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December 20, 2013

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



AIRMEN SPREAD CHEER AT VINELAND'S VETERANS HOME

Story and photo by Mark C. Olsen, NJDMAVA Public Affairs

The residents of the Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland were treated to the singing talents of several Airmen from 177th Fighter Wing Dec. 11.

Additionally, more than 70 fourth graders from the Seaview School in Linwood, N.J., were on hand to musically balance out the Airmen for the Annual Holiday "Songfest" at the Home.

This is the 13th year that the Wing has visited the Home.

As in years past, Airmen and fourth graders were issued holiday greeting cards, assigned to groups and sent out to spread cheer to the residents.

"It's an amazing thing that the students want to come here for our residents, and it means so much for the residents to see youth come out here, to know that they care about them," said Derick Glenn, a senior therapy program assistant at the Home. "They come in and they sing, they hand out cards; they actually go one-on-one and talk to them and it does something to the residents."



Congregating in cafeterias, day rooms, as well as serenading individuals in their rooms (those residents that are bedridden), the carolers passed out cards and candy canes, sang and chatted with the residents.

"You want to let these people know we still care about them. We want to thank them for the duty that they did. That without them we wouldn't be here," said Staff Sgt. Steven Ballinger, 177th Maintenance Squadron.

Prior to the Songfest, the Wing delivered items from the Home's Holiday Wish List. Each year, the Wing raises money from individual and organizational donations to purchase items on the list.

"We have a wish list for donations and deliver them with our visit and Seaview School brings things from their communities that are donated and it's great for the residents," said Senior Master Sgt. Tim Donovan, 177th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "You see it in their eyes. It's nice to see them smiling, bringing a nice thing to their day."

Veterans at Menlo Park Home Receive Early Holiday Gifts

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Armando Vasquez, NJDMAVA Public Affairs



Looking to bring smiles and cheerfulness to veterans, more than a dozen volunteers from various veteran and non-profit organizations brought gift bags to residents at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park Dec. 18.

Volunteers from Red Cross of Central New Jersey, New Jersey Daughters of the American Revolution, United Way and American Legion Post 211 went around the Home delivering the holiday gifts to each resident. With some volunteers dressed in their Santa outfits

According to Marsha Lasko, recreation assistant supervisor at the Home, the planning for this event began several months back



with the collection of donated items such as clothing, toiletries, books and various other items from several organizations. Then these items were separated to match residents' needs and put in gift bags by more volunteers from Nordstrom, Bristol Myers Squibb, Silver Line and Federal Express. This was accomplished this past week as these helpers held a holiday packing party in preparation for the delivery date.

The gifts to the residents provides them with some needed items as well as an opportunity for the volunteers to thank each resident for their service to the nation.

A New Jersey Super Community Blood Drive Event

4th & Goal Blood Drive

You're in the Red Zone!

Sponsored by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation

Meet former
NY Jets WR,
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Troops**



Joey Vincent
Funny Man With a Horn

January 14, 2014 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sun National Bank Center

81 Hamilton Ave., Trenton, NJ 08611

Every person who volunteers to donate blood will be entered into a drawing for tickets to Super Bowl XLVIII. One pint of blood from a single donor can save 3 lives.

Sign Up Today at www.njsave3lives.com

Registration is strongly encouraged,
but "walk-ins" are welcome.





Guard life is all in the Bono family

Story and photo By 1st Sgt. Kryn P. Westhoven, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

"I knew at four days old he would be in the military," said Mary-Kay Bono after watching her son, Maj. William Bono, take command of the 2nd Battalion, 254th Combat Arms Regiment in Sea Girt.

After 25-years in the New Jersey Army National Guard herself, watching her son receive the colors, were the manifestation of the feelings Mary-Kay had holding her newborn 42-years ago.

Tears of joy fill the retired sergeant first class's eyes as she stood with her son looking at the shadow box with mementos and a photo of Mary-Kay's late husband, Master Sgt. Eugene Bono. William's dad served three decades in the 50th Armored Division and aviation before retiring.

With both parents in uniform, some might feel it was destiny that William would follow the tradition started with his grandfather in World War II. For him it is much more.

"The Guard is a family business," said William, who entered this business of arms as the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) distinguished military graduate in 1993.

A year after graduation William transferred from Virginia to the New Jersey Guard. Through the years he saw the Guard from different perspectives before taking over the training battalion that conducts Officer Candidate School and other military courses.

So when William says "This is not your father's National Guard," he has a family legacy to look back on.



First photo above, Pfc. Miles Taricomne leads the column of help with Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General, and Pfc. Christopher Vitorrit at the Tuckerton food pantry Dec. 19, 2013 as part of Gov. Chris Christie's Season of Service program.

Second photo above, dozens of Civil Air Patrol cadets honored hundreds of veterans at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery Dec. 14, 2013 by placing remembrance wreaths on their graves (Photos by Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA/PA)

AMERICA'S HEROES

THE WOUNDED WARRIOR AMPUTEES

VS

THE 1ST RESPONDERS TO 9/11

& NFL ALUMNI TRIBUTE & CHALLENGE



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2014
FROM 6:00PM - 9:00PM

CODEY ARENA
560 NORTHFIELD AVE
W ORANGE, NJ

COST: \$20 18 AND UP
\$10 AGES 13-17
CHILDREN (12 & UNDER) FREE

*Tickets may be purchased in advance at the Codey Arena box office and/or on line at WWAFT.org
All Proceeds to be Shared by the WWAFT and 9/11 1st Responders Charities*

This game is being presented by Essex County, the Military Benefit Association, Humana and the AFL's 2013 champion Philadelphia Soul and is being hosted by NY Jets star Joe Klecko, NY Giants star (and US Naval Academy grad) Phil McConkey and by four time Pittsburgh Steeler Super Bowl champion and decorated Vietnam veteran, Rocky Bleier.

FDNY & NJ Heroes of 9/11 and more than 40 NFL Alumni will also attend and participate in this tribute including a number of former Giants and Jets.

The Wounded Warrior Amputee Football Team is composed of men and women who lost a limb serving this country in Iraq or Afghanistan.



* The Village People will be making a special appearance at half time.

* Free photo opportunity and autographs prior to the game.

* Raffle prizes will include NY Giant and Jets Hall-of-Fame memorabilia.



For more information on this game please visit
www.WoundedWarriorAmputeeFootballTeam.org
Or call the WWAFT at (703) 923-3000

Humana



Vietnam veteran tells his story to NGMMNJ's Oral History Project

Internet search helps wounded veteran find battle buddies

New Jersey native, Michael George, was badly wounded by a rocket propelled grenade on March 9, 1969, while serving with H Troop, 17th Cavalry, 198th Light Infantry Brigade, in Vietnam. Although his life was saved by a timely Medevac, George lost both of his legs in successive operations as he was transferred to hospitals in Vietnam, Japan and, finally, the United States.

After extensive physical therapy, he was discharged in September 1969 from Walter Reed Army Hospital and then spent time at the East Orange Veterans Hospital before returning to civilian life.

This past October, George, who'd never talked about Vietnam, was interviewed in Sea Girt, N.J., by Carol Fowler, an assistant curator and director of the National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey's Veterans Oral History Project. Museum intern and Monmouth University student, Vincent Gonzalez, who assisted Fowler in the interview, subsequently wrote a summary of George's story for inclusion with the museum website's Oral History Archives. That summary led, through the reach of the Internet, to a remarkable conclusion to George's story.

Jim "Wildman" Linton, an H Troop veteran from Flushing, Mich., maintains a website (www.H-Troop17thCav.com), as well as a Facebook page dedicated to the unit, and searches the Internet for information on H Troop men. Linton had been looking for information on Michael George due to a specific research inquiry he'd received, and the posting of the NGMMNJ narrative provided the critical clue needed. Linton got in touch via the museum's website and upon Ms. Fowler's call to George, the veteran had some startling news of his own.

George received a call from Kentucky from a unit member who told him "I was there the day you were wounded. It was all we could do to staunch the flow of blood. The medic who helped you was killed two days later..."

After the conversation George accessed Linton's website, where he discovered many familiar names and the news that there will be a 2014 troop reunion in Myrtle Beach, SC.

This was not the first time the museum's oral history program, which is affiliated with the Library of Congress, has served as a vehicle to reunite old wartime friends, or to unite the families of veterans who served together in conflicts from World War II to the present, nor will it be the last, but it was certainly one of the most dramatic.

For more details on Michael George's story, as well as other veterans interviewed in the museum oral history program, see: <http://www.nj.gov/military/museum/oralhistory.html>

“I was there the day you were wounded....”

NORAD to track Santa's global journey

By Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service

On Christmas Eve, tens of thousands of children around the globe will gather around their family telephones and computers to track the path of Santa Claus as he makes his rounds delivering gifts on his sleigh led by tiny reindeer.

On the receiving end of the emails, phone calls, mobile "NORAD Santa" applications, website trackers, Facebook followers, Tweets and other social media inquiries into Santa's journey will stand a cadre of 1,250 volunteers to field children's questions at the North American Aerospace Defense Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colo. NORAD has conducted the Santa tracking program for 58 years, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Bill Lewis, a NORAD spokesman.

"The program has its own life," Lewis said of the "NORAD Tracks Santa" mass appeal that's often handed down in families from generation to generation. The program's website offers games and other activities for children until Dec. 24 when the tracking Santa tracking map goes live, he said.

When the website goes live, other tracking methods via satellite, ground-based radar and "fighter jets" also spring to life, Lewis said. Sirius radio will also give a live-feed rundown of Santa's journey, he added.

Children ranging in age from 4 years old to early teens can contact the "NORAD Tracks Santa" call center at 877-446-6723, Lewis said. Typically, the younger ones want to know when Santa will arrive at their houses, where he is at that moment, and what kinds of gifts he has in his sleigh.

Sometimes children want to know how Santa can deliver presents around the world so quickly.

"Santa travels at the speed of starlight," Lewis said. "And he's got the ability to circumnavigate the globe and do his mission with the speed and accuracy that nobody's ever seen."

NORAD routinely performs aerospace warning and aerospace control missions 365 days a year, and that's where the "fighter jets" come into play when Santa approaches his first stops in the Northeastern Canadian provinces, Lewis explained.



From there, he goes around North America, then north to south and back and forth along the poles, making deliveries as he goes across each of the time zones, he said.

"[Canada] has the 'pilots' this year who will take on the 'fighter jet' mission, and as Santa makes his approach into North America, [the 'jets'] go up, make sure it's him, verify it on the flight plan that he gave us and let him go on his way," Lewis said.

As Santa makes his rounds, the call center volunteers tell the children they must be asleep between 10 p.m. and midnight before Santa can bring their presents.

"A lot of times when we tell the children what time it is they say, 'That's really close to now!' and you'll hear the phone just drop as they run off to bed," Lewis said.

The military and civilian volunteers work in two-hour shifts from 3 a.m., Mountain Standard Time Dec. 24 to 3 a.m. Christmas day, he said. Responses are available in eight languages - English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Chinese.

"In just the call center alone, volunteers do anything from social media posting, pushing out tweets all night, posting on our Facebook page, and answering phones -- which is the largest percentage of [the shift] - and they answer emails," Lewis said.

During Christmas in 2012, more than 1,250 volunteers in the "NORAD Tracks Santa" call center fielded about 114,000

calls and nearly 11,000 emails from children, NORAD figures show

The website had 22.3 million visitors from 235 countries and territories across the globe during December, and the program's Facebook page grew to more than 1.2 million followers.

More than 129,000 people also tweeted about Santa's journey on Twitter, and cell phones downloaded 1.5 million applications. Altogether, 25 million people around the world followed Santa's journey in real-time on the web, on their mobile devices, by e-mail and by phone in 2012.

The program began in 1955 when a local newspaper ad directed children to call Santa directly, but the number was a misprint. Instead of reaching Santa, the phone rang through to the crew commander on duty at the Continental Air Defense Operations Center. Since 1958, Lewis said, NORAD has carried on the tradition.

Fifty-five corporate donors pay for the program, Lewis said.

"We have people calling all the time to help," he said. "We just could not do this without the volunteers."

The volunteers sign up for "NORAD Tracks Santa" for a good reason, Lewis said.

"It's the joy of the season in your heart," he said. "When you get the first few phone calls from these kids and hear the innocence in their voices ... if you step back and take it all in, it's incredible."

TSA Precheck formally expands to members of the military at more than 100 airports

As the result of the ongoing partnership with the Department of Defense, the Transportation Security Administration will officially extend tomorrow TSA Precheck expedited screening benefits to all U.S. Armed Forces service members. Service members, including those serving in the U.S. Coast Guard, reserves and National Guard will be able to enjoy the benefits of this expedited screening program at more than 100 participating airports when flying on nine major U.S. airlines.

If a service member has entered their DoD identification number correctly in a flight reservation, they will be permitted access to TSA Precheck lanes. The expedited screening will allow service members to keep their footwear on as well as light outerwear, laptop in its case and their 3-1-1 compliant liquids/gels bag in a carry on in select screening lanes. More than 30 million passengers have experienced TSA Precheck since it launched in October 2011.

DoD has worked closely with service members worldwide to inform them of the process of updating current and/or future reservations along with their airline profiles to include their DoD identification number. That ID number will be used as their Known Traveler Number, and enables TSA to expand the program to all airports offering TSA Precheck. Previously, members of the U.S. Armed Forces could utilize TSA Precheck lanes at 10 domestic airports by presenting their Common Access Card.

"Expanding the TSA Precheck screening benefits is great news for our service members, and is a tangible sign of this nation's gratitude for the men and women who serve this nation bravely each and every day," said Mary Snavelly-Dixon, director, Defense Manpower Data Center. "We will continue to work with the Transportation Security Administration to help expand this program further."

"TSA is grateful to the brave men and women in uniform who continue to serve our nation with honor and distinction," said TSA Deputy Administrator John W. Halinski, a 25-year Marine Corps veteran. "Providing TSA Precheck expedited screening while on travel is the least we can do for the members of our military."

TSA will always incorporate random and unpredictable security measures throughout the airport. No individual will be guaranteed expedited screening. Travelers can check the TSA Precheck Participating Airports page for information on locations of active TSA Precheck lanes.

Further information on TSA Precheck program for military members can be found at www.TSA.gov and www.defensetravel.dod.mil.

New Jersey Air Guardsman chosen to cover NASA launch

By Mark C. Olsen, NJDMAVA Public Affairs

A 177th Fighter Wing Airman is getting an opportunity to be a part of the space program.

Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, a photojournalist with the 177th Public Affairs Office, jumped at the chance when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration offered media passes for the first launch of an Antares rocket at the agency's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

"NASA offered media passes to organizations that had robust social media sites that had an interest in aviation, science, and space, so I applied on behalf of the 177th because I felt that it could be mutually beneficial - we get to share the launch with our viewers, and in return there's a chance that our own audience will grow as we network with NASA and their partners," said Hecht.

This is the first of eight resupply missions to the International Space Station and is part of NASA's on going plan to rely on American companies to launch supplies and astronauts to the Station.

"I'll be getting a tour of the facility the day before the launch, followed by a prime viewing area on launch day," said Hecht. "There are USAF personnel I'm hoping to interview, and Air Force Col. Mike Hopkins is on the ISS right now, so I'm hoping to tie that in."



Deputy Commissioner Raymond L. Zawacki, left, and Director of Veteran's Services, Albert J. Bucchi, right, present gifts to the more than 60 formerly homeless veterans at Veteran's Haven North during their annual holiday party Dec. 19, 2013 at the facility in Hunterdon County. (Courtesy photo)

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