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THE Maryland LINE



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The Maryland Army National Guard and the Maryland Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team conducted swift water rescue training May 15, 2013, at Essex Skypark, Essex Md. (Photo By Sgt. Edwin Gray, 29th MPAD.)

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Maryland National Guard celebrates diversity through Unity Day

By Sgt. Breeanna Pierce
29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Maryland Guard members from around the state gathered to take part in games, performances and multicultural cuisine, celebrating diversity through the Maryland National Guard's 8th Annual Unity Day, May 16, at the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore.

"Unity day is a day of celebrating ethnic observances designed to enhance cross-cultural awareness and promote harmony among all members of the Maryland Military Department," said Maj. Gay Williams, this year's Unity Day organizer and the state equal employment manager for the Maryland National Guard.

The celebration, which was open to Guard members and their families, gave participants an opportunity to immerse themselves in the different cultures represented throughout the Maryland National

Guard.

"It's a lot of fun learning about different cultures," said Airman 1st Class Rebecca Persuhn, with the 175th Wing, who has attended the last two Unity Day celebrations. "I really love the different foods; a lot of people get dressed up, which brings something special to [the festivities]."

Since its inaugural year in 2005, Unity Day has been one of the numerous ways the Maryland National Guard shows support for the diverse cultures that make up the force.

"It gives us a change to step away from ignorance," said Rosheim Christian Lewis II, a participant in the Maryland Guard's Free State Challenge, a tuition-free program for at-risk adolescents, 16 to 18 years old. "I like how I can see different cultures and interact with a bunch of different people."

The National Guard, home of the 'citizen soldier,' creates a unique environment in which Guard members work alongside others of various heritages.

"We all come from various cultures and backgrounds, which makes us unique," Williams said. "It is important that we come together to embrace those differences and learn from each other."



GOING FOR THE GOLD

By Tech. Sgt. David Speicher
175th Wing Public Affairs

On July 5, 2011 Senior Airman Gideon L. Connelly, repair and reclamation crew chief, 175th Maintenance Squadron, was involved in a motorcycle accident in Baltimore County with serious damage to his left leg. The doctors told the Maryland Air National Guardsman if he kept his leg, it would leave him with limitations to what he could do. However, if the leg was replaced with a prosthesis, his abilities would significantly increase.

On Sept. 16, 2011, Connelly chose to have the leg removed below the knee.

“(When the accident happened) I was upset. I didn’t think I would be able to return to work. I didn’t understand how it would affect my life. I was scared,” said Connelly. His friends were scared but supportive. “They didn’t know how to help. My family stuck by my side and is very supportive.”

Connelly started a rehabilitation process to walk, and then run with the goal of staying in the military.

Around Thanksgiving 2011, he started walking and progressed to running in October 2012.

Running means a lot to him. “I want to inspire people. It is a great opportunity. I am blessed to come back and do what I can do now after a horrific accident,” said Connelly.

Before the accident, he lifted a lot of weights and did some distance running for physical training, now he runs sprint races.

Connelly competed in the Texas Regional Games (Paralympic games that are used for qualifying for the national events) April 13-14, 2013. He competed in the men’s t44 (below the knee amputation) 100m and 200m races, receiving two gold medals. His 100m time qualified him for the Paralympic Nationals in San Antonio, Texas June 14-16. He will however, compete in the Endeavor Games at the University of Central Oklahoma June 6-9 to make a second attempt at qualifying in the 200m for the Paralympic Nationals.

“My goal for now is to make the nationals. In the time frame I have, I will probably not win nationals. I am a beginner at running and at this point I do what I can do,” said Connelly. His goal is to win nationals in the future with the ultimate goal of competing in the 2016 Paralympic games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

“I would like to stay in the military and compete for the Air Force team. I would like to work down at Walter Reed as a physical therapist,” he said.

Most wounded military members with amputations go to Walter Reed Military Hospital in Bethesda, Md. to receive and learn how to use their prosthesis.

To stay in the military, “I had to do a Air Force physical fitness test and prove to medical personnel that I can do my job without assistance. The worst part was the paperwork. I had to prove myself to the base medical review board,” said Connelly. His next step is to be medically worldwide deployable.



Senior Airman Gideon L. Connelly practices at a local Baltimore area track. Connelly, a repair and reclamation crew chief, 175th Maintenance Squadron, was involved in a motorcycle accident with serious damage to his left leg in July 2011. He is currently training for the Paralympics. (Courtesy photo)

Lt. Col. Tom Donnellan, deputy commander, 175th Maintenance Group, talked about Connelly's progress to stay in the military. "He has to do what all Airmen would do to stay in the military."

"I couldn't imagine waking up one morning missing a limb. He has been able to overcome it. The military has seen a lot of this," said Donnellan. "Losing your limb affects your whole life. He was in good physical shape to begin with. He had the mental capability to deal with the accident. He trained to do his job with his limitations."

"He is a young troop, and no one wants this to happen. He is squared away and knows what he needs to do to stay in the game," he said.

He is also participating in a study by the University of Florida on prosthesis. The study helps develop the devices not only for him, but also for others who need the devices.



Senior Airman Gideon L. Connelly, repair and reclamation crew chief, 175th Maintenance Squadron, was involved in a motorcycle accident in Baltimore County that left his left leg severely damaged in July 2011. The doctors told the Maryland Guardsman if he kept his leg, it would leave him with major limitations. If the leg was replaced with a prosthesis, his abilities would significantly increase. On Sept. 16, 2011 Connelly chose to have the leg removed below the knee and is now training for the Paralympics. (Courtesy photo)

“Keep your head up. If you keep your head in the right place, you can do anything you want!”

He is testing three mechanical feet. They put him on an obstacle course that the Tampa police Special Weapons And Tactics Team uses which includes walking/running on treadmills. The performance of the foot is then evaluated under these conditions. During these tests, his vital signs are monitored to see how his body

works with the devices. "The study is to see how the different feet perform in stress-related conditions," said Connelly.

Donnellan likes that Connelly working to improve prosthesis that both civilians and military members may use in the future. "I hope by working the kinks out of the new prosthesis, it will benefit him and others."

Although Connelly has received support from a lot of people, one person stands out — Tech. Sgt. Kandyce O'Meally, a maintenance management data analyst in the 135th Maintenance Operation Flight.

"I saw him walking around with a prosthetic leg and I didn't know who he was. I approached him and asked him if I could ask him a few questions. We started talking, and I discovered he was into track. I learned he wanted to go to Rio in 2016 — the Paralympic games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," said O'Meally.

"I asked how he was going to do it and what his plans were. In the conversation, I let him know I had some contacts in the track world from when I trained during college," she said. She got him in contact with someone on the Paralympic committee.

"She helps me out at times when I need it. I have a lot of paperwork to fill out, and she helps me out with that. She is a great person. She helps me out when I am down. She gives me motivation. She is a great-hearted person," said Connelly.

"I see a hard-working kid. I see a kid with a lot of motivation and drive. He is never down. Life dealt him a hand, not a bad hand, not a good hand. Just a hand, and he plays it well," said O'Meally.

"I think she has been very beneficial to him. She has given him the backup, support and guidance to get where he is today," said Donnellan.

Donnellan summed up Connelly's potential, "It's whatever he wants to make of it. He is on the right track. He can go as far as he wants to."

Connelly has good advice for anyone who has lost a limb. "Keep your head up. Don't let anything discourage you. It is a mind over body experience. If you keep your head in the right place, you can do anything you want."

MARYLAND LIEUTENANT COLONEL HELPS SAVE SOLDIER AFTER JUMP MISHAP

By 2nd Lt. Jessica C. Donnelly
29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

What began as a routine training jump from the back of a C-27J aircraft, quickly became a matter of life or death for one soldier. As he hung by the neck, unable to release himself from the harness, the response of his fellow Soldiers was crucial, and in this case, life-saving.

Members of the Maryland Army National Guard's C Company, 1st Squadron, 158th Cavalry Regiment were performing a non-tactical jump over Bitner Drop Zone in Little Orleans, Md., this past December when strong winds and a late exit out of the aircraft led to a serious situation.

"Some of the jumpers landed in the trees at the far edge of the drop zone, which isn't uncommon," said Capt. Wade Cleland, C Company commander.

He explained that because of the multiple soldiers suspended from the trees, the company created a detail to help get the members and parachutes down from the branches. Included in that detail was Lt. Col. Bradley Martsching, 1-158th commander, who headed over to the edge of the drop zone to assist the unit. While most of the members were focused on the soldiers trapped high in the trees, a struggle for life was taking place just a few feet from the ground.

"Because the soldier was suspended so close to the ground, it appeared from a distance that he was standing up and was okay," said Cleland. "[The detail] drove near the injured soldier and almost kept going, until they took a second look. [They] noticed he was limp and raced over and realized the soldier's face was turning a purplish-black color and that he wasn't breathing. They lifted him up to release the tension on his harness and got him to the ground and immediately radioed back to me."

While Cleland worked on getting the unit's medic out to the soldier and coordinated with civilian medical authorities, Martsching worked to resuscitate the soldier. Martsching's quick actions got the member breathing again, but the danger wasn't over yet.

"At this point, things seemed very touch and go," said Cleland. "The Soldier had labored breathing... but still did not respond to verbal or physical cues."

Martsching continued to reassure the soldier and assisted the medics until the Maryland state medical personnel arrived with a helicopter to transport the soldier to the hospital. While many people helped in saving the sol-

dier's life, Martsching's initial reaction in retrieving him from the tree and performing life-saving measures contributed to the fact that the Soldier is now fully recovered and back to duty with the unit.

"For the first few seconds, it was simply a matter of doing what we were trained to do and working through the process and procedures," said Martsching. "I participated in another jump earlier this month with that same soldier. It is awesome to see him fully participating in everything the unit does and a testament to his resiliency that he can get past a near-fatal event and still don a parachute. I'm glad I could play a part, and I admire his courage."

While saving the soldier's life certainly stands out as a career highlight, Martsching has had many other accomplishments throughout his 20 years of service.

Prior to his current role as the squadron commander, Martsching served several years at the National Guard Bureau level working in multiple sections to include the Army National Guard's Readiness Reporting Branch, Current Operations Branch where he supported contingency operations in Libya, Strategy Branch, and he served as the aide-de-camp to the chief of the National Guard Bureau. However, his favorite assignments were back at the state level in command positions that allowed direct involvement and greater opportunity to influence the Soldiers.

"I've had the opportunity to influence soldiers in the squadron and supporting organizations, and I do my best to try and show them what right looks like, whether that is fitness, training, counseling, fairness



Lt. Col. Bradley Martsching, 1st Squadron, 158th Cavalry Regiment commander, and a qualified jumpmaster, performs a Jumpmaster Personnel Inspection on Spc. Moises Sanchez of C Company (Long Range Reconnaissance), prior to a planned airborne operation on Bitner drop zone near Little Orleans, Md. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Dwight Williams, C Company, 1st Squadron, 158th Cavalry Regiment)

or work/life balance,” said Martsching. “In this command, I’ve tried to focus on leadership development above everything else. I realized several years ago, that I’ve been very fortunate to have some great mentors that spent time with me, challenged me and brought me along. Not all my peers were as fortunate, so I feel an obligation to try and do the same for my soldiers.”

For his next assignment, Martsching was chosen to attend the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in Norfolk, Va., as part of continued military education, where he will learn joint planning processes and critical analysis that will prepare him to serve on a joint staff. The selection process to attend the course as a resident student was competitive, and Martsching will be one of the few National Guard officers in attendance. Because of that, he was honored to be selected.

“JAWS has the reputation of being the most rigorous of the senior service college options,” said Martsching. “I understand that my performance in the course will have an influence on the faculty and

students’ perception of the National Guard, and I take that seriously.”

While Martsching’s success during JAWS is yet to be determined, his abilities as a leader have influenced the soldiers in his current command.

Maj. Edward Clements, 1-158th executive officer, explained that Martsching has a unique capability as a senior leader to provide a balance, focusing both on soldier care and giving attention to personnel issues, as well as maintaining his edge as a combat arms Soldier and emphasizing the tactical and technical proficiency of the unit.

“He definitely remembers his field craft and keeps in mind what it’s like to be a ‘muddy boots’ soldier,” said Clements.

Martsching demonstrated this quality of getting his feet dirty by being at the non-tactical jump training with members of the unit on that near-fatal day in December, and because of his level of involvement, the potential loss of a soldier’s life was prevented.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON: A FAMILY DEPLOYMENT

By Staff Sgt. Kristen Duus
1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team,
1st Armored Division

When most Soldiers deploy, they have to say goodbye to all the loved ones they leave behind. Two Soldiers from 115th Military Police Battalion, a Maryland National Guard unit, each had one less goodbye to say.

Sgt. 1st Class Lester Parks, Sr., and his son, 1st Lt. Lester Parks, Jr., deployed together with the battalion, which is attached to 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

Parks, Sr., is the battalion logistics noncommissioned officer in charge, while his son is the military intelligence officer in charge.

The younger Parks was enlisted prior to becoming an officer. For a time, they were each staff sergeants in the same battalion at the same time.

“We were the same rank, same

name, same battalion, so it was always kind of confusing,” said Parks, Jr.

When Parks, Jr., became an officer, his dad rendered his first salute.

“I was proud of him,” said Parks, Sr. “He’s exceeded my expectations.”

Although the family is deployed together, they only get to spend time together briefly each week.

“It’s hard because we’re both so busy and we work in different buildings,” said Parks, Jr. “We try to have dinner every once in a while or stop by just to say hi.”

Though the father and son team do not get to spend a lot of time together, when they are in the states, the only spend time together during drill weekends or family get-togethers.

Parks, Sr., lives in Newark, Md., while his son lives in Leesburg, Va., nearly four hours away.



1st Lt. Lester Parks Jr., a resident of Leesburg, Va., and his father, Sgt. 1st Class Lester Parks Sr., a resident of Newark, Md., pose together at Forward Operating Base Walton, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. The father and son team deployed together with the Ready First brigade. (Photo by Spc. Kenith Walker, 115th MP Battalion Unit Public Affairs Rep.)

Being deployed together brings comfort to the dad, knowing his son is not deployed on his own. It is each of their second deployment, but their first together.

“Most people have to deal with being away from their families,” said Parks, Jr. “For us, it kind of merges. We are dealing with that family dynamic here. To me, he’s one of the guys.”

COMMUNITY BIDS FAREWELL TO MD

200th Military Police Company

The Maryland Army National Guard held a deployment ceremony May 1, 2013, for the 200th Military Police Company at the Maj. Gen. William J. Witte Readiness Center, in Catonsville, Md. The 200th MP Company can trace its lineage back 90 years as a company in the 29th Infantry Division. The unit was mobilized into federal service for World War II, Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and to guard the Pentagon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The 200th MP Company will be serving for approximately one year in Afghanistan.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington
Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office



GUARD MEMBERS DEPLOYING OVERSEAS

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment



The Maryland Army National Guard held a deployment ceremony March 20, 2013, for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment at the Major General Warren G. Hodges Armory, Aberdeen Proving Ground-Edgewood Area, Md. Nearly 60 members of the 224th will be serving for approximately one year in Kosovo.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington
Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office



On the +LINE

The Maryland National Guard held a Freedom Salute for Charlie Company, 1-169th Aviations based at Aberdeen Proving Ground-Edgewood Area, Md, mobilized for Operation Enduring Freedom on February 2nd, 2012, and deployed to the southern provinces of Afghanistan. In all, the unit flew 691 mission hours, completed 713 medical evacuation missions and transported 975 patients. (Courtesy photos)



Soldiers from C Company, 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, C Company 1st Battalion 169th Aviation Regiment (Medical) and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade participated in an annual water helicopter bucket training event April 16, 2013 at Weide Army Airfield at the Edgewood area of Aberdeen Proving Ground.

The combination of a trained aircrew flying a UH-60 Blackhawk with a helicopter bucket creates a rapidly deployable fire suppression system that can respond to calls across the entire state. The UH-60 helicopter bucket system holds 660 gallons of water and can be refilled from any open body of water. (Courtesy photo)



The Maryland Air Guard has a mutual aid agreement with Baltimore County to help during times of crisis. On May 28, 2013 the Maryland Air National Guard responded with high-flow pumper fire trucks and other vehicles for the train derailment at the Baltimore County/City line. (Photos by Tech Sgt. Dave Speicher, 175th Wing)



Maryland Army National Guard Soldiers from the 175th Infantry Regiment participated alongside ROTC cadets from Maryland and Delaware in a competition to earn the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency March 28 and 29, 2013 at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Md.



Hosted by the Salisbury University Army ROTC program and the German Army Liaison Team from Ft. Lee, Va., the competition included track and field events, a long distance run, a 100-, 200-, and 1,000-meter swim, 9mm. pistol qualification, and a 7.5-mile road march. (Courtesy photos)



John Matthew "Matt" Stover, former Baltimore Ravens kicker, visits members of the Maryland Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation, near Reisterstown Md., May 9, 2013. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office)



The Board of County Commissioners for Somerset County issued a proclamation May 7, 2013, thanking the members of the Maryland National Guard for their assistance following Super Storm Sandy. They also thanked Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general of Maryland for his help in the County Emergency Operations Center during the storm. (Photo by Lt. Col. Charles Kohler, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office)



The Maryland National Guard gave the keys to the armory in Chestertown, Md., to Washington College May 15, 2013, at a formal ceremony for a symbolic transfer of ownership of the 82 year-old facility.

Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general of Maryland, talked about the service and sacrifice of all the Soldiers that have walked through the doors over the years. Mitchell B. Reiss, president of Washington College discussed the future plans for the building. (Photo by Lt. Col. Charles Kohler, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office)

GUARD, COMMUNITY LEADERS KICK OFF CONSTRUCTION ON MD. GUARD READINESS CENTERS

By Sgt. Jennifer Sardam
29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

During April and May, leaders from the Maryland Army National Guard and the local community gathered on three separate occasions to break ground on construction projects that will significantly enhance the readiness of National Guard units in the La Plata, Dundalk and Westminster communities.

In La Plata, April 24, the Brigadier General William Smallwood Readiness Center project kicked off with plans to build a new 28,000-square-foot facility to replace the current 1950s-era

structure. Funded by the Grow the Army initiative, the facility will house the 253rd Engineer Company (“Sapper”) and support the unit’s readiness to perform both state and federal missions.

During the groundbreaking ceremony in La Plata, Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general of Maryland, addressed how the center will allow the Guard to accomplish both missions effectively, as a location where the unit can train for its federal responsibilities, but also as a “great staging area... to support the citizens of Maryland in times of need and times of emergencies.”

Community leaders expanded on Adkins’ comments, offering real-world examples of the benefits of a strong local National Guard presence.

“The Guard performs many, many outstanding functions, only one of which is helping our communities when there is a disaster,” said Roy G.

Hale, La Plata mayor. “And, as you know, we have suffered one [tornado] in La Plata not too long ago. The Guard played a major role in helping us recover from that and [to] continue and provide the opportunity to build back our community.”

Partnership between local community officials and the Maryland National Guard has been a key factor in the success of these construction projects.

“We would not be here today without the cooperation of Charles County,” said Adkins, referring to the La Plata construction. “This over \$9 million project will provide a world-class facility for our world-class Soldiers.”

The La Plata facility will include more than 2,000 square feet of classroom space, a unit library and learning center, a training simulation center, physical fitness area, and recruiting and family assistance offices.

In Dundalk, officials broke ground May 2 on a \$14.29 million addition and alteration to the Command Sergeant Major Jerome M. Grollman Readiness Center, which includes 65,000 square feet of renovated space and new construction.

The project is set to enhance operational space to support missions of Maryland’s 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment, the battalion’s Headquarters Company, and F Company, 128th Support Battalion.

“It’s been a long time coming,” said Brig. Gen. Peter C. Hinz, the assistant adjutant general-Army, who hosted the groundbreaking. “And, in fact, before we started the ceremony, some of the 175th



veterans were mentioning how long this project has been on the books — more than a decade. So we're excited that this project is finally coming to fruition.”

Additionally, the most recent of the Maryland National Guard's groundbreaking ceremonies, May 22 in Westminster, kicked off a \$7.1 million addition and alteration to renovate and expand the 33-year-old Major General Henry C. Evans Readiness Center, which will include 16,019 square feet of new space, 16,015 square feet, and support the 29th Military Police Company.



The Maryland Army National Guard broke ground on a project to renovate and expand the Command Sergeant Major Jerome Grollman Readiness Center in Dundalk, Md., May 2, 2013. The facility will be home to units of the 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office)

(RIGHT) Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general of Maryland hosted a groundbreaking ceremony May 22, 2013, for a new addition and alteration to the Maryland Army National Guard Major General Henry C. Evans Readiness Center in Westminster, Md. The construction will provide significantly enhanced operational and support space to support the 29th Military Police Company's state and federal missions. (Photo by 1st Lt. Kristofer Baumgartner, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office)



(BELOW) The Maryland Army National Guard broke ground on a \$9.28 million project to build a new Brigadier General William Smallwood Readiness Center to replace the existing 1950s facility in La Plata, Md., April 24, 2013. The 28,200 square-foot facility will be constructed on 20 acres of land located in Charles County. The Readiness center will be the new home for the 253rd Engineer Company. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office)



Andersons named Maryland's best warriors

By Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington
Maryland National Guard Public Affairs

The Maryland Army National Guard completed its 2013 Best Warrior Competition at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation April 21, 2013, to determine the year's best Soldier and noncommissioned officer. Sgt. Delvon Anderson was named the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. Robert Anderson was named the Soldier of the Year. Although the two share the same last name, they are not related.

Six Soldiers competed in the 3-day event to represent their respective brigades. The 58th Troop Command, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade and 58th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade each sent a Soldier and an NCO to compete.

"I was selected by my company to go to the battalion board. I beat the rest of the battalion there," said Sgt. William White, 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment, 58th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and NCO of the Year runner-up. "I went to the brigade board and got a victory there. This is my first time at the



The Maryland Army National Guard completed its 2013 Best Warrior Competition at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation April 21, 2013, to determine the year's best Soldier and noncommissioned officer. Sgt. Delvon Anderson was named the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. Robert Anderson was named the Soldier of the Year. Although the two share the same last name, they are not related.

state competition."

This was a first-time experience for many, but Delvon Anderson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade, was no stranger to this type of competition. He won Maryland's Soldier of the Year competition as a specialist in 2011 and won the 29th CAB's NCO of the Year competition while deployed to Kuwait in 2012.

"I've done the state competition once and the brigade competition three times," said Sgt. Anderson. "The competitors this time are harder than the competitors I faced back in 2011. The challenge this time was definitely a little bit tougher."

The Army's BWC started in 2001, and

the Maryland Army Guard has held the BWC annually since 2009. Some of the minimum requirements for the competition are an Army Physical Fitness Test score of 225 or above, level I certification in Modern Army Combatives, Combat Lifesaver certification and a rating of sharpshooter or above with the Soldier's assigned weapon.

Qualified privates through specialists compete for Soldier of the Year while corporals through sergeants first class compete for NCO of the Year.

The Soldiers woke before sunrise to participate in the competition's first event, an APFT. After breakfast, the Maryland Army National Guard's best warriors competed in a round robin series of events that reflected real life combat situations.

The events included maintaining an M240B machine gun, performing a functions check on an M2 .50-caliber machine gun, performing first aid for a severed bleeding extremity, operating a Single Channel Ground and Air-



Pfc. Gregory Hobbs, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade, performs first aid for a bleeding severed extremity during the Maryland Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation April 21, 2013.

borne Radio System, using visual signaling techniques, donning the M40 protective mask and performing a vehicle search. After the events, the Soldiers prepared for the land navigation event through the woods of Camp Fretterd.

“It’s a really good learning experience. I’m glad to be here, and hope I can do it again next year,” said Pfc. Gregory Hobbs, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade. “My least favorite event was the land navigation. That’s something I need to work on for next year.”

The last event of the day was qualifying on an M16 rifle using the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000, an indoor weapon simulator. Once qualified, the Soldiers ended the event with a stress shoot. They ran up a hill and then back down to put stress on their bodies. The Soldiers engaged targets in a scenario projected on the EST 2000 when they returned.

Day two consisted of a 7-mile tactical road march event. Soldiers carried 35-pound packs in addition to water and other tactical gear. Gunpowder Military Reservation, home to Maryland’s

B Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, provided a formidable route. All the Soldiers completed the 2-hour march with at least 25 minutes to spare.

“This particular ruck march had a killer hill that we had to do twice. That was pretty much terrible,” said Robert Anderson, 104th Area Support Medical Company, 58th Troop Command. “It’s been a great and fun experience. I think I would be open to doing it again next year, hopefully competing in the NCO competition instead.”

When asked his thoughts on the competition, Sgt. Trevor Nichols, 253rd Engineer Company, 58th Troop Command said, “It was a great honor. I think everyone should want to do this if they’re up for it and as squared away as they think they are.”

The third day consisted of what many of the participants dreaded the most—the board appearance. Five command sergeants major questioned the competitors on different subjects from the Korean War to the Creed of the Non-commissioned Officer.

“My least favorite event is the board,” said Spc. Samuel Clark, 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regi-

ment, 58th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and Soldier of the Year runner-up. “I don’t like speaking in front of people, but it’s a part of (the competition).”

“We’ve been fine-tuning this thing for the past four or five years to try to make it competitive, where we could really stress and challenge you,” said Command Sgt. Major Brian Sann, Maryland National Guard senior enlisted leader. “Whoever wins this competition deserves to win and is the best representative to go on to the regional competition.”



Sgt. William White, Sgt. Delvon Anderson, Sgt. Trevor Nichols, Spc. Robert Anderson, Pfc. Gregory Hobbs and Spc. Samuel Clark, along with their respective brigades’ command sergeants major pose for an end-of-competition group photo.

MARYLAND LIEUTENANTS SHINE AT FORT BENNING

By 1st Lt. Kristofer P. Baumgartner
Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office

Three Maryland Army National Guard Soldiers proved themselves among their active duty counterparts by graduating with honors, this month, from Basic Officer Leader Courses at Fort Benning, Ga.

1st Squadron, 158th Cavalry Regiment lieutenants Benjamin P. Smith and Nicholas A. Riesett graduated from Armor BOLC on May 17, in the top 20 percent of their class. Riesett ranked number two in the class and was the cycle's honor graduate. 2nd Lt. Noah K. Russell, also from the squadron, earned the top spot in the Infantry BOLC and was named the class' distinguished honor graduate on May 2.

Armor BOLC incorporates a broad range of combat arms doctrine, platoon-level tactics and gunnery skills on M1A2 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The course also prepares new officers for leadership roles in tank and cavalry units, while paving the way for future success on the battlefield.

"It was great to gain the tactical knowledge of the armor branch while working alongside my peers," said Smith. "I was able to make many friendships and bonds coming out of the course."

Infantry BOLC focuses on technically and tactically preparing lieutenants to successfully lead a rifle platoon in combat.

"I always pushed myself to be one of the best in my platoon," said Russell. He attributed his suc-

cess to "... hard work, help from members of my platoon and a lot of luck."

For his part, Riesett gives much of the credit for his success to the Maryland Army National Guard Officer Candidate School, which he and Smith attended together.

"Before going to Armor BOLC, I already felt that Maryland had one of the best OCS programs, and for 2nd Lt. Smith and I to do well in this course was a validation of this," said Riesett.

As the newly qualified lieutenants transition to their respective roles in the squadron, they will have the chance to test their skills at the two-week exportable Combat Training Capability exercise at Fort Drum, N.Y. in August.

The XCTC provides a setting for units to focus on realistic training based on hypothetical, but conceivable conflict scenarios. The training is designed to evaluate the full spectrum of missions of which each unit is capable.

Smith will head to A Troop, and Riesett will go to B Troop. Both units conduct traditional scout tasks such as area and route reconnaissance, but they can quickly change gears to urban warfare and humanitarian missions. Russell, an infantry officer, will begin as a platoon leader in C Company, the squadron's more-specialized long range reconnaissance unit. All three will work together within their units and the squadron to accomplish their particular missions.

Although the lieutenants finished these difficult schools, their military education is only beginning. Riesett starts the Army Reconnaissance Course in June, and Russell and Smith can look forward to Captains Career Courses, Intermediate Level Education and other specific military schools as their careers progress.

In the end, Smith, Riesett and Russell showed the quality of National Guard training in a field of active duty, reserve component and international students. As both Armor and Infantry BOLC are widely regarded as among the most difficult BOLCs, the new lieutenants will strengthen their future units and help them prepare for new challenges.



2nd Lt. Benjamin P. Smith leads a simulated litter team during a field training exercise at Fort Benning, Ga. In April, 2013. (Courtesy photo)



2nd Lt. Benjamin P. Smith (left) and other members of his platoon pose on their M1A2 Abrams System Enhancement Package tank during a field training exercise at Fort Benning, Ga. (Courtesy photo)

GUARD MEMBERS HELP EDGEWOOD MATH STUDENTS CALCULATE PATHS TO SUCCESS

By 1st Lt. Kristofer P. Baumgartner
Maryland National Guard
Public Affairs Office

Area high school math students applied their recently learned skills today while getting a taste of military life courtesy of Maryland Army National Guard Soldiers from the 29th Combat Aviation Brigade and the 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment April 10, 2013.

Ho Chang, a mathematics teacher at Edgewood High School and a former Army air defense artillery officer, brought 60 of his juniors and seniors out to Lauderick Creek Training Site and the nearby Edgewood area of Aberdeen Proving Ground to examine vehicle displays of trucks and helicopters and participate in a land navigation course, seeing first-hand how math permeates all aspects of even military life.

“We’re trying to incorporate our classroom learning out in the field,” said Chang. What better opportunity to go out in the real world and apply what they learned in the classroom?”

Shortly after the students arrived at the training site, they received a safety briefing. The infantry Soldiers then demonstrated one of their common tasks—an assault on an objective. Blank-firing crew-served weapons barked out as Sgt. Maj. John Greer, operations sergeant major for the 29th Combat Aviation Brigade pointed out the changing angles of bullet trajectories as the assaulting Soldiers “lifted and shifted” their fire.

After the infantry demonstration, the students split into groups and used their new land navigation skills to find set points in the adjacent woods. A Maryland Army National Guard member

accompanied each group and assisted as needed.

The planning for this event started in January and progressed as the students studied the components of land navigation in the classroom. Earlier in the week, Greer went to Edgewood High School and gave the students an initial safety briefing and some hands-on instruction on land navigation techniques.

“They learned all about degrees, distances and azimuths and converting from grid to magnetic (North). It was full circle for me, because I remember being the kid in that seat,” said Greer, himself a 1982 graduate of Edgewood High School who actually went to Basic Combat Training the summer before his senior year.

“We gave them the points we wanted them to find on this site, but they had to calculate the angles and the distances. Once they get here, they have to apply that along with using a compass and their pace count,” said Matthew Rankin, Edgewood High School mathematics department chair.

As the students found their way out of the woods, they were greeted by static displays of a National Guard Light Medium Tactical Vehicle and a Humvee, both armor-clad and staples of military operations.

After boarding buses and moving to the Weide Army Airfield, the students had the opportunity to get up-close views of the Army’s newest helicopter, the LUH-72 “Lakota” and the workhorse UH-60 “Blackhawk.”

According to Rankin, the day was about more than applied school work. He saw the day as an opportunity to bring different groups of the community togeth-



er.

“It’s a three-pronged attack: math in the real world,



an experience with the National Guard and fun,” said Rankin. “The more partnerships we build, the better off our students are, the better off the community is and the better off the schools are.”

Sgt. 1st Class Leo Sturm, a Maryland Army National Guard recruiter, agreed from a military perspective.

“It allows the public to truly see us and how we act. We’re actually people that live here and work in Maryland; we just happen to wear a uniform,” said Sturm.

In addition to the Edgewood High School students and teachers, Tarah Gilson, Fallston High School mathematics department chair, was along for the fun, scouting the event as a possible field trip for her students as well. The two department chairs even discussed having a friendly land navigation competition between the rival schools.

The day was a success for all the groups involved. The teachers demonstrated how math exists all around us, and the students got out of the classroom for a day while learning more than just numbers on paper. Meanwhile, the Maryland Army National Guard showed off their skills and may have helped several young minds contemplate a future career of military service.

MARYLAND CELEBRATES PARTNERSHIPS:



By the Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office



Governor Martin O'Malley recognized the 20 and 10 year anniversaries of the Maryland National Guard's partnerships with Estonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with a reception for senior delegations from the two nations May 13, 2013, in Annapolis, Md.

The Maryland National Guard established its State Partnership Program with Estonia in 1993 to assist with the Baltic state's transition to an independent nation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2003, the Maryland National Guard began another partnership, this time with Bosnia and Herzegovina, to help stabilize that country following the break-up of Yugoslavia and the ethnic conflict that followed. The program promotes civil and military cooperation to promote peace, stability, prosperity and democratic principles.

During the past two decades, the State Partnership Program enhanced relationships between the United States and these countries through hundreds of military and civilian exchanges. Cooperation spread, over the years, beyond military-to-military

ESTONIA & BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

exchanges to civilian collaboration. Salisbury University in Maryland and Tartu University in Estonia, for example, established a relationship as a result of the State Partnership Program.

“Over the last 20 years, the Maryland National Guard has been a pioneer in this type of international engagement,” said O’Malley. “The organization’s success with two state partnerships has been a terrific benefit to not only the state of Maryland, but also to the nation as a whole.”

Two pilots from Estonia, Capt. Rene Kallis and Capt. Martin Noorsalu, are serving with the Maryland National Guard on a 3-year tour. They recently returned from Afghanistan with the Maryland Army National Guard’s C Company, 1st Battalion, 169th Air Ambulance Company where they flew medical evacuation missions alongside Maryland pilots.

Twenty-six military policemen from the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina deployed last fall to Afghanistan with the Maryland National Guard’s 115th Military Police Battalion to support the International Security Assistance Force. These soldiers are fully integrated into the unit and conduct operations with Maryland Guard members.

“The partnership between Maryland and Bosnia and Herzegovina is a classic example of how it works,” said Gen. Frank J. Grass, chief of the National Guard Bureau. “We took a country out of war, and we worked together as they went from a consumer of security to a producer of security.”

Nationwide, the State Partnership Program currently involves 65 different partner counties and nearly every state and territory in the nation cov-

ering Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Some states have two programs. Although many of the partner nations have deployed together, in 2012, Maryland’s became the first program ever to have supported two co-deployments with two different partner nations at the same time.

“Over the past 20 years, we have achieved great success through our partnerships while supporting U.S. foreign policy objectives,” said Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general of Maryland. “As we look forward to the future, the SPP remains a cost-effective engagement program that produces results beneficial to the United States and our partners.”



Final Frame



Saber Strike is a long-standing, multilateral, multifaceted, U.S. Army Europe-led security cooperation exercise primarily focused on the three Baltic States. The exercise spans multiple locations in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and involves approximately 2,000 personnel from 14 countries. The Maryland Air National Guard provided A-10 close air support aircraft, and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard supported with KC-135 aerial refuelers.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN HUGHES