

DMAVA Highlights

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Nall takes over as new commander at 119th CSSB



Lt. Col. Walter R. Nall, left, receives the colors of the 119th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion on Sunday (Nov. 15, 2009) during a change of command ceremony at the Joint Training and Training Development Center. Looking on are Lt. Col. (P) Gerald Gagnon, 57th Commander Troop Command, right and outgoing 199th CSSB commander Lt. Col. Todd F. Berger. Photo by Spc. Robert Neill, JFHQ PAO

New program provides legal representation to low-income veterans

Legal Services of New Jersey has launched the Veterans Legal Assistance Project to provide legal representation to eligible low-income veterans with VA disability compensation and pension claims.

Melville D. Miller, Jr., the organization's president said that while many organizations advocate on behalf of veterans, few can offer legal help with the complicated VA claims process.

"Having skilled legal counsel greatly improves veterans' ability to secure the benefits they are due," Miller said.

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, it takes an average of 280 days to process a veteran's initial claim and more than 18 months to resolve an appeal. More than 100,000 claims decided each year are eventually reversed after an initial adverse determination. It is projected that veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will file more than 600,000 new disability claims over the next five years.

Initially the project will be staffed by Mary Acevedo, an LSNJ senior attorney. Because of limited funding, full representation will only be provided in disability claims, but telephone advice will be offered for other legal issues commonly faced by veterans.

"LSNJ has developed successful systems and strategies for securing disability benefits for clients," said Kevin Liebkemann, an LSNJ senior attorney who has led the design of the new project. "When we looked at the increasing number of veterans with disabilities who need legal help, we saw that a project to serve those veterans is something we could – and should – do."

Legal Services' has wide-ranging expertise and experience in housing, family law, health care access, consumer issues, education, and workers' rights, and aims to ultimately provide veterans comprehensive legal help in those other areas, Miller said.

Those seeking help from the veterans legal assistance project should go to the www.LSNJLAW.org Web site, or call LSNJ's toll-free, statewide legal hotline, 1-888-LSNJ-LAW (1-888-576-5529). Those outside New Jersey should call 732-572-9100 and ask to be transferred to the hotline. Services are provided at no charge, but all clients must be financially eligible (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and representation is not guaranteed.

CFC launches: I Care - Now More Than Ever campaign

From the desk of Jo Anne Miller, CFC Coordinator

The New Jersey National Guard Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) has officially kicked off its 2009 Campaign which will run until Dec. 5.

The CFC provides each of us with an annual opportunity to voluntarily help others and ourselves by donating to the community, national and international level human, health and environmental organizations. Contributions may be made via easy payroll deductions each year or by check.

Over the years, our Department has been most successful in this endeavor because of your personal generosity and concern. We urge every employee to support this worthy cause. Catalogs and payroll deduction forms will be going out to all full time federal technicians and AGRs.

The CFC Coordinator for this year's Combined Federal Campaign is Jo Anne Miller, of the JI-HRO Office. For more information, please call 609-562-0851.



Happy Thanksgiving.
DMAVA Highlights will not be published next week. We'll be back in your e-mail box on December 3.

DMAVA Highlights

New GI Bill carries different eligibility, many benefits

By Sgt. 1st Class Kryn P. Westhoven, JFHQ-PA

About two dozen Soldiers filled the conference room at Joint Forces Headquarters on Tuesday night eager to hear how their recent deployment could mobilize their education opportunities through the state and federal education programs.

The overview of the federal Veterans Administration latest GI Bill was provided by Capt. Ben Stoner of the New Jersey Army National Guard's Education Office. Stoner called Chapter 1607, the new Post 9-11 program, transformational and how it is the biggest change in the funding of post-secondary learning since the original GI Bill after World War II.

Unlike Montgomery GI bill programs, Chapter 1607 provides three separate types of benefit payments to those who have at least 90 days of aggregate active service after Sept. 10, 2001.

The VA will directly pay schools for tuition and fees equal to what each state's most expensive state-run school charges for in-state, undergraduate study.

The students who are attending school more than halftime, seven credits or more, and are physically in a classroom setting at least for one course per semester are entitled to a monthly basic housing allowance for an E-5 with dependents for the zip code the school is located.

The third benefit is a stipend of up to \$1,000 a year for books and supplies.



Service members with 36 or more months of active duty will receive 100 percent of the three payments and those with less than three-years will receive a prorated amount. For example the majority of the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers would be at the 60

percent level for the 12 plus-month deployment.

Three schools participated in the College/Career Night with representatives of Peirce College, Roger Williams University and Thomas Edison State College. For more information contact the state Education Office at 1-888-859-5999 or 609-562-0711 or visit them on the web at www.nj.gov/military/education/index.html.

DMAVA Green

By Tech. Sgt. Barb Harbison, Public Affairs Specialist

In my search for a topic for this week's column, I came across an interesting concept and Web site that carries out the idea. Mail "The Green Thing" your single gloves – you know the ones, like the socks that get lost in the dryer, you end up with a single glove or mitten and really dislike throwing away a perfectly good glove in case you find its mate.

Here you are, a year or two later and you have never found the mate to that lone glove. Well, throw it in the wash, print the form that can be found on the site and mail both to the organization. They will match up the gloves and sell the natty new pairs, giving the proceeds to charity.

To read more about the way to provide a new fashion look and to keep hands warm, visit <http://www.dothegreenthing.com/shop>.

Then, I found a column from "Planet Green," about the surprising places you would find oil. One of them is pantyhose – if it will save the planet, I will gratefully give up wearing pantyhose for the rest of my life.

Other interesting or surprising places the author, Rachel Cernansky, noted you would find oil as a key ingredient include: chewing gum, hair dye, asphalt, crayons, ink, heart valves, pillows, aspirin, ammonia, toothpaste, toothbrushes, guitar strings, shoe polish, tape, rubbing alcohol, vitamin capsules, caulk, deodorant and glue.

I can give up or cut down on some of them, but others will take much research and testing to find a good substitute!

Want to save a few bucks on your electric bill? Unplug your cell phone charger when not in use. A simple way to save energy in your home is by unplugging your phone charger when your phone is fully charged. "Two-thirds of the energy consumed by a mobile phone during its usage is lost when the phone is fully charged and unplugged but the charger is left connected to the outlet," according to Nokia.

Keep Green!

Quotes

Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy.

--Jacques Maritain

To climb steep hills requires slow pace at first.

--William Shakespeare

The uncreative mind can spot wrong answers, but it takes a creative mind to spot wrong questions.

--A. Jay

I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation.

--George Bernard Shaw

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Wounded Soldier and Family
Hotline
1-800-984-8523

Families

Dates set for Strong Bonds, Marriage Enrichment weekends

For those Soldiers who recently returned from deployment – how about a great weekend to “reconnect” with your spouse? Why not try Strong Bonds AKA Marriage Enrichment? The critiques are 99 percent positive overall on the effect the weekend has had with insight to marriages. This is NOT a counseling weekend.

Upcoming weekends will be Feb. 12-14, April 9-11 and May 14-16.

This is for couples who have not had the opportunity to attend in the past. If you are interested, contact Marie Durling at marie.durling@us.army.mil, or 609-530-6884 for an application form.

Registration Forms will be checked to see if you did attend previously. If you attended over two years ago, you may fill one out for the waiting list. With the return of the IBCT, we want to make sure the soldiers who have not attended have the opportunity to do so.

Soldiers are required to attend the entire weekend and ALL sessions in order to receive a SUTA certificate. Dress code is casual for the entire weekend. We do not provide child care. This is a couples' weekend.

More information will be mailed to you approximately 30 days before your event weekend with details.



Military and family members: health insurance questions should be directed to:

Tricare – Sgt. 1st Class Louis Tuck, 609-562-0865

US Family Health Plans – Pam Worley, 732-977-8531

VA Medical – Michelle Stefanelli, 973-676-1000, ext. 1727

State Family Programs

101 Eggert Crossing Road, Lawrenceville

Toll-free number 1-888-859-0352

Family Assistance – 609-530-6834/6884

State Youth Coordinator – 609-530-6836

Military Family Life consultants – 609-530-6835/6886

Yellow Ribbon Program – 609-530-6846/6853/6859

Military OneSource 1-800-342-9647; NJ 609-530-6867

Fax – 609-530-6871

Mullen sends thanks during Military Family Week

From Admiral M.G. Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

As we count our blessings this month, America's Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coast Guardsmen serve day and night around the globe to defend our Nation. We are all very proud of them, and yet we should never forget that none of them do it alone. The extraordinary families who support them sacrifice every bit as much to make their service possible. In the spirit of giving thanks, we devote this week to honor and appreciate our military families.

Our families serve as the bedrock for our Nation's defense. Family members may not shoulder a weapon, drive a ship or fly combat sorties, but their commitment, support and endurance is a source of great pride and inspiration for us all. From care packages to emails to invaluable friendship, your love and devotion helps our forces do their very best. I can think of no better words to express this than those spoken by a Soldier from the 25th Infantry Division upon his return from Afghanistan. Reflecting on his family's help while deployed, he said “just receiving letters... seems to give you the motivation needed to stay upbeat.... I couldn't do this without your support.”

Our combat readiness stems from readiness at home, and America's might is a reflection of the power of military families.



As a Nation, we can certainly never say or do enough to express our gratitude for their devotion and sacrifice, but this week is one way in which we show our appreciation.

On behalf of my family and those of the Joint Chiefs, to all our military

families, past and present, we thank you for your service and for your love. Our Nation's strength and honor depend upon you. Because of you, we truly accomplish far more than we ever could alone.

Teaneck FRG shows calendar

From the desk of Janis M. Shaw, Family Assistance Center

The upcoming Teaneck FRG/FAC meeting is Dec. 17 at 7 p.m.

Teaneck FRG Mardi Gras/Tricky Tray and BeefSteak will be held Nov 20 at the Teaneck armory. Tickets are \$4; time is 7-11 p.m.

Check out Blue Star Flag Program

Grantham University's Blue Star Flag program has been providing Blue Star Flags to Service members and their families since 2006. Grantham University is also offering scholarships and grants to Servicemembers and veterans. For further information about the Blue Star Flag program, please go to: <http://www.mybluestar-flag.com>.

State Employees

DMAVA Holiday party, Town Hall slated for Dec. 11 - time to make your reservations!

The 2009 DMAVA/JFHQ Town Hall and Holiday Party will be held on Dec. 11. The town hall meeting will be held at 11:30 a.m. and the meal will be served at noon.

Cost for the party is \$12; \$20 at the door and only 35 tickets will be sold at the door. Payment due date is Dec. 4. This is an employee-only event.

The menu will be catered by Amici Milano's. Raffle tickets for a flat screen TV and 50/50 tickets will be sold before and after the town hall meeting. Proceeds will be donated to the DMAVA Family Readiness Program.

Attendance at the Town Hall meeting is mandatory and those who chose not to attend the holiday party must return to their regular duty station as it is a normal and full workday.

If you are interested in attending, give your money to one of the following: DMAVA – Darlene Laarz, 609-530-6992; Karen Hansen, 609-530-6868; Dawn Baulo, 609-530-6717 or Tina Taylor, 609-530-7170. Fort Dix – Master Sgt. Barbara Alcott, 609-562-0870; and HSCOE – Kevin Hearn, 609-530-7069.

Holiday lighting ceremony at Vietnam memorial Dec. 5

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 800 from Bergen County and the Jewish War Veterans, Department of New Jersey, will host the annual Holiday Lighting Ceremony at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Holmdel on Dec. 5, at 6 p.m.

The ceremony will include the lighting of the Christmas tree and menorah, and readings about Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. The Brick Memorial High School Caroling Choir will lead the singing of patriotic and holiday songs. The festivities are open to the public at no charge, and hot chocolate and cookies will be offered.

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial and Vietnam Era Educational Center are located on the grounds of the PNC Bank Arts Center, off the Garden State Parkway at exit 116. The Memorial is open 24 hours, 7 days a week. The Educational Center is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Regular admission to the Educational Center is free for veterans and active-duty military personnel. Regular adult admission is \$4; student and senior citizen admission is \$2; and children under 10 are admitted free.

Please call 732-335-0033 for additional information or to RSVP your attendance.

Holiday Mail for Heroes program launches for 2009

In this season of hope and giving the American Red Cross and Pitney Bowes, Inc. have joined forces to invite Americans to "send a touch of home" to United States service members and veterans across the country and abroad. In its third year, the Holiday Mail for Heroes program is an opportunity to share joy and thanks with our service members throughout the holiday season by way of a greeting card.

Today more than 1.4 million men and women serve in the U.S. armed forces and over 24 million veterans have served in the past. The holiday season is the perfect time to honor and extend a warm holiday greeting to those who've served and continue to do so.

How Holiday Mail works

We have established an extensive process to ensure all cards sent to our service members are safe and arrive in time for the holidays. Holiday cards will be collected through a unique P.O. Box address from Nov. 2 through Dec. 7.

First, cards from across the nation **must** be sent to this address:

Holiday Mail for Heroes

P.O. Box 5456

Capitol Heights, MD 20791-5456

Every card received will be screened for hazardous materials by Pitney Bowes and distributed to participating Red Cross chapters nationwide. Once the cards arrive at the Red Cross chapters, they are sorted and reviewed by volunteers who then distribute them to service members, their families and veterans in communities across the country.

Please don't forget to follow these guidelines while preparing your holiday greetings!

Do...

- Sign all cards
- Entitle cards "Dear Service Member, Family or Veteran"
- Send holiday-neutral cards rather than those with religious themes
- Limit cards to 15 per person or 50 for school class or business group
- Bundle groups of cards in single, large envelopes

Don't...

- Send letters
- Include personal information such as home or email addresses
- Use glitter – excessive amounts can aggravate health issues of wounded recipients
- Include inserts of any kind as they must be removed in the screening process

Veterans & Military

Organizations named for donations for Hood victims

FORT HOOD, TX - Officials at this sprawling Central Texas Army post have announced opportunities for the public to donate to various agencies on the installation honoring the Soldiers and family members affected by the mass shooting on post.

Checks can be mailed to:

Chaplain's Fund Office
Bldg 44, 761st Tank Battalion Ave.
Fort Hood, TX 76544-5000

Checks should be made payable to "CTOF" (Chapel's Tithes and Offerings Fund) with a note on the memo line stating "Nov. 5 Tragedy."

Contributions on behalf of Fort Hood Soldiers can also be made to:

Fisher House
Bldg 36015, Fisher Lane
Ft Hood Texas 76544

If you have questions about the Fisher House operation, phone (254)286-7927 or (254)286-7929.

Donations can be made to Red Cross:

Killeen Red Cross
208 W. Ave. A,
Killeen, Texas 76541

Phone (254) 200-4400 or visit their website: www.waco.red-cross.org

And finally, donations can be made to the USO at the following:

USO Fort Hood
Building # 1871, 50th St.
Fort Hood, Texas, 76544

Phone: (254) 768-2771 or visit their website at www.uso.org

Holiday party for Essex Troop on Dec. 12

The Essex Troop and Iron Horsemen Associations cordially invite you to join in a holiday celebration on Dec. 12 at Zeris Restaurant, Route 46 (East) Mountain Lakes.

There will be a "Meet and Greet" starting at 6:30 p.m. with wine, beer and cheese (cash bar for mixed drinks). A buffet dinner will be served at 7:30 p.m. – wine, beer and soda are included. Cost is \$35 per person.

For those who may want to stay over, there is a discount rate of \$72 plus tax for Saturday night, Dec. 12 accommodations and breakfast at the Fairfield Marriot Inn, 3535 US Hwy 46 East (973-265-0095). The hotel is located at the corner of Route 46 E and Cherry Hill Rd. Imile east of Zeris Restaurant. Make your own reservation and mention The Essex Troop Association by Dec. 1.

Join the New Jersey WOA

The United States Army Warrant Officer Association, Fort Dix Doughboy Chapter, is looking for members. For membership information, contact Chief Warrant Officer Nancy E. Rowbotham at nancy.rowbotham@us.army.mil.

Peirce College offers \$10,000 scholarship to NJNG member

From the desk of Maj. Joel L. Martin, Education Services Officer, NJ Army National Guard

Peirce College, located in Philadelphia, Pa., will award one \$10,000 dollar renewable scholarship to a New Jersey National Guard member starting in the January 2010 academic term. The amount of this award is up to \$10,000 an academic year. This award has a maximum benefit of \$40,000. The \$40,000 is good for six years or degree completion. The scholarship will cover tuition and books only. Final selection of the recipient will be made by a member of Peirce College and a member of the New Jersey National Guard. Application deadline is Dec. 1 2009. For more information on Peirce College, visit their website at www.peirce.edu. Scholarship applications can be obtained thru the NJARNG Education office at 609-562-0711/0975, 108th ARW at 609-754-1260 and 177th FW at 609-645-6217.

For more information please contact Maj. Joel Martin, New Jersey Army National Guard Education Services Officer at 609-562-0711/0975 or e-mail at joel.louis.martin@us.army.mil.

Concert at Clifton High School honors veterans, American flag

Veterans are invited to the Clifton High School on Nov. 24 at 7 p.m. for a Salute to the Veterans Concert. This year the concert will be honoring the flag of the United States. The Silver Starlite Orchestra will be featured.

During this special tribute to veterans and their families, veterans who attend the concert are asked to report to the welcome wagon upon arrival for a token of appreciation. At the concert's conclusion, veterans are asked to bring their family and friends to the canteen to continue the celebration.

Cost of admission to the event is non-perishable food items. The school is located at 333 Colfax Ave., Clifton.

Veterans Organizations contact information

State Veterans Service Council
Richard Clark, RJClark21@msn.com
BG William C. Doyle Cemetery Advisory Council
William Rakestraw, warjrnj@msn.com
Veterans Hotlines
Benefits and Entitlements
1-888-8NJ-VETS (1-888-865-8387)
Mental Health
1-866-VETS-NJ4 (1-866-838-7654)

Calendar

*Mark your calendar
for February 13.*

*Valentine's Day Weekend Company
Grade and Warrant Officer Mixer
Details coming soon.*

Register for Guard/Reserve retirement seminar Dec. 5

Mark your calendars for a free seminar on Reserve and Guard retirement benefits. It will be held on Dec. 5 at the Timmerman Center, building 5441, 8th Ave., Fort Dix, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is for all Guard, reserve, retirees and spouses.

If you are unsure of what benefits are available to you while you are waiting to receive your retirement check – if you are a “gray area” retiree – this is the seminar for you.

Presenters at the seminar will include military service centers, Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, and various military transition organizations that will cover topics from a Guard/Reserve perspective.

If you are interested in attending, contact Chief Everett Currie at 757-444-7295, ext. 2005 or e-mail Everett.currie@navy.mil.

MTA running train for USMC Toys for Tots Dec. 12-13

On Dec. 12-13, the Military Transport Association (MTA) will run a special train in Northern New Jersey to collect donated toys for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation. Along the route, the train will stop at ten locations where members of the public can drop off toys, board the train to see Santa Claus, experience a variety of working railroad equipment, and meet members of the Marine Corps and MTA.

Members of the public are encouraged to drop off new, unwrapped toys at various collection points along the route in the first two weeks of December. At each stop, one or more businesses or organizations has a large collection box. The web site, <http://www.njoperationtoytrain.com>, lists all the toy drop-off locations and the schedule for the train.

The train will stop in Flanders, Ledgewood, Dover, Rockaway, Maywood, Hawthorne, Wortendyke (Midland Park), Wyckoff, Franklin Lakes, Pompton Lakes, and Butler.

The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November, and December each year and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in the community where the campaign is conducted. The Toys-for-tots website is: www.njtoys-fortots.org.

Veterans Outreach Campaign schedule

The DMAVA Veterans Outreach Campaign has kiosk displays at malls throughout the state and other special events to help veterans and their family members discover and apply for the benefits they are eligible to receive.

January 5*, 6, 7 Cherry Hill Mall

February 2*, 3, 4 Monmouth Mall

*Medal ceremony at 10:30 a.m.

Book fair being held at Picatinny Arsenal Dec. 8

Come enjoy the Books Are Fun book fair held at Picatinny Arsenal Building 34 (by the conference room), Choices Cafeteria on Dec. 8, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

With over 250 great titles at unbelievable prices, you are sure to find something for everyone on your list!

Categories include: children's story books, cookbooks, general interest books, New York Times best sellers, stationery and scrapbooking, music collections, gifts for all ages, early learning products and children's educational products.

First run, top quality products from the world's leading publishers.

Sixers offer Guard nights with “cheap seats”

The Philadelphia 76ers are holding two New Jersey National Guard nights. Come watch the Sixers in the Wachovia Center.

Dec. 9 the Sixers are playing the Detroit Pistons. Ticket prices are \$30 for lower level corners and \$15 for mezzanine center.

To reserve your tickets, fax the order to 215-339-7658, attention Dave Reed, corporate sales manager. Or call 215-218-7822 or e-mail dreed@comcast-spectacor.com.

For more information, contact Marie Durling at 609-530-6884 or e-mail marie.durling@nj.ngb.army.mil.

Deadline

Want to place an event or article in DMAVA Highlights?

Deadline for articles is noon Wednesday.

Send submissions to barbara.harbison@njdmava.state.nj.us.