Idaho National Guard wins conservation award

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Mine was earned in Vietnam. By my dad.

Barbara Q., USAA member

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NEWS

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All submissions should pertain to the Idaho National Guard and are subject to editing. Contributions and reader comments should be sent to: timothy.marsano@us.army.mil.

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ON THE COVER:
This cooperative remote sensing project, using UAVs to map vegetation communities, could save millions of dollars in future large-scale surveys.

Photos: Provided by the Environmental Management Office

Gowen Field, the home of the Idaho National Guard’s headquarters, has spent much of this unusually cold winter covered in snow and frost. Photo: Spc. Elizabeth Canary

The Gem State Guardian
4040 W. Guard Street
Boise, Idaho 83705

The Gem State Guardian is the official newsletter of the Idaho National Guard. It is published quarterly with a circulation of 5,000 copies. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Army, Air Force, Army National Guard, Air National Guard or the Department of Defense.
Shaunna Coit’s Facebook posting from Jan. 25, 2012, explains it best: “Last night, a complete stranger saved my life. I was driving alone, and I realized I was starting to have another tetany seizure from low calcium [editor’s note: Ms. Coit has a rare endocrine disorder]. I headed for the hospital and was blowing through stop signs as I started seizing up. My hands, arms, and jaw seized so bad that I could not pick up my phone or even reach out to turn my hazard lights on.

“My eyes started to clamp shut so I had to stop. I couldn’t see, couldn’t get my phone, and all I could think to do was turn my car sideways in the middle of the road, lean on the horn, open the window with my elbow, and yell as best I could with my jaw clamped shut. Right away, a man reached into my window and unlocked my door. He got my car into park, got my seatbelt off, and literally picked me up out of my car. He raced to the hospital honking his horn and then lifted me out and carried me inside.

“I was never able to open my eyes so I have no idea what he looked like, where he came from or even what kind of car he had. I got intravenous infusions of calcium and some potassium and started asking the ER staff about the guy who carried me in. They could not believe I did not even know who he was.

“This morning, I am completely in awe of this man who did all of that without a moment’s hesitation for a complete stranger. I am so grateful and lucky. If anyone knows a man that meets this description in Idaho (Twin Falls) please help us find him so we can say thanks in person?”

It was the next morning before Sgt. 1st Class Jesus E. Gonzalez, a recruiter with the Idaho Army Guard’s 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, was found. A friend of the victim thought she recognized the yellow Ford Mustang he was driving the previous evening and placed a note on the windshield that read, “Are you the good Samaritan who saved my friend last night? All she knows is that a man in a yellow Mustang drove her to the ER. She wants to thank you. This is not a joke. Please call me. Thank you.” The lady who left that note wrote down her name and phone number.

Gonzalez was traveling with his daughters on his way home from a school function when he saw a silver SUV speeding through a stop sign in downtown Twin Falls. “Now, that’s really bad,” he told his daughters. When he saw the same SUV stopped in the middle of another intersection, he parked, walked over to the SUV and immediately noticed something was wrong with the lady at the wheel. She was screaming, and her body was curled into a ball. Gonzalez remembered thinking she might be having a stroke.

He recalled, “My adrenaline was rushing. I could feel my heart beat all the way to my brain.” But he didn’t panic. Instead, he acted. He opened the door of the SUV, pulled Coit out and got her into his yellow Mustang. As he drove her to the hospital, Gonzalez held her hand and assured her everything would be ok – and it was.

After ensuring that Coit was in good hands at the hospital and asking the staff if there was anything more he could do, Gonzalez went home without fully comprehending that he’d saved somebody’s life. In fact, he didn’t remember to tell his wife about the incident until the next morning.

Gonzalez enlisted in the Navy in 1985 before he joined the Idaho Army Guard in 1999. He deployed to Iraq with the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team during its 2004-2005 rotation to Iraq. ‘Jesse’ – as his friends call him – is well known to family and friends for his kindness. He regularly does favors for friends and strangers alike and has been known to mow the lawn of a neighbor or act as a translator for somebody he meets in a store.

After he responded to the note, Gonzalez met Shaunna Coit under better circumstances a few days later when she came to the Twin Falls armory with her two young sons. Coit recalls saying, “I wanted to thank you.’ He jumped up and gave me a hug. He gave my kids a basketball and Army T-shirts. He was feeding my 2-year-old the pudding out of his lunch.”
Gonzalez received his well-deserved recognition when Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter and Idaho Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Gary L. Sayler draped the Idaho Cross around his neck in the governor’s office on Dec. 5. Gonzalez was surrounded by his family, Shaunna Coit’s family and many uniformed members of the Idaho Army and Air National Guard.

In presenting Gonzalez with the Idaho Cross, Otter said, “We don’t give out many of these awards. When we offer an award such as this, we do so with a grateful heart. Sgt. Gonzalez has made us all proud, and he makes us want to reach higher. He’s set the bar extremely high. We’re grateful for your selflessness and your spirit – congratulations.”

The Idaho Cross is the highest state of Idaho award presented to a military member or civilian assigned to the Idaho Military Division, usually for saving a person’s life or other significant act of heroism. It has been awarded to 30 individuals since 1989.

Additional reporting from GX Magazine was used by permission. GX Magazine is the official publication of the Army National Guard.
Who says holiday angels exist only in movies like “It’s a Wonderful Life”? This past Christmas season, we were again very fortunate to have Tom Westall, a retired active duty Air Force chaplain, oversee the coordination of Christmas trees donated to military families. He annually spearheads a faith-based initiative called Operation Christmas Blessing.

On Dec. 3, a semitruckload of Christmas trees arrived at Gowen Field. Navy and Army National Guard personnel showed up to unload the trees at various drop points for members of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army Reserves, Air Guard, and Army Guard. A big “thank you” goes to those individuals who volunteered their off-duty time to help out with this task! In addition, 100 trees were delivered to the Disabled American Veterans and 50 trees to the Veterans Center here in Boise. Delivering some of these trees to outlying armories throughout the state was challenging for us. However, the J.R. Simplot Company answered the call. They delivered trees to Eastern Idaho armories so Guard families in that part of the state could enjoy a part of the donation. Another big “thanks!” to Simplot for that contribution.

In addition to this donation, Westall and his group of volunteers organized to sell some 550 Christmas trees at the Albertsons on the corner of Fairview and Cole in Boise. The proceeds from that effort go to the Guard and Reserve Family Support Fund.

Besides the trees, Tom and his group donated over 120 Christmas toys that were dispersed to all branches of service at Gowen Field. They also obtained and passed out over $9,000 in Wal Mart gift cards to our Family Assistance Specialists throughout the state to be distributed to families in need. Finally, Tom also wrote out a check for $1,000 to the Idaho Guard and Reserve Family Support Fund and gave another $1,000 to our chaplains for families in need throughout the year.

For all service members here locally and in outlying areas that received this kind donation, we want to thank Tom and all the other holiday angels involved with these donations. From the grower of the trees, retailers who made donations, truck drivers and all who gave their time to help with the logistics, thank you! These acts of kindness brought a little extra joy and comfort for a lot of families this past holiday season.

By Master Sgt. Greg Adams, State Yellow Ribbon NCOIC

CHRISTMAS TREES
DONATED TO
MILITARY FAMILIES

Idaho Soldiers unload the first batch of Christmas trees at Gowen Field.
Photo: Tom Westall

Tom Westall presents Walmart gift cards and children’s toys to Brig. Gen. John Goodale at state HQ.
Photo: Col. Tim Marsano

Christmas trees
donated to
military families
The Idaho Army National Guard recently received a Dismounted Soldier Training System, a fully immersive, computerized system that places Soldiers in a more realistic setting to enhance their skills in a virtual environment.

The manufacturer, Intelligent Decisions, Inc., aimed to create a system that allows Soldiers, leaders and entire units to train in such an environment to reduce costs associated with a large-scale training facility. Using devices attached to a Soldier’s uniform, the new system can simulate a number of different operational themes including major combat operations, irregular warfare, peace operations, limited intervention and peacetime military engagement. Its high-resolution graphics can simulate a 3-D setting and use combat equipment as they would in a real environment.

In a training scenario on Gowen Field recently, Soldiers in a squad formation had an opportunity to use the new system. “It’s very user-friendly, once you get into it,” said Master Sgt. Gregory Adams. And one of the real benefits of doing this type of training on Gowen Field is the fact that Soldiers don’t have to move to another area to get similar training. “You’re saving three hours, easy, by not having to coordinate transportation to the training area,” added Adams.

The system is intended to be expanded, giving multiple units the ability to coordinate their actions in different, virtual environments.

These photos give a good feel for the many different elements of setting up and operating the system. While Soldiers wearing the outfit are taking part in scenarios, other Soldiers and civilian contractors can manipulate the scenario on computer terminals to enhance it in real time.

First Lt. Pamela Hess is immersed in one of the virtual scenarios.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chad Melanese helps a Soldier get set up to train in a virtual environment.
Samuel Sharpe Ordnance award honors two Soldiers

Sgt. 1st Class Brian Bettis and Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Huerta were honored with the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe award in a Gowen Field ceremony in October.

The purpose of the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe is to recognize those individuals who have served the United States Army Ordnance Corps with demonstrated integrity, moral character, and professional competence over a sustained period of time and whose selfless contributions to the corps stand out in the eyes of their seniors, peers, and subordinates alike.

The award is described as follows: “In May 1984, the U.S. Ordnance Corps Association initiated a program to ensure that ordnance personnel receive recognition for their deeds that go above and beyond the norm. In order to recognize and honor the best of the best in our corps, the association created the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe. The medal depicts an eagle holding a flintlock rifle, surrounded by oak leaves, with a shell and flame overhead. The eagle represents America’s freedom, which has been defended faithfully and to its fullest measure by members of the corps since 1812. The flintlock rifle represents our corps’ beginnings as well as the material support provided by ordnance personnel in both peace and war. The oak leaves represent the strength and resolve of the ordnance corps to stand the test of time. The shell and flame represent the unleashed energy of the ordnance corps.”

Idaho National Guard employee receives award

Molina Medicaid Solutions of Idaho recently celebrated the good deeds of four community heroes at its second annual Community Champions Awards.

This year’s winners included Thomas Obstarczyk, second from left. Tom is a contract employee with Idaho National Guard Family Programs who works hard – along with Marnie Bernard, third from right – to advocate for Idaho veterans and families as founding members of the Idaho Veterans Network. Both have personal experiences with the challenges veterans face after deployment: Bernard has multiple family members who have served in the military, and Obstarczyk is a veteran himself. Their volunteer efforts include assisting veterans with legal services, housing needs and family issues, all while maintaining full-time careers.
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For more information contact:
H2H.jobs@osd.mil
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More than 70 Citizen Soldiers of the Idaho Army National Guard’s 145th Brigade Support Battalion of the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team traveled to Canada in early October to participate in “Maple Resolve,” a Canadian military exercise designed to train Canadian Soldiers in warfighting operations. This year, the 5th Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group out of Quebec was the primary focus, augmented by units from the United Kingdom and the Idaho National Guard. The 145th BSB’s mission was to support the NATO ally with heavy lift capability and security in the training area at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright in Denwood, Alberta.

Soldiers and trucks from Alpha Company, 145th BSB, began departing the Bonners Ferry National Guard armory on the morning of Oct. 6, embarking on a two-day, 600-mile trek to the training site. Once there, the unit, composed of a headquarters element, maintenance section and a transportation platoon, was in charge of transporting basic Soldier subsistence supplies such as rations and water.
American and Canadian troops work together on all kinds of wartime tasks.

“Each squad in Alpha Company’s Transportation Platoon utilizes a heavy tactical truck outfitted with a load handling system allowing the unit the capacity to haul more than 10,000 kilograms [about 22,000 pounds, or 11 tons] at one time,” said Maj. David Darney, operations officer for the 145th BSB.

The 140-mile logistics route from Canadian Air Force Base Cold Lake to the supply exchange point provided the transportation platoon with an opportunity to train personnel in seven out of 10 transport and distribution mission essential tasks. This, coupled with the long journey to and from home base, earned 11 Citizen Soldiers the Army’s Driver’s Badge, which requires 8,000-plus miles of driving within a yearly period. “The unit accrued more than 78,000 miles of drive time and hauled nearly 900 short tons of supplies – twice as much as what you’d expect to see during normal forward support operations,” said Darney.

During the training, First and Second Squads were also assigned as a forward support company providing additional training opportunities. Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Frye, NCO in charge of logistics, said he found the exercise to be some of the best training he had experienced in his 22 years of service. “It was clear from day one that the Canadian military was glad to have our help, and we were glad to be there. The logisticians I worked with were absolute professionals. We pulled together as a multinational unit and did some really great training – in fact, some of the best driver training in the worst possible weather.”

Maple Resolve is an annual exercise held at the Canadian Maneuver Training Centre. The exercise uses some 4,000 Canadian soldiers. The Canadian military is a NATO partner, a close U.S. ally, and is deeply involved in ongoing operations in Afghanistan.
Eight members of the Idaho Army and Air National Guard competed in the Sacramento, Calif., “Spartan Beast” competition in their free time, Nov. 17, 2012. The course was 13.8 miles in length with more than 25 obstacles, including multiple rope climbs, cargo nets, a spear throw, 8-foot walls, low crawls under barb wire, sand bag carry, fire jump and more.

“This event for me was a personal goal of fitness and dedication and became a great team-building experience that has inspired me to do and be more,” said Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Wilde.

Master Sgt. James Mace said, “This is a hard pounding that no other mud run or obstacle race comes close to. No retreat, no surrender – this is Sparta!”

Weather on race day was below 50°F, with rain, and wind gusting to 32 mph. All eight members of the team completed the race, earning the Spartan Beast Medal. Master Sgt. James Mace and Maj. Kevin Hickey also received the Spartan Trifecta Medal for completing all three levels of Spartan Races during one calendar year. Team members are already signed up for future Spartan Races. Race organizers say they are always looking for more people to join.

For more information, contact Hickey at 272-4263.

Guardsmen compete in “Spartan Beast”

By Col. Tim Marsano
Over the past two years the Idaho National Guard Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program has created a small Army (no pun intended) of bystander intervention facilitators (6), SHARP trainers (41), victim advocates (78) and SARCs (4). These people are dedicated to ensuring that we reduce and eventually eliminate harassment and sexual assault in the Idaho National Guard. These resources are available to the men and women of the Idaho National Guard 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Over the past year the personnel of the SAPR program have facilitated bystander intervention and sexual harassment/assault prevention and response classes for more than 3,500 personnel statewide. The classes have ranged from 90 minutes for the Air to three hours for the Army, and now the word is out, passive bystanders are a thing of the past. Active bystanders will intervene. When our Soldiers and Airmen find themselves in a precarious situation, they know that their Idaho National Guard Battle Buddies/Wingmen have their backs. A bystander will no longer be a facilitator – they will no longer stand idly by when they have that gut feeling that something is wrong. They will act. Their actions may go against the norm, may buck the “good old boy” system, may ruffle a few feathers, but in the end they may prevent another person from becoming a victim.

The program continues to grow; the change in culture and mind set is apparent; and this change is facilitated whenever you think about, discuss or intervene in sexual harassment or assault.

- By thinking about sexual assault and harassment, it carries over to our daily behavior. We choose our words and actions more carefully, and we create a safer and harassment-free working environment for all to enjoy.

- By discussing it, we ensure that it remains on the minds of others, eliminating conditions that perpetrators try to capitalize on. We tell our peers and subordinates it is okay to take a stand to ensure that our brothers and sisters in uniform are safe in their work environment whether at home station or deployed.

- By intervening, we stop actions that can save careers, can stop a person from becoming a victim, and we will change lives for the better, forever.

As awareness continues to grow, the likelihood is that perpetrators existing within our ranks will shrink. We put predators on notice that there is no place in the Idaho National Guard for sexual harassment or assault. Most of all, we will be saving someone from becoming a victim and providing invaluable services to those who already are.

Keep the program growing, talk to your peers, subordinates, and families. Help the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office change the statistics that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men will be victims of sexual assault in their lifetime. Change starts with you!

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For more information, visit woundedwarriorproject.org
190th Fighter Squadron participates in Operation Jaded Thunder
Guard and Reserve A-10 pilots from all over the U.S. joined pilots from the 190th Fighter Squadron to support the A-10’s role in Operation Jaded Thunder in November at Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, N.M.

Reserve pilots from the 47th Fighter Squadron out of Barksdale Air Force Base, La., the 45th Fighter Squadron from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., and the 76th Fighter Squadron at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., joined other Guard pilots from the Maryland Air National Guard’s 104th Fighter Squadron for the operation.

“Every unit has different techniques that pilots can all learn from,” said Maj. Matthew McGarry, Jaded Thunder detachment commander. “It’s good to see all of this integration. It only makes us better fighter pilots,” he added.

As they employed a bunch of laser-guided munitions and illumination flares, the skilled pilots executed a fully successful sortie rate, thanks in part to mechanically stellar aircraft as well. Of the 82 day and night sorties flown during Jaded Thunder, none were cancelled for maintenance reasons.
Idaho National Guard
wins conservation award

By Col. Tim Marsano

In October 2012, the National Guard Bureau announced
the 2012 Environmental Security Awards winners. Our Envi-
ronmental Management Office took first place in the Natural
Resource category.

In announcing this prestigious award, the Guard Bureau’s
letter said “you have set the example for others to follow.”
As a result of winning this award, our EMO will represent
the Army National Guard in the 2012 Secretary of the Army
Environmental Awards Program, and information on our pro-
gram will be used later in a video presentation at the National
Environmental Workshop.

Charles Baun, the EMO’s conservation branch manager,
provided the following information and comments:

“To say the Orchard Combat Training Center is one of a
kind is an understatement of epic proportion. Where else
can you find one of the most sophisticated military training
facilities in the world that mimics the Afghan theater so well, is
open to the public and within a short distance – 13 miles – of a
major metropolitan community? Nowhere is where.

A cooperative project to inventory and monitor bat populations and digitally survey caves associated with the OCTC is a proactive approach to dealing
with white-nose syndrome, deadly to bat populations.

A golden eagle with GPS backpack is used to
observe and record migratory patterns or year-
round use of the area for nesting and foraging.

A collaborative study by the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological
Survey and Northwest Nazarene University inventoried and tracked the move-
ment of herpetological species – reptiles and amphibians – within the OCTC.
The study shows the impact of military training and other human activities on
these species, important prey for raptors. The study indicates that populations
of these species within the boundaries of the OCTC are generally more diverse
and stable compared to similar populations outside the training area.
“The OCTC is within the boundaries of a congressionally protected national conservation area that is home to one of the largest stands of remaining native-shrub communities in southwest Idaho. It also has one of the largest populations of raptors in North America. We have a responsibility to balance sustainable use, such as using it for our training mission, with conserving the resources. We use the area for our mission, but it’s also used by the public for recreation and livestock grazing. And there are few places in the country that have risen to the challenge as successfully as the Idaho National Guard.

“It is a great feeling to have the program that my team – Kevin Warner, Jake Fruhlinger, Tom Hamilton and Jay Weaver – [devised] recognized on a national level. This truly has been a group effort. While this is classified as a conservation award, it is our partners in other IDNG programs that are truly the key to winning this award. Without the cooperation and coordination of key personnel and leadership from multiple IDNG programs, as well as federal and state partners, we would never have received this coveted award.”

A pair of seasonal field technicians monitor and conduct a census count on a population of endangered slickspot peppergrass (lepidium apilliferum) within the Orchard Combat Training Center.
Ten Idaho Air Guard members arrived at the Boise Airport on Dec. 13 from a 180-day deployment to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. All are members of the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron from Gowen Field.

While in Afghanistan, they performed their civil engineer mission of runway/taxiway repair, maintenance and other construction projects. Other members of the 124th CES departed that same week for a 180-day rotation to the same place.

As of mid-December, the Idaho Army National Guard and Idaho Air National Guard had more than 100 Soldiers and Airmen deployed to Afghanistan. Since the Global War on Terrorism began, we’ve sent some 5,000 Soldiers and Airmen to perform combat roles in harm’s way.
Retirees hosted in afternoon on TAG Leadership Day, March 9

On Saturday, March 9, 2013, the Idaho National Guard will host Idaho Army and Air National Guard retirees as part of the Adjutant General’s Leadership Training Day. This annual event is a forum to promote professional development and conduct leadership training for senior leaders of the Idaho National Guard.

At 2 p.m., the Gowen Field Activity Center will begin filling with retirees, when they will receive a warm welcome from the Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Gary L. Sayler. Retirees will also receive briefs from the commanding generals of both the Idaho Army and Air National Guard, bringing them up to date on the latest news and introducing representatives from professional organizations such as the Idaho National Guard Officers Association and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

At 4 p.m., immediately following the day’s activities, retirees will have a chance to visit with old friends and meet new ones as current Idaho National Guard leaders join them during the social event. Live entertainment will be provided by the 25th Army Band’s rock ensemble, “Six Rounds to Zero.”

If you are a retiree from the Idaho National Guard and would like additional information,

- Retired Army Guard members please contact Lt. Col. Ralph Myers at (208) 272-3777 or via email at ralph.r.myers8.mil@mail.mil
- Retired Air Guard members please contact Capt. Chris Borders at (208) 272-8629 or via email at christopher.l.borders2.mil@mail.mil

Be Red Cross Ready

Winter Storm Safety Checklist

Winter storms can range from a moderate snow over a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Some winter storms are large enough to affect several states, while others affect only a single community. Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures and sometimes by strong winds, icing, sleet and freezing rain.

Know the Difference

Winter Storm Outlook
Winter storm conditions are possible in the next 2 to 5 days.

Winter Weather Advisory
Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. When caution is used, these situations should not be life threatening.

Winter Storm Watch
Winter storm conditions are possible within the next 36 to 48 hours. People in a watch area should review their winter storm plans and stay informed about weather conditions.

Winter Storm Warning
Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. People in a warning area should take precautions immediately.

For more information on disaster and emergency preparedness, visit RedCross.org.
A new warrant officer class graduated on Sept. 22 at Gowen Field. Reserve component warrant officer candidate schools are conducted by the Idaho Army National Guard’s 2nd Modular Training Battalion, 204th Regional Training Institute.

The six-month program consists of three phases: distributed learning, five UTA weekends and two weeks of active-duty training at Fort McClellan, Ala.

Why consider this program? “Becoming a warrant officer is a way to make a difference in a Soldier’s area of expertise,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michelle Hartley, course manager. “Warrant officers are a means for Soldier liaison and influence at the command level.”

It’s very clear that, for those who are interested in the program, Idaho’s program is one of the best. “Our school received the highest rating this last fiscal year of all the Phase 2 WOCS programs in this region, and we are excited to offer even more opportunities for officer development this year than ever have before,” Hartley said. “The Idaho Regional Training Institute was awarded the Institute of Excellence rating after all three of the regiment’s battalions were inspected by their respective component accreditation team.”

A new class will begin in November. The deadline for federal recognition and completion of the distance learning Phase 1 is Oct. 15. For more information contact Chief Warrant Officer 4 Hartley at (208) 272-3926 or Capt. Steve Keeton at (208) 272-4167.

Some reasons to consider the 204th RTI’s Warrant Officer Candidate School

Mentorship – Hands down we are able to provide more direct mentorship and officer development to candidates because our class size is smaller. Imagine how much leader development a candidate can get who is 1 of 12 instead of 1 of 100?

Funding – The owning unit will only pay for the candidate’s travel and drill check, but we cover all billeting, rations, and transportation to and from the airport. Then for Phase 3, conducted off site, it’s a normal annual training period with transportation, rations, and billeting provided.

Exceptional billets and classrooms with state of the art equipment and a true dedication by our staff to develop the best possible warrant officers.

Required reading to enhance the development of future warrant officers.
New tactical vehicle trainer trains whole crews

By Capt. Christopher Borders

GOWEN FIELD – When Barrett Bishop, the virtual site lead for Idaho’s latest and most advanced suite of simulators, suggested I chew gum to avoid motion sickness, I thought he was kidding. As I grabbed hold of the M-4 and climbed into the commander’s seat, I was struck by the simulator’s authenticity.

Everything from the weapon in hand to the Blue Force Tracker at my side, this simulator was like no other I had trained with. After loading the radio frequency and conducting commo checks with the other vehicles in my convoy, we rolled out into a virtual combat zone complete with friendlies, close air support and civilians on the battlefield.

The device, a reconfigurable vehicle tactical trainer, or RVTT, is the latest in virtual technology that allows full crews to engage in simulated wheeled vehicle tactics, accommodating up to 20 participants as they shoot, move and communicate in a realistic 360-degree battle space.

“What separates this simulator from others is how little it leaves to the imagination,” Bishop said. “The weapon is real, the Blue Force Tracker is real, there are no keyboard interfaces and, best of all, there’s no time wasted on learning how to use the system. If you know how to fire a weapon, use a radio and drive, you’re ready to train.”

The RVTT also differs from other vehicle simulators by focusing on the entire crew: driver, gunner, vehicle commander as well as dismounts. This allows the crew to train as a unit. Previous simulators only focused on one or two positions.

Bishop’s team is able to load any scenario imaginable into the system, placing participants in a number of geographic locations from Afghanistan to Fort Bliss. They expect the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., by year’s end.

Bishop said because nothing on the device is classified, it is available for use to the public. Church youth groups, businesses and other organizations that have nothing to do with the military find this to be a fun, team-building activity. Local law enforcement agencies also realize its benefits. The Boise Police Department reserved the device to train their Special Victims Unit on wheeled and mounted tactics.

Its primary function, however, is to provide realistic combat training to Air and Army National Guard personnel preparing to deploy, such as the Idaho Guard Agricultural Development Team’s deployment to Afghanistan scheduled for next year.

Bishop also sees the RVTT becoming a mandatory part of the Idaho Army National Guard’s annual training curriculum much like the engagement skills trainer. “This would also be a very useful tool in scout truck gunnery,” said Bishop, who is also a cavalry troop commander in the 2-116th. Gowen Field is one of only four National Guard sites with the device.

As it turns out, Bishop was not kidding about the chewing gum. The simulation is realistic beyond explanation. However, if you are planning a trip in the RVTT, I recommend something stronger, perhaps Dramamine a half-hour prior to rolling out.
New fitness center opens

By Staff. Sgt. Robert Barney

GOWEN FIELD – The simple act of recycling led to a brand new gymnasium for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines stationed and training at Gowen Field. The 6,600-square-foot facility on Ellsworth Street, just south of the running track, is now open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The new facility cost $731,000, of which approximately $130,000 came from the base recycling program.

“Recycle, recycle, recycle, because it turns into Morale, Welfare and Recreation money, and this is what it can produce,” said Idaho Army National Guard Maj. Christen Titus, facility operations supervisor at Gowen Field. Titus also helped coordinate the re-use of some of the gym’s exercise equipment, first used by the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team during their 2011 deployment to Iraq.


Photo: Capt. Tony Vincelli

Just the facts:

The gym is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Rules include the following:

• To ensure a comfortable atmosphere for everyone, please be courteous and respectful of others

• During peak hours (or while others are waiting) limit your time on the treadmill, stair climber, stationary bike, etc., to 30 minutes.

• Please pick up your towels, water bottles, magazines and trash – help to keep our gym clean.

• Wipe down each piece of equipment for the next user.

• Wear proper attire (no cutoff shorts or sandals)

• No food or beverages (except water).

• No personal radios and/or boom boxes.

Please use personal ear buds.

• Please re-rack your weights.
George Cargill of TriWest Healthcare Alliance stopped by Gowen Field Dec. 7 to present Idaho Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Gary L. Sayler with a check for $10,000 to be used for the Idaho Guard and Reserve Family Support Fund. This has become something of an annual tradition, and it’s greatly appreciated.

“We really believe in giving back,” said Cargill. His remarks were amplified in a letter from Scott Celley, TriWest vice president of external affairs. He wrote, “We particularly value the opportunity to be associated with the Idaho Guard and Reserve Family Support Fund by providing aid and relief to our nation’s service members and their families. It is truly a pleasure and privilege for us to support the outstanding work done by you.”

If you and your immediate family have a legitimate need for temporary assistance and can meet the fund’s criteria, contact your local Family Assistance Center or Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Downing at 272-3505 for more information.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance helps Guardsmen and Reservists

Photo: George Johnson
In October, three members of the Idaho National Guard’s 101st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team joined forces with seven Idaho Hazardous Materials Regional Response Team members from Caldwell, Boise, Idaho Falls and Pocatello to take part in the exercise Urban Shield in the San Francisco, Calif., area.

Urban Shield 2012 San Francisco was a multidiscipline exercise with participants from all over the U.S. and even a couple of international teams from Brazil and Jordan. Urban Shield focused on law enforcement, fire department, hazardous materials and emergency medical service functions in standard response scenarios and in terrorism scenarios involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. The exercise was also a graded competition, with approximately 15 teams participating. Idaho’s team was the only joint civilian/military team competing; they took 5th place in the competition.

The Idaho National Guard 101st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team and the seven Idaho Hazmat Regional Response Teams train together regularly, bolstering one another’s readiness and building solid working relationships for the future. They support each other in many ways, including participation in full-scale CBRN response exercises annually.

The relationship between the Idaho Civil Support Team and the state of Idaho’s regional Hazmat teams is very important to the safety of the citizens of Idaho, and it is through participating in events such as this that it is fostered. The readiness of the state of Idaho against a terrorist use of a CBRN weapon is healthy today because of the relationships that have been fostered over the years between the Civil Support Team and the Hazmat community.
Make sure your family has a plan in case of an emergency.

Fill out these cards, and give one to each member of your family to make sure they know who to call and where to meet in case of an emergency. For more information on how to make a family emergency plan, go to ready.gov
Warmer weather and longer days are approaching, and people in Idaho are emerging from their winter cocoons to tackle long-neglected projects like spring cleaning, home repairs, and yard work. Some timely tips on safety and health precautions may help you avoid some hazards possibly lurking among the items on your to-do list.

**Spring Cleaning ....**
Eliminate fire hazards such as stacks of oily/dirty rags and newspapers. Give special attention to areas around the furnace, hot water tank, space heaters and dryer. Check your barbecue grill for gas leaks and fuel line cracks.

Clean up work areas. Put dangerous tools, adhesives, matches and other items out of the reach of children.

Ensure that gasoline, diesel, and other dangerous fluids are properly marked and stored in a clean, dry place away from children and pets. Store gasoline-powered equipment away from anything that uses a pilot light.

Properly dispose of chemicals that are leaking, expired or look bad. Don’t put them in the trash or pour them down the drain. Be careful when mixing chemicals … combining some common household chemicals can be very dangerous.

Springs is a great time to organize the power tools in the garage. Inspect tools for wear, loose connections or defects. Just be sure to pull the plug before removing, adjusting or cleaning moving parts. Extension cords that are worn should be discarded or repaired, as worn cords are special hazards in damp outdoor areas.

**Yard Work....**
- Limber up! Yard chores may seem easy, but they involve muscles you probably haven’t used for a while.
- Always wear protective clothing when you handle pesticides and fertilizers, and don’t breathe the stuff or get any of it in your eyes.

**And a word or two about Lawn Mowers:**
- Look before mowing to be sure you don’t launch any stray stones or other material into the air.
- Never start a mower indoors. Be sure the engine is off and cool before refueling.
- Don’t leave your mower running unattended.
- Don’t use electric-powered mowers on wet grass.

**Ups and downs of Tree Planting!**
- Look up….be sure your tree won’t be growing into a power line.
- Look down….call 811 before you dig; there may be utility lines where you least expect them.

**Using a Ladder?**
- Inspect your ladder to be sure nothing’s broken and that all the parts are where they should be.
- Be sure the ladder is the right height for the job…never stand on the top rung or on the bucket shelf.
- Be sure your ladder is fully open, and all its feet are firmly on the ground.
- Stay centered when you’re on the ladder. Don’t lean to the side or “hop” your ladder.
- Don’t use a metal ladder where contact can be made with electrical sources.

**And for the Outdoor Adventurers....**
- Muscles need to recover from winter’s hibernation. Avoid overdoing the hikes or other activities the first time you’re out…it may take some time to get into the shape you think you’re in.
- Don’t walk onto frozen streams or lakes in the spring. That remaining ice may be thinner than it looks.
- Be careful around normally safe rivers and streams. Winter’s increased runoff can turn them turbulent and treacherous…not to mention much colder than usual. Be careful standing on river banks—they may have been undercut by rushing water.

Enjoy our Idaho springtime safely!
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