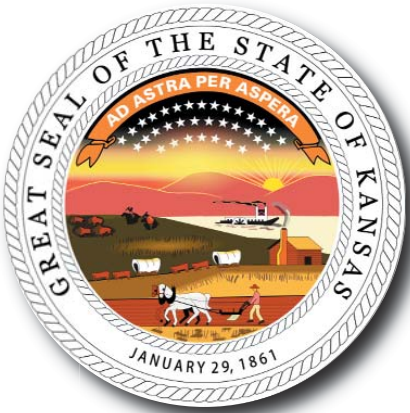


Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting shares a moment with his parents, retired Brig. Gen. Alfred Bunting and Marjorie Bunting after his retirement ceremony on Jan. 8, 2011. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)



# Heavy snow and bitter temperatures don't deter

## KANSAS INAUGURAL 2011



The Kansas National Guard Color Guard presents the colors at the Governor's Inaugural Ball Jan. 9, 2011, at the Kansas Expocentre in Topeka. (Photo by Maj. Mike Wallace, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback and Brig. Gen. Lee Tavanelli talk with Staff Sgt. Jerrod Hayes (left) and his wife, Nancy. Hayes was wounded in Iraq in 2006 while serving with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery for Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Witzke, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Moments after taking his oath of office, Gov. Sam Brownback gives his first address to the Legislature Jan. 10, 2011. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Bill McGinnis, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

The Jan. 10, 2011, inauguration ceremony of Gov. Sam Brownback was supported by the Kansas National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol at the Kansas Statehouse. Despite heavy snow and bitter temperatures that forced the ceremony inside to the House of Representatives chambers, the ceremony went smoothly.

The Kansas National Guard, both Army and Air, cooperated with many other agencies in planning for and assisting in activities for the inauguration of Brownback and other elected officials of the state.

As governor, Brownback is the commander in chief of the Kansas National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol. The Adjutant General serves as his chief of staff for state military matters.

The Adjutant General's Department includes the Kansas Army and Air National Guard, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and provides administrative support to the Civil Air Patrol. The Kansas National Guard has approximately 7,700 Army and



Members of the Kansas Army and Kansas Air National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol participate in the Assumption of Command ceremony, honoring Gov. Sam Brownback as the 41st Governor of Kansas.



# Inaugural, Assumption of Command ceremonies



Gov. Sam Brownback speaking at the podium in the Kansas House of Representatives chamber Jan. 11, 2011.

Following his swearing in as governor, Brownback gave his inaugural address from the House Speaker’s platform. The Assumption of Command ceremony was conducted immediately following Brownback’s remarks. The Assumption of Command ceremony provides a formal setting for the governor, as commander in chief of the Kansas National Guard and the Kansas Highway Patrol, to officially take command of these organizations. Lt. Col. Barry Manley, Kansas National Guard, was the commander of the troops for the Assumption of Command ceremony. The governor was honored with a 19-gun salute fired on the south lawn of the Kansas statehouse by Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery, Kansas National Guard, Abilene, and four Ruffles and Flourishes, played by the 35th Infantry Division Band.



Members of the Kansas Highway Patrol stand at attention in the House of Representatives gallery during the Assumption of Command ceremony.



While his wife, Mary, holds the family Bible, Gov. Sam Brownback takes his oath of office, administered by Kansas Chief Justice Lawton R. Nuss. Brownback’s children Abby, Andy, Elizabeth, Mark and Jenna were also present while their father took his oath. (Photo by Maj. Mike Wallace, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Gov. Sam Brownback; Brig. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, adjutant general select; and Maj. Alan Stoeckline, acting superintendent of the Kansas Highway Patrol, return the salute of Lt. Col. Barry Manley, commander of the troops for the Assumption of Command ceremony. (Photo by Steve Larson, Public Affairs Office)



Members of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery, Abilene, fire a 19-gun salute in honor of Gov. Sam Brownback, their new commander in chief. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Witzke, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



# Guardisman headed for fourth deployment, second mountaintop

**Continued from Page 2**

adventure through his three tours of duty, adventures of another kind also call his name. He has run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, and skied the glaciers of Switzerland.

“I consider myself a calculating thrill-seeker. I’m not geared to jump out of airplanes or anything.” So, Isaacson decided to try a new kind of thrill: mountain climbing.

Isaacson’s decision wasn’t a knee-jerk reaction, however. While recovering from his leg injuries in 2009, he heard about a group of veterans who were climbers and thought that sounded like exactly the challenge he was looking for.

“[They were] taking Soldiers to climb Mount Denali in Alaska. So I contacted those people. They said, “If you have a Purple Heart, we may have something better for you.”

That was how Isaacson discovered World Team Sports, a non-profit organization that organizes and hosts a myriad of challenging sporting events.

“World Team Sports was planning to take a group of Wounded Warriors to Nepal, and I thought that sounded [like a great fit for me],” Isaacson told us.

Isaacson and 10 other Wounded Warriors will be engaged in a three-week expedition in which they hope to summit the 20,075-foot peak of Lobuche East, located just 8.7 miles from Mount Everest. The team will be led by Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind climber ever to summit Mount Everest, and a number of climbers who summited with him 10 years ago.

World Team Sports not only organized the expedition, but financed the lion’s share of it.

“We did some climbing in Afghanistan on the mountains, of course, but that was a different technical ball game,” said Isaacson. “This is a first for me. I’ve wanted to do this



**Capt. Aaron Isaacson and other Wounded Warriors climb Mount Lobouche, Nepal, in October 2010. (Photo by Didrik Johnck/Johnck Media, LLC)**

since I was a kid. Growing up in Kansas, (there was nothing like this)—it’s pretty flat.”

Preparing for this expedition included five months of training and several trips to Colorado.

“Climbing the mountains in Colorado was challenging,” Isaacson shared. “We climbed 14,300 feet and let me tell you, when you reach the summit you feel like you’ve really accomplished something.”

In preparing for the event, Isaacson relied on trainer Brad Bull for expertise and advice. Bull, an experienced mountain climber, was part of the first father-son team to summit Mount Everest, and he’s been impressed with Isaacson and his abilities.

“In climbing, there’s sort of the joy of fatigue, and you’ve got to be comfortable

being uncomfortable. I think Aaron’s going to excel at that. Also, he’s a very selfless person in terms of supporting other people, and this group is an interesting mix of strengths and weaknesses. He’s going to be able to apply his wide range of strengths to a lot of different situations.”

But in the end, the success of this expedition will rely largely on the team itself and the way they work together. Isaacson is proud to be able to support his fellow Wounded Warriors in this endeavor and it is that, as much as the thrill of the climb, that excites him.

## Kansas Response Plan updated

The Kansas Division of Emergency Management and its many partners including state agencies, local government, private sectors, and other key stakeholders revised the Kansas Response Plan during 2010. This plan became effective Jan. 5, 2011.

The Kansas Response Plan applies to all state government departments and agencies providing assistance in a disaster or emergency situation. Within, it describes the fundamental policies, strategies, general concept of operation, and incident management action to be used through all phases of emergency management. The plan serves to provide guidance and policy direction on interfacing with county emergency operations plans and the National

Response Framework and is based on the fundamentals within the National Incident Management System.

The revisions of the Kansas Response Plan include: creates and tasks a plan which provides support through all phases of emergency management; increased use of Emergency Support Function planning teams and coordinated revision meetings; protocols for incident management actions (Emergency Management Assistance Pact, Preliminary Damage Assessments, mission tasking, etc.); and increased specificity of Emergency Support Function actions and responsibilities.

The report may be downloaded as a PDF at <http://kansastag.ks.gov/KDEM.asp?PageID=186>

## Battalion prepares Burundian soldiers

**Continued from Page 2**

State Department in many capacities to assist in developing African armies’ skills for peacekeeping operations throughout Africa, said Cobb.

“It helps both Americans and Africans,” Cobb said. “It gives us an opportunity to partner together and part of our exchange is we provide them with a baseline of doctrine and information that is NATO-standard and can be applied to all peacekeeping operations on the continent. It also gives (African) battalion commanders an opportunity to train their staff with our assistance.”

Mittman understands that the main pur-

pose of his presence in Burundi wasn’t to teach the BNDF how to conduct their operations, but to build a partnership with the force and share best practices.

“The truth is I really like doing these types of engagements,” Mittman said. “They’re inexperienced in some areas, but there is nothing I can teach them about how to fight a war. They’ll know more than I ever will about how to fight. But hopefully, if we can bring them a little bit of sophistication with regard to staff work here, it’ll lessen the casualties they are having (while deployed) and help them be more accomplished in finishing their mission.”



**Capt. Claver Nahimana, Burundian National Defense Force (left) goes over the morning briefing with Lt. Col. Gregory Mittman, commander of the Kansas National Guard’s 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment, during a Command Post Exercise in Burundi. The exercise allowed the Burundian battalion to work as a command element before an upcoming deployment (Photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Stanton)**

## 2010 Annual Report now online

The Adjutant General’s Department has released the agency’s 2010 Annual Report. The report was passed out to Kansas legislators the first week of the 2011 legislative session.

The report reviews the major accomplishments and highlights of all the department’s divisions – Kansas Homeland Security, Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Kansas Army National Guard, Kansas Air National Guard and Civil Air Patrol. This includes deployments

and homecomings of Kansas National Guardsmen involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Horn of Africa and other U.S. military operations; overview of 2010; a historical overview; fiscal information; and a map showing the locations of all Kansas National Guard units.

The report is available on-line in a PDF format at [http://kansastag.ks.gov/AdvHTML\\_Upload/files/Annual%20Report%202010%20w%20map.pdf](http://kansastag.ks.gov/AdvHTML_Upload/files/Annual%20Report%202010%20w%20map.pdf)

## Bunting says farewell to agency

**Continued from Page 7**

gen, you are not leaning forward enough.

The solutions that will work best for us will come from us. Our commission on emergency preparedness is led by a private industry member – John Prather of Groendyke Trucking. He succeeded Jack Taylor – the Emporia Fire Chief.

We are the cavalry; we are the scouts. TACAMO – take charge and move out. Final detail:

Whenever you get a chance to sing our state song, Home on the Range, I ask you to do so with gusto. Most of us know only the first verse. There are other verses and my favorite, which I have noted while at

many places around the world looking in on our warriors, goes like this:

“How often at night when the heavens are bright/ With the light of the glittering stars/ Have I stood here amazed/ And asked as I gazed/ If their glory exceeds that of ours.”

You, and all you have done and will continue to do for Kansas and our nation, are truly worthy of equal glory.

*Ad Astra per Aspera* – “To the stars through difficulties.” It is what made us a state in the first place and it is the motto that will keep us great and take us into the future.

God bless you, God bless America, and God bless the great state of Kansas.

Proud to Serve.

***“This is a first for me. I’ve wanted to do this since I was a kid. Growing up in Kansas, (there was nothing like this)—it’s pretty flat.”***

***Capt. Aaron Isaacson***



# Stranger’s letters shed new light on father’s death in Vietnam

By Devan Tucking-Strickler

It was many years ago that Natalie Davis, a staff member with the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, began her quest to gain the honored Purple Heart medal for her father, James M. Garrett. Garrett, a U.S. Navy corpsman, was killed in action in Vietnam on Nov. 29, 1969, leaving behind a wife, Lois, and two small children, Natalie and Paul.

Original reports to the family said that he died as a result of mechanical failure in the helicopter in which he was traveling, resulting in the crash of the helicopter. Garrett and a number of other servicemen died in the crash.

For many years, the Garrett family assumed that the death was attributed to the mechanical failure and did not have reason to question this. However, in 1989 the Garrett family received a letter from one of Garrett’s bunk-mates, Bruce, telling about the time he served with Garrett and sharing a story that none had heard before:

“... On the night of November 28th, Jim, myself, and two other corpsman were sitting around in the old dispensary talking. I remember he talked about his car, and about all of you. We talked until about 2230 and decided to turn in. It was raining outside and as we were about to go out the door Jim asked me if I would change flights with him because he was trying to get off the flight rotation early as he was going

home soon. I agreed. By the time I got up at 0630, Jim was already out flying. I heard him leave at 0500 or so. It was still dark, gloomy, rainy outside. The day went normal until about 0930-1000 when we first received word that Jim’s chopper went down. At first they thought the Medevac ship had a mechanical problems and set down. Then they later confirmed it had crashed and burned and that it appeared from the chase ship they had been shot down, probably by an RPG somewhere near LZ Ross. There were no survivors of the seven men aboard. For me, I was stunned. I kept thinking that I was supposed to be on that chopper. Why wasn’t I? I was single and had no responsibilities and Jim was married with two kids. God was crazy. He made a mistake. I was supposed to be dead.

Several of Jim’s friends found out I had switched flights and took their anger out on me, confirming my belief that “the wrong man had died.” They told me it was bad luck, superstitious to change flights. I never heard that before, but became a believer. Thank you for letting me enter into your life with the memory of Jim after all of these years. I can only imagine the feelings I have stirred up in you all. For this again, I am sorry.

Sincerely,  
Bruce

Through this letter, the Garretts learned



U.S. Navy corpsman James M. Garrett finally received the Purple Heart medal he was due on May 28, 2007. Garrett died in combat in Vietnam in 1969, but a records error about the circumstances of his death was not corrected until a letter from a former bunk-mate brought to light new facts. (Photo provided)

the initial evidence indicated mechanical failure rather than enemy action, but a later inspection determined that a .50 caliber round had entered the bottom of the aircraft, continued through the radio cabinet behind the cockpit and struck the synchronization shaft, causing it to fail.

After this determination was made, the casualty reports for five Marines on the aircraft were corrected to reflect death due to hostile action rather than accident. However, the reports about the two Navy Corpsman had never been changed to reflect the later findings.

This new information brought a new wave of emotions for the Garrett family, stirring up feelings that had long before been dealt with and bringing in a wave of anger and confusion that took a number of additional years to sink in.

After coming to terms with this new knowledge and the establishment of a new friendship with the bunk-mate who shed light on the situation, Natalie set out on a mission to have her father’s military records corrected to reflect the actual circumstances that lead to his death so many years before.

Through this process, Natalie and Paul actually got to know the father who had deployed to Vietnam on Natalie’s first birthday and died in Vietnam on Paul’s first birthday. They had always known that their father had been a brave man and gave his life while in the service, but through the new found relationship with Bruce these two children got

to know the father who died before ever being a memory for either of them.

The Garretts found that changing military records is no small undertaking. With a lot of support from Bruce and the assistance of the offices of many political figures, Natalie’s quest became a reality. On May 28, 2007, Senator Pat Roberts presented the family of James M. Garrett with the Purple Heart for his service in the Vietnam War.

The story of James M. Garrett not only lives through his children and fellow servicemen, but is now included in a book, Luminous Base: Stories about Corpsmen and Helicopters, Courage and Sacrifice, by Bruce Williams-Burden, the bunkmate whose letter started the chain of events for the Garrett family. Recently, Natalie was contacted by a man who served with her father, telling her that he has a coffee mug that belonged to her father and asking if she would like to have it.

Things happen in our lives that we do not understand, and maybe we are not meant to. Other things fall into place that make these tragedies easier to manage, events such as the letter that came to the Garrett family in 1989. The letter that shed light on the truth and brought peace to one family and to a dedicated serviceman, a letter that resulted in a quest that became a reality and a journey to bring honor and the Purple Heart medal to James M. Garrett, a husband, father, son, brother and member of the United States Navy.

## Guardsmen share Veterans Day with those who came before

By Sgt. Michael H. Mathewson  
Joint Forces Headquarters

On Memorial Day, we honor the veterans that have given the last full measure of devotion to their country. On Veterans Day, we honor living veterans who are a part of our community. However, as veterans age, they sometimes outlive their family and friends, spending their last days in a care home.

This Veterans Day, members of the Kansas Army and Air Guard in Topeka took time out of their holiday to spend time with other veterans, visiting more than 180 veterans in 10 care homes.

“We have made Veterans Day a special event before, but this is the first time that we have brought in serving service members to be with our veterans,” said Rosmarie Doyle, Eventide Convalescent Center.

The event was held in the center’s dining room, which was decorated for the occasion. Certificates were presented to each veteran in recognition of their service to their nation.

Tech. Sgt. Emily Alley, 190th Air Refueling Wing, made time to visit several of the homes. Senior Airman Shanna Finkemeier brought her children, Destiny, 8, and Jessie, 9, to help pass out certificates to the veterans

“so that they would have appreciation of those who came before.”

“They love the military as much as I do,” said Finkemeier.

Capt. Marci Solander, 190th ARW, took time to visit with Army veteran Larry Foster. Foster told her of his service in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969. Staff Sgt. Dane Baker, Company D, 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation, talked with Bill German, who served in the Navy during the 1960s.

Master Sgt. Terry Martin, 190th ARW, his wife, Amanda, and children, Cara, 11; Seth, 9; Lorraine, 7; Jesse Lyn, 4, and Megan, 6 months, visited two facilities.

“The children made cards to give to the veterans at the Atria Hearthstone,” said Martin. “They were so excited by it; they wanted to do it again. We went home and they made more for the veterans here at Eventide.”

Jeff Moszeter, Eventide’s director of operations, said that he has a special respect for the veterans under his care. He thanked the men and women in uniform for taking their time to share war stories with his veterans.

“I hope that we can make this visit a regular part of our annual Veterans Day’s activities,” said Moszeter.



Spec. Justin Prochaska, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 287th Sustainment Brigade, presents a certificate of appreciation to veteran Mosi Marlow. (Photo by Maj. Mike Wallace, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

## Civitan Club, Cub Scouts send care packages to Kansas troops

By Spc. Jessica Zullig,  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Members of the Topeka Civitan Club and Cub Scout Pack #478 came together Nov. 1, 2010, to put together care packages for the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 137th Infantry, currently deployed to the Horn of Africa. This is the third year the group has sent packages to deployed Kansas Soldiers.

Civitan normally works with the developmentally disabled and stays involved in the community, but during a trip to the Veteran’s Administration, David Hodges, Topeka Civitan Club chaplain, was blown away by the amount of courage the veterans have.

“I was speaking to someone who lived the Battle of the Bulge,” said Hodges, “hearing that they still had nerve damage from being frostbitten. They have courage.”

Two years ago, members of Civitan got involved after hearing on the news about a company in Afghanistan that was in need of supplies. Michael Hays, Civitan member and a den leader for Cub Scout Pack #478,

asked to get the youth involved.

“It’s a great example for these kids to be doing something like this,” said Hodges, “to be writing letters and cards and showing that respect and giving thanks. That’s awesome. If they do it as kids, they might do it as adults. We’re proud of those kids.”

The faces of the Scouts displayed their excitement while writing post cards and packing boxes for the Soldiers.

“It goes along with some of the achievements the Scouts need to do with their badges,” said Hays. “Doing this project helps them, helps the troops and falls into what Civitan is all about – community service.”

For the past three years, Civitan and the Cub Scouts have worked together to support troops deployed around the globe.

“I hope Soldiers know that they’re not forgotten,” said Hodges. “We know that they have to make an incredible sacrifice while we get to stay home, but we’re thinking about them. They’re loved and respected and we care about them.”



# 184th Force Support Squadron serves thousands, one meal at a time

By Capt. Nancy Harper  
184th Force Support Squadron

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte is credited with creating the motto, “An army marches on its stomach.” However, it was the endless number of military and civilian cooks who, throughout the centuries, put those words into action. Services personnel from different armed forces continue the tradition of providing meals to scores of deployed military members.

Master Sgt. Edgar Salazar-Aguirre and Staff Sgt. Christopher Guild, members of the 184th Force Support Squadron, are currently providing that service to thousands of U.S. service members and coalition forces at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. Salazar-Aguirre is a facility manager at one of the many dining facilities while Guild oversees daily operations at the food distribution warehouse. The multimillion dollar facility includes dry goods storage; giant freezer and refrigerator sections that house produce, dairy and meats; and metal cargo containers used to store frozen items such as ice cream, fried foods, meat, fish and ice. The food items are later transported to the dining facilities and served to thousands of military members, civilians and contractors.

Maj. Steven Shook, 184th Force Support operations officer, praised the sergeants for their achievements.

“Sergeants Salazar-Aguirre and Guild were eager to volunteer for the deployment to Qatar. The skills and expertise they take with them to the field will continue to demonstrate the dedication and commitment that Air Guardsmen offer the total

force efforts around the world.” Guild has had to overcome weather and electrical issues while maintaining the warehouse. “It’s been reaching 120 degrees here,” he said. “Since we’re in charge of the connex freezers with all the food, it’s been a constant battle with the heat trying to keep the food at safe temperatures to where it doesn’t spoil. We’ve had about five connexes go down in week, so some days I get pulled out of bed before sunrise to move product and avoid incredibly large monetary losses. All of our connexes are overheating trying to keep the food frozen.” Guild was also on hand to assist the grand re-opening of the Fox Sports Sky Box in June 2010. The sports bar, funded in part by the Fox Network, was renovated over a five-month period. Although the base hosts other franchise eateries such as Baskin Robbins, Green Beans Coffee and Burger King, the Al Udeid dining facilities continue to serve over 500,000 meals a month.

Guild’s daily tasks are to ensure food and ice deliveries have a timely arrival to food storage facilities in theater.

While Sergeants Salazar-Aguirre and Guild miss their families and friends, they are motivated to provide first-class service to their customers.

“I’d say that without me, the food wouldn’t get to the base and we wouldn’t have all the amenities that remind people of home. I guess I would just like people to know how much Force Support does and how critical we are to the base standard of living.”



Staff Sgt. Christopher Guild, 184th Force Support Squadron, inspects a product shipment at al Udeid Air Base in Southwest Asia, where he is deployed as a food service technician. (Photo by Capt. Nancy Harper, 184th Force Support Squadron)

## TRICARE benefits extended for military dependents up to age 26

The signing of the National Defense Authorization Act of fiscal year 2011 into law enables TRICARE to extend coverage to eligible adult children up to age 26. A premium-based TRICARE Young Adult program is expected to be in place later this spring.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 required civilian health plans to offer coverage to adult children until age 26. TRICARE previously met or exceeded key tenets of national health reform, including restrictions on annual limits, lifetime maximums, “high user” cancellations, or denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions – but did not include this expanded coverage for adult children. Dependent eligibility for TRICARE previously ended at age 21 or age 23 for full-time college students.

The fiscal year 2011 NDAA now gives the Department of Defense the authority to offer similar benefits to young adults under

TRICARE. The law was signed by the President Jan. 7, 2011, but full details of the TRICARE Young Adult program will not be in place until later this spring, according to TRICARE officials.

Beginning later this spring, qualified, unmarried dependents up to age 26 will be able to purchase TRICARE coverage on a month-to-month basis – as long as they are not eligible for their own employer-sponsored health coverage.

Premium costs are not yet finalized, but the NDAA specifies that rates must cover the full cost of the program.

Initially, the benefit offered will be a premium-based TRICARE Standard benefit. Eligible family members who receive health care between now and the date the program is fully implemented may want to purchase TYA retroactively and should save their receipts. Premiums will have to be paid back to Jan. 1, 2011 in order to obtain reimbursement.

## 190th Air Refueling Wing testing automated air refueling

By Tech Sgt. Emily F. Alley  
190th ARW Public Affairs

Flying high and moving fast, boom operators in KC-135 air refueling tankers can still look down and see a pilot when they refuel a plane. Eventually, however, the cabin may be empty.

The 190th Air Refueling Wing was selected to host the first group of tests for automated air refueling. After the first set of tests concluded, the engineers could have gone somewhere else--other bases would have been happy to host them. But they chose to come back to Forbes.

The 190th ARW was first selected largely because of its location near Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma, but with less air traffic than Edwards Air Force Base in California. Engineers appreciated the wing’s willingness to innovate and noted the outstanding effort by the Maintenance Squadron, specifically mentioning Tech. Sgt. Jason Piper and Tech. Sgt. David Powelson from the 190th Avionics shop as part their reason for returning for the second round of testing.

“We flew eight days in a row. Our guys were always there,” said Maj. Jeff Warrender, a 190th ARW pilot who took part in the testing. “They were just superb, actually.”

By early December, they had performed

almost 20 test runs, using the equipment. The flights provided ample opportunity for engineers to improve the automated refueling system. A manned Learjet stood in for an autonomous aircraft, which was embedded with GPS. Representatives from the Air Force Research Lab, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Tinker Air Force Base and even Navy testers participated. Refueling was performed by guest boom operators from Edwards Air Force Base.

Once all testing is completed, the avionics equipment can be installed in other bombers, fighters and built into future generations of aircraft. Warrender suspects, however, the technology won’t be commonly available until after he retires.

Lt. Col. Lee Grunberger, who helped coordinate the testing, suggested the new system blurs the distinction between traditionally piloted and autonomous aircraft. Several aircraft could fly in a tight formation, even in turbulence, in what Grunberger calls “station keeping.” Pilots can use the avionics system to keep in place while they take a break.

“It’s a safety feature,” described Grunberger. “The pilot can let go and it relieves fatigue. Planes can be manned or unmanned. It’s optional.”



A Lear jet trails a 190th Air Refueling Wing KC-135 refueling jet while testing an Automated Air Refueling. Ultimately, the system will allow for the refueling of unmanned aerial vehicles. (Photo by Master Sgt. Allen Pickert, 190th Air Refueling Wing)

## Chapman marks recovery with reopening of city’s schools

Members of the Kansas Division of Emergency Management’s Public Assistance Office attended the grand opening/dedication ceremonies for the elementary, middle and high schools of Chapman, Kan., Wednesday, Jan. 12, marking a milestone in the community’s recovery from a tornado that ripped through the city in 2008.

Prior to the ceremony, KDEM staff surprised USD 473 Superintendent Tony Frieze by handing him a check for \$2,215,414 as part of continuing payments of the federal and state share of eligible disaster funds. The state share of the check was \$260,637. Frieze and other School Board members and city officials expressed heartfelt gratitude of the support

the community has received from the department of Homeland Security/FEMA and KDEM during the recovery process.

On June 11, 2008, the city of Chapman, Kan., was struck by an F-3 tornado. The elementary, middle and high schools, as well as the USD 473 administration building, were heavily damaged or destroyed. The cost to repair these facilities exceeded \$70 million.

Presidential disaster declaration DR-1776 was awarded to the state in July 2008. After insurance proceeds were deducted, combined federal and state funding exceeded \$42 million for all categories of work under the Public Assistance Program. This includes repairing and rebuilding the above mentioned structures in the City of Chapman.

## High power rifle team plans reunion

The Kansas National Guard High Power Rifle Team is planning a reunion to be held at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard, in Topeka, on April 10, 2011.

Currently, the team is trying to compile a list of all past members. These teams competed in Army area matches, regional matches, various state matches, national matches, and the National Guard championship matches. If you were ever selected for the

State level High Power Rifle Team when it was active, please contact retired Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Lewis at lewy62@sbcglobal.net; phone 785-235-2248.

Please provide your current mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. If you know any other past members, who may not receive the Plains Guardian, please contact them and have them contact Lewis with their information.



# Taylor retires after 39 years

By Staff Sgt. Heather Wright  
35th Infantry Division Public Affairs

Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Taylor, 35th Infantry Division, retired from the Army National Guard after 39 years of service, handing over responsibility to Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Newton, 287th Sustainment Brigade.

Taylor joined the Missouri Army National Guard in 1971. His initial enlistment as an aircraft sheet metal repairman was for six years, but by the sixth year, he decided to make a career of it. He got a civilian job as a federal technician and worked his way through the military ranks to become a command sergeant major in 1997.

“Concluding my career here at the division is the highlight of my career,” Taylor said.

Highlights of Taylor’s time with the 35th ID include the successful deployment and redeployment of the Kosovo Force 2009, fielding of the Standard Integrated Command Post System, participating in Operation Key Resolve in Korea and being the first Division to put the Domestic All-Hazards Response Teams process together.

Though Taylor relished the division’s accomplishments, he derived most satisfaction working with division Soldiers. “The hardest thing about leaving the military will be not having contact with Soldiers,” Taylor said.

Taylor’s made a career based on taking care of Soldiers. He was “blessed to have great commanders and command sergeants major,” throughout his career that made Soldier care a priority.

“I saw what bad was as a young Soldier,

and I knew, absolutely, that I was going to fill my toolbox up with good,” Taylor said. “I’ve seen the easy wrong and the hard right too many times.” He made a vow as a young Soldier that none of his troops would see the easy wrong.

Taylor leaves the division with a few words of wisdom: “It’s been an honor and privilege to wear the uniform with you. Believe in Be, Know and Do. Never compromise you character – Be. Know yourself, your family and your military position. Do – be a doer. God Bless. Santa Fe.”

Taylor assumed duties as the 35th Infantry Division command sergeant major in December 2006.

His major awards and decorations include a Bronze Star Medal, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Army Commendation Medals, an Army Achievement Medal, nine Army Reserve Component Achievement Medals, three National Defense Service Medals, a Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, a Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, two Armed Forces Reserves Medals, four Non-commissioned Professional Development Ribbons, an Army Service Ribbon, five Army Reserve Component Overseas Training awards, the Missouri Conspicuous Service Medal, five Missouri Army National Guard Commendation ribbons, a Missouri National Guard Recruiting and Retention Ribbons, five Missouri National Guard State Emergency Duty Ribbons, the Missouri National Guard Long Service Ribbon for 30 years service and the Master Aircraft Crew member badge.



State Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Haworth presents a bronze statuette and congratulations to Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Taylor as he retires from military service after 39 years. (Photo by Lt. Col. Rick Peat, 35th Infantry Division Public Affairs)

# Kansas sends off third Agribusiness Development Team to Afghanistan

Continued from Page 1

tional Guard could answer... and especially the National Guard of the state of Kansas... Kansas sets the standard and that was proven by ADT 1 and ADT 2.”

Wheeler said that the ADT team “is only the tip of the spear when it comes to this mission.”

“It’s taken the support of literally hundreds of fellow Kansans to get us to this point and prepare us for mission accomplishment,” said Wheeler.

“I’d also be remiss if I didn’t take this opportunity to thank our families and employers,” he continued. “I know it’s difficult to fill the gaps at home and at work that our absence causes. We work through it all the while, smiling, patting us on the back, or giving us a hug and all the while telling us how proud you are of us.”

“But in my opinion,” said Wheeler, “you’re the true patriots. It’s your support that allows us to do what we do.”

“General Bunting,” Wheeler concluded, “we’re prepared to go forward and represent Kansas in the way that we should.”

ADT #3 is comprised of approximately 60 members of the Kansas Army and Air National Guard. The team will work in conjunction with a number of agencies to assist in building capabilities for increased agricultural production, training and services, and improving the safety of food and other agricultural products that are produced and distributed to the Afghan people. They will also assist in the development of sustainable agriculture and other related enterprises that will increase the economic well-being of the Afghans.



Agribusiness Development Team 3 stands in formation at their deployment ceremony in Salina on Nov. 23, 2010. (Photo by Sharon Watson, Public Affairs Office)

# 778th arrives at Camp Arifjon

By Sgt. Charles Malloy, UPAR  
778th Transportation Company

Nearly 300 Kansas National Guardsmen of the 778th Combat (Heavy Equipment Transport) Company arrived at Camp Arifjon, Kuwait, in the early morning hours of Dec. 7, 2010, to start their year-long deployment in Kuwait. This is the unit’s second deployment in support of Operation

Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom.

1st Lt. Jerry Monasmith, company commander, was promoted to the rank of captain, pinned by Lt. Col. Richard Rollins, the outgoing 164th Transportation Battalion commander. The 778th takes over operations from the 1166th Transportation Company, a Massachusetts National Guard unit.



778th Transportation Company gun crews conduct Basic Issue Item inventories as they take over operations in Kuwait from the Massachusetts National Guard’s 1166th Transportation Company (Photo by Sgt. Charles Malloy, UPAR)

# Civil Air Patrol practices for search and rescue missions

In November, the Kansas Wing of the Civil Air Patrol conducted its last search and rescue exercise for 2010. The Wing established mission bases for the exercise in Chanute, Ellsworth, Garden City, Kingman, Lawrence and Osage City.

The exercise simulated a statewide emergency, challenging the command and control and communications capabilities of the wings. Exercise missions were passed down from higher headquarters to the incident commanders at the mission bases. The incident commanders and their staff had to decide how to do the mission with the resources on hand.

The Lawrence Squadron hosted the Topeka and Olathe Squadrons. Their missions involved the search for a missing or overdue aircraft.

The Civil Air Patrol planes, with a pilot, observer and scanner, followed the last

known path of the missing plane. They looked for signals from the emergency locator transmitter or signs of a downed plane.

In the meantime, the ground teams were sent out, driving to staging points along the missing plane’s route of flight. When one of the flight crews received a radio signal or had a visual sighting, they would direct the ground crew. The ground crews had to confirm the information provided by the flight crew. This often required the ground crew to dismount, form a search line and conduct a search, following directions from the flight crews.

On this day, the Civil Air Patrol trained by themselves, conducting two four-hour missions. On a real mission, many other local and state agencies would be involved.

The Civil Air Patrol is a volunteer force comprised of cadets ages 12 to 18 and seniors 21 and older.







# New Teen Council to train leaders and give teens a voice

By **Spc. Stephanie Hodges**  
**105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

Last November, 13 youth volunteers gathered at Nickell Armory in Topeka to pioneer the establishment of the first Kansas National Guard Teen Council.

The group is comprised of young individuals ranging from 13 to 18 years old who have family members enlisted in the Kansas Army and Air National Guard. The mission of this council is to develop leadership skills and enhance life for military children in Kansas.

“We felt an ample amount of military youth were looking for leadership positions within the Kansas National Guard,” explained Darcy Seitz, State Youth Coordinator. “We believe Teen Council will be an opportunity for them to represent their age group and help make decisions for youth and children.”

The intention of the teen council is to provide a forum for military teens to discuss ideas and offer suggestions that will positively impact the Kansas National Guard Child and Youth Program. The Teen Council’s role is to assist the state youth coordinator and act as a collective voice for the children and youth of the Kansas National Guard. To be involved in the Teen Council, participants must fill out and submit an application to the state youth coordinator. Council members hold a term of appointment for one full year. The Teen Council consists of president, vice president, secretary, two historians and up to 10 council member positions.

“The Teen Council is a great place to bond with other military kids and make a difference,” said Reed Wheeler, a council member, “Today, we are helping kids that



**Members of the Kansas National Guard Teen Council (front row) Tyler Prine, Allyson Henry, Kassidy Seaba, Sophia Olsen; (second row) Toby Sullivan, Mary Powledge, Reed Wheeler; (third row) Skylar Dickey, Ty Shafer, Jahna Yuh; (back row) Preston Henry, Ryan Brunner, Sawyer Green. (Photo by Spc. Stephanie Hodges, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)**

are less fortunate receive toys and trying to make their life a little better by doing it.”

As part of their first meeting, the Teen Council spent the day performing community service and team-building activities to strengthen the bonds between council members. The Teen Council completed their first community service opportunity, Toys for Tots, with the local U.S. Marine Corps Reserves. The opportunity involved

gathering and sorting new toys by age groups and gender. The toys were distributed during the Christmas holiday.

After a morning of community service of sorting and packing toys, the group headed to Blue Star Ranch, Carbondale, where the council learned how to care, maintain and ride horses. More importantly, it was an

## Yellow Ribbon event provides good times for Guard kids

By **Amanda Herlinger**  
**State Youth Coordinator**

The Kansas National Guard Child and Youth Programs hosted 120 youth ages 6 to 17 for a day and a half 161 Yellow Ribbon Predeployment event in Hutchinson Nov. 6 and 7, 2010.

On Saturday, teens ages 13 to 17 took a field trip to the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, Kan., where they experienced all the Cosmosphere has to offer, including Dr. Goddard’s lab, a guest speaker and the IMAX theatre.

Youth ages 6 to 12 stayed behind at the hotel to enjoy several guest presentations. Instructors from Kansas STARBASE spent the morning demonstrating the properties of air. Youth got to help the instructors with several engaging demonstrations about air.

After the presentation, the youths broke into groups and took turns creating and shooting straw rockets, using the airzooka to knock things over, and getting themselves “vacuum-packed.”

In the afternoon, the 6 to 12 year olds

event aimed at building group collaboration and friendship.

“It’s a great opportunity for kids to get out of their normal routines, and engage and participate with other young adults,” said Seitz, “and while we do try to steer the activities towards building collaboration and teamwork, we also want to keep it fun.”

The Teen Council has aspiration of establishing a networking community that involves peer mediation for Kansas National military youth. This networking enables the council to discuss military related issues and establish an interpersonal relationship with the geographically dispersed military youth of Kansas.

They also plan on creating a presentation called “Life as a Military Kid.” The presentation will explain the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and viewpoint of a military child through various ages and situations. Leadership training will begin in January and the teens will take part in other community service events.

“The Teen Council is an opportunity to gain leadership skills,” said Kassidy Seaba, a council member, “I think our experience with deployment will allow us to help out other kids.”

The Teen Council members are Ryan Brunner, Skylar Dickey, Sawyer Green, Allyson Henry, Preston Henry, Sophia Olsen, Mary Powledge, Tyler Prine, Kassidy Seaba, Ty Shafer, Toby Sullivan, Jahna Yuhn and Reed Wheeler.

For information regarding Teen Council contact Darcy Seitz at 785.274.1967; email darcy.l.seitz.ctr@us.army.mil.

## Scouts provide “eyes and ears” in the field when disaster strikes

By **1st Lt. Mathew Nordquist**

When disaster strikes the state, key leaders need reliable and knowledgeable personnel on scene to provide accurate information about the situation. That’s when the members of the Kansas National Guard Scout Program respond, providing support to ensure that Kansas National Guard assets are properly organized and deployed to affected areas.

The scouts serve as the “eyes and ears” of the adjutant general, providing timely and accurate information to the Joint Operations Center on the situation and anticipating the need for state assistance.

The Scout Program was created in an effort to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of the Kansas National Guard during disasters by ensuring that Guard members are engaged with county elected leaders, first responders and emergency managers prior to an emergency.

Angee Morgan, the deputy director of the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, attests to the value of that role. “The scouts are crucial as a liaison at the local level, and they really become a part of our team,” said Morgan.

Scouts have responded to numerous disasters over the past 11 years. In 2007 alone, scouts provided damage and needs assessments following the winter storm in Western Kansas in January, the Greensburg tornado in May, the flooding in Southeast Kansas in July and the winter storm of December. Because of the scouts, leaders received timely assessments and information that greatly increased the efficiency of the response and assistance provided.

Scouts work with the Joint Operations Center and some make daily contact. These scouts give pre-storm updates when inclement weather moves into their area and can be deployed anywhere within their region.

Scouts are also a means to ensure important aspects of disasters are not overlooked. The scouts have military training and can provide on site knowledge, giving a distinct advantage when coordinating with



**Volunteers with the Kansas National Guard Scout Program provided valuable on-site information following the Greensburg tornado. (Photo provided)**

multiple state agencies. “The Scout Program exists so we have on-scene situational awareness and to represent the Kansas Guard on-site to communicate with emergency management personnel,” said Sgt. 1st Class Justin Becker. “Scouts can notify us of incidents in their areas of residence or we can call them for information. For instance, this past spring we contacted scouts on the phone and over the radio net to ask them about violent weather and any reported damages in their area. They can give us info more quickly than waiting for it to appear on the news.”

Now, more than ever, new scouts are needed. The need to deploy National Guard troops throughout the world has put a strain on the program. Retirees from the Kansas National Guard and other military services are able to continue their service to the state and play a major role in the program.

There is required online training for each volunteer and additional training on the Incident Command System and National Incident Management System.

For information regarding the National Guard Scout Program, go to the Kansas Adjutant General’s Web site at <http://kansastag.ks.gov> and select Scout Program under the Careers tab.



**Demonstrations, crafts, making new friends, a little learning--and a lot of fun-- were all part of the 161 Yellow Ribbon Predeployment event in Hutchinson Nov. 6 and 7. (Photo by Amanda Herlinger, State Youth Coordinator)**



# PLAINS GUARDIAN

## Even at 73, giving is in his blood

By Ann Marie Bush  
Used by permission of the  
Topeka Capitol Journal

Bickley B. Holmes, 73, of Topeka, doesn't sit still for long.

After three months of retirement, he went back to work because he needed something to do.

Holmes works 19 hours per week for the Kansas Adjutant General's Office, and handles a majority of the laundry, cleaning and grocery shopping for him and his wife.

But when it comes to giving back to the community, Holmes finds a few hours every month to sit down and donate platelets at the Community Blood Center in Topeka.

He reached a milestone of donating 100 gallons, or 800 pints, Dec. 22.

"I've been doing it for 40 years," the 1956 Highland Park High School graduate said Sunday morning.

Holmes began donating when he was an employee of the city of Topeka and his workplace had a blood drive.

"I was nervous," he said with a laugh. "I didn't feel a thing. I've been hooked ever since."

In February 2005, Holmes was honored along with several other donors for their achievements. At the time, he had donated 83 gallons, or 664 pints, and was the second highest donor.

Holmes started donating whole blood at Topeka Blood Bank and recalls that a needle was placed in each arm for the collection process.

"Things have changed," he said.

Now, like clockwork, Holmes donates platelets — sometimes double platelets — once every two weeks.

"It's just the feeling of helping someone," he said. "I just do it to help people. I

don't like to sit down, but it is well worth it. I feel good."

Holmes stopped by the Community Blood Center in Topeka on Sunday, Jan. 2, for a photograph. He chatted with staff members, who said Holmes is a regular at the center. Holmes has donated more than 800 times.

His next goal?

"I don't think I could donate another 100 gallons. That would take another 40 years," he said. "Maybe I'll try to reach 1,000 donations. I can do that."

"Bickley is a caring and giving person with a strong desire to help others only for the reason that they need it," said Kathy Boldt, site manager for the Topeka Community Blood Center. "He has been dedicated in donating his time to Community Blood Center to help save lives since I can remember. I have been working with the blood center since 1983 and he has been a regular donor since then. Bickley's attitude has always been take what you need without any concern for his own time. We thank Bickley for his dedication in helping Community Blood Center save many lives over the years and hope to see him continue the support of saving lives in our community."

The center needs 580 donors each day to meet area hospitals' needs, according to the Community Blood Center Web site at [www.savealifenow.org](http://www.savealifenow.org). The center, the headquarters of which are based in Kansas City, Mo., sends out almost 3,600 units of blood components each week to treat patients in more than 70 area hospitals.

Holmes encourages others to give blood, too.

"I tell them it's no big deal," he said.

"It's not painful enough to make me quit. The good you do surpasses that little bit of pain."



Bic Holmes, who works part time in the Kansas Division of Emergency Management has practically made a second career out of donating blood. Holmes recently hit the 100 gallon mark and has no plans to stop donating. (Photo by Sgt. Michael Mathewson, Joint Forces Headquarters Kansas)

## Join the Civil Air Patrol

The Kansas Wing of the Civil Air Patrol is looking for teens 12 to 18 years of age and adults to join our current volunteers in our important missions.

The Civil Air Patrol is an auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force with three primary missions:

- Aerospace education
- Cadet programs
- Emergency services

Go to [www.kswg.cap.gov](http://www.kswg.cap.gov)  
for a Civil Air Patrol Squadron near you



## The only way is down... and that suits one Soldier just fine



Spc. Jake DeCaro readies to exit a plane. He has more than 600 jumps to his credit, at least 400 of them while shooting video. (Photos provided)

By Sgt. Gilbert Gonzales, UPAR

Company D, 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation

Kansas Army National Guard Soldier Spc. Jake DeCaro looked up to see the onrushing ground he was fast approaching, knowing that he had just seconds to correct or cut away the tangled suspension line that had ended up over the parachute canopy before he would impact. He was rushing towards the ground in excess of 10,000 feet per minute, yet time slowed down for him while he worked to correct his dilemma and save his life.

"I could hear a friend's voice going through my head saying, 'The number one reason for a reserve malfunction is instability upon deployment'," said DeCaro, a UH-60 helicopter repairman with Company D, 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment (Assault) in Topeka, Kan. "So I knew I had to correct the spin, and the standard parachutist response is to cut away the fouled parachute, stop the spin of the body and deploy the reserve chute."

DeCaro succeeded in those three steps, which took only a few seconds, "but it seemed like time slowed down for me."

This one mishap does not diminish DeCaro's love of jumping out of a perfectly performing aircraft to pursue his talent as a skydiving photographer and videographer. He's been skydiving for 11 years, getting his start in 1999 out of curiosity, when he was on active duty at Fort Carson, Colo., where he was a heavy wheel mechanic.

Now that he has done more than 600 jumps, roughly 400 of them video jumps, DeCaro says that it is no longer as much of an adrenaline rush to skydive, but he has slowed down quite a bit over the past years, practicing his art in Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Kansas and Missouri.

"Now, it is more relaxing than anything," said DeCaro. "But, I would definitely recommend it to anyone who has not tried skydiving but is considering it," said DeCaro.

Skydiving can be an expensive hobby. The first tandem jump is roughly about

\$200 and the cost tend to increase more as the individual becomes more active in the jumps. Although a little expensive, DeCaro says it's definitely worth being able to say you jumped out of a plane, if only once.

"I highly recommend this to anyone who is considering trying it and having it videotaped," says DeCaro. "You will wear that video out showing it to all your buddies."

The standard height of each jump is different, DeCaro explained, and depends on the location of the jump and the type of aircraft that is being used. On DeCaro's first jump, he was tandem with the instructor, meaning that he and a diving instructor were tethered together for this jump.

"Basically, you're just along for a ride at that point" said DeCaro

After a couple of weeks, DeCaro went back to begin Student Progression Training. This training requires the student to make 20 free fall unassisted jumps, which took him about six to eight weeks to complete. Once DeCaro completed this stage of his training he started working on free fall photography and videography around 2000.

"You just strap a camera to your helmet and begin experimenting with it all," said DeCaro.

They began producing video for formation skydiving teams and began doing tandem video and photography, as well. During this jump, the instructor is tied to the new student and the videographer jumps out of the aircraft at the same time and video tapes the entire dive.

It may seem ironic that someone who repairs aircraft to keep them in the air would enjoy jumping out of them, too, but DeCaro says the thrill of jumping is its own reward.

"I had always wanted to try it and one day I just opened up the Yellow Pages and looked it up and set up an appointment," said DeCaro. "I showed up all scared, I was pretty nervous, thinking 'What am I doing...' Once I tried it, I was hooked."