

DMAVA Highlights

16 December 2016



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PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. MARK C. OLSEN, NJDMAVA-PA



A pair of DMAVA employees were honored for forty years of service as Gary Schmitz, National Guard Training Center, left, and Cindy Leese, human resources department, were presented certificates by Robert Hoyd, director, human resources; Ray Zawacki, deputy commissioner and Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cuniff, The Adjutant General.



The New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs held it's annual Town Hall meeting and Awards Ceremony at the National Guard Armory at Lawrenceville, N.J., Dec. 15, 2016. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)



AIRMEN AND FOURTH GRADERS BRING HOLIDAYS TO VETS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. MARK C. OLSEN,
NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, THE RESIDENTS AT
THE NEW JERSEY VETERANS MEMORIAL HOME
IN VINELAND GET A SPECIAL VISIT.

NO, NOT FROM SANTA CLAUS.

EVERY YEAR, FOR THE LAST 16 YEARS, AIRMEN FROM
THE 177TH FIGHTER WING, NEW JERSEY AIR NATIONAL
GUARD, TEAM UP WITH FOURTH GRADERS FROM SEAVIEW
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN LINWOOD, N.J., TO BRING THE
HOLIDAY SPIRIT TO THE VINELAND HOME RESIDENTS.

THIS YEAR WAS NO DIFFERENT ON DEC. 13, 2016,
18 AIRMEN AND MORE THAN 80 GRADE SCHOOLERS
SANG CAROLS AND PASSED OUT CARDS TO THE
HOME'S RESIDENTS DURING THE 16TH ANNUAL
HOLIDAY "SONGFEST." IT ALSO GAVE THEM THE
OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH VETERANS WHO
HELPED SHAPE THIS NATION'S HISTORY.

THE VINELAND RESIDENTS ARE A MIXTURE OF
VETERANS FROM WORLD WAR II, THE KOREAN AND
VIETNAM WARS, AS WELL AS OPERATIONS' DESERT
STORM/DESERT SHIELD AND VETERANS' SPOUSES.

"THESE VETERANS HAVE A LOT OF STORIES TO
TELL; THEY HAVE DONE THINGS I NEVER DREAMED
OF DOING, JUST LISTENING TO THEM IS AN
EXPERIENCE," SAID STAFF SGT. EILER GOMEZ
MEJIA, 177TH LOGISTICS READINESS SQUADRON
AND JUNIOR ENLISTED COUNCIL PRESIDENT.

THAT WAS THE CASE FOR MASTER SGT. JAMIE
NIEVES, 177TH CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON, ALONG
WITH 227TH AIR SUPPORT OPERATIONS SQUADRON
MEMBERS TECH. SGTS. STEVEN HASKINS AND KANE
LAWLOR, STAFF SGT. HARRY NIEVES, AND AIRMAN
1ST CLASS JOHN CUCCI, WHEN THEY MET RESIDENT

AND WORLD WAR II ARMY VETERAN, ED LEHENY.

LEHENY, WHO IS 95, SHARED WITH THEM HIS STORY
ABOUT HOW HE MET HIS BROTHER, LEO, ON CHRISTMAS
DAY DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE. LEHENY HAD
NOT SEEN HIS BROTHER SINCE THE WAR BEGAN.

THE STORY HAD APPEARED IN THE MAGAZINE VETERAN
JOURNAL AND HAD PHOTOS OF ED AND LEO IN
THEIR UNIFORMS. THE FACT THAT NIEVES, HASKINS,
LAWLOR, AND CUCCI WERE CLOSE TO THE SAME
AGE AS THE TWO BROTHERS IN THE PHOTOS WAS
CERTAINLY NOT LOST ON THEM; IT ALSO GAVE THEM
A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

"MY FAMILY IS FROM ALSACE LORRAINE," SAID NIEVES.
ALSACE LORRAINE WAS THE SITE OF SOME OF THE
HEAVIEST FIGHTING DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE.

AS IN YEARS' PAST, THE AIRMEN AND THE FOURTH
GRADERS DIVIDED UP INTO GROUPS AND TRAVELLED
THROUGHOUT THE HOME SINGING CAROLS AND
PASSING OUT CARDS TO THE RESIDENTS.

"WE MET AT SEAVIEW; WE PICKED UP THE KIDS'
DONATIONS AND BROUGHT THEM HERE, AND NOW
WE'RE GOING TO SING SOME CAROLS AND HAND OUT
SOME CARDS," SAID STAFF SGT. STACEY LAZARO,
177TH LOGISTICS READINESS SQUADRON.

LAZARO, THE 177TH JUNIOR ENLISTED
COUNCIL'S VICE PRESIDENT, WAS IN CHARGE
OF COORDINATING THIS YEAR'S EVENT.

"THE 177TH IS DONATING \$200 TO ONE OF THE
(HOME'S) ONGOING FUNDS, WHICH PROVIDES
MONEY FOR THE VETERANS TO ATTEND SPORTING
AND ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS," SAID LAZARO.

"I THINK IT'S A GREAT CAUSE," SAID GOMEZ
MEJIA. "THIS IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE THEM
SOMETHING BACK FOR THEIR SERVICE."

THIS WAS GOMEZ MEJIA'S THIRD VISIT TO THE HOME. UP UNTIL THREE YEARS AGO WHEN THE JUNIOR ENLISTED COUNCIL TOOK OVER THE VISIT, CHIEF MASTER SGT. TIM DONOVAN, 177TH MAINTENANCE SQUADRON AND SENIOR MASTER SGT. MICHAEL MONTEITH, 177TH MAINTENANCE GROUP, HAD BEEN IN CHARGE OF COORDINATING THE EVENT.

THIS YEAR, AS IN PREVIOUS TWO YEARS, DONOVAN AND MONTEITH LENT THEIR VOCAL TALENTS TO THE MIX. DONOVAN EVEN BOASTED ABOUT WORKING ON HIS SINGING THROUGH KARAOKE PRACTICE.

WHILE SANTA HAS YET TO MAKE HIS APPEARANCE AT THE HOME, THE MEANING OF THE HOLIDAYS CAME EARLY FOR THE RESIDENTS, THE FOURTH GRADERS, AND THE AIRMEN.



NJNG & ROWAN U. PERFECT TOGETHER

By Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Woolley, JFHQ PA

Arlington, Va. -- It's no secret that the partnership between the New Jersey National Guard and Rowan University has saved taxpayers millions of dollars and provided coveted real-world experience to bright college students.

Now, the program is getting national recognition.

At a ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on Tuesday, Under Secretary of the Army Patrick Murphy and Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham recognized New Jersey and Rowan for forming one of the five best Army community partnerships in the nation.

"We are very proud of your efforts," Murphy said. "When we're asked to do more with less, the successful path forward is with partnerships like yours."

The Guard-Rowan partnership began seven years ago with an affiliation the university's nationally-recognized geographic information systems (GIS) program, a move that has yielded more than \$1.5 million in federal reimbursements for facilities upkeep, and now includes use of interns for audits of energy and water use as well as for wildlife management. Savings from those programs has exceeded \$300,000.

"There are so few qualified energy auditors at the moment and great demand for the service, so we wouldn't be able to afford it without the interns," said Col. Mike Lyons, the New Jersey National Guard's construction and facility management officer.

"It is a benefit to the university and students because of this great demand," he added. "They have graduates going out into both the public and private sector with recent and relevant experience."

William Riddell, a civil engineering professor at Rowan University, said the intern program offers that real-world experience to both undergraduate and graduate students.

"The projects reflect all of the complexity and ambiguity students will face in practice," Riddell said.

Christopher Moore, a former intern who became the energy manager for the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Construction and Facilities Management Office, is living proof of the rewards offered by the internship program.

"I believe that helped me hit the ground running when taking my current position because I already knew a lot about the Guard and their unique energy challenges," he said of the program.

Maj. Jeanne Falchek, CW5 Thomas Comyack and Riddell accepted the award at the Pentagon ceremony.

The national recognition for the National Guard, DMAVA and Rowan did not end on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, the organizations were honored by the U.S. Department of Energy with the 2016 Federal Energy and Water Management Award at a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Falchek, Moore, and Comyack accepted the award along with DMAVA employees Joan McClosky and Vernon Hicks and Sam Valentine of Rowan University.



Representatives of the New Jersey Army National Guard and Rowan University received the 2016 Army-Community Partnership at a ceremony Dec. 6 at the Pentagon. The award recognized the five top partnerships in the nation. From left, Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham, the Army's assistant chief of staff for installation management; Vernon Hicks, DMAVA; Maj. Jeanne Falchek, New Jersey Army National Guard; Christopher Moore, DMAVA; William Riddell, Rowan University; Sam Valentine, Rowan University; CWS Tom Comyack, New Jersey Army National Guard.

On December 7, representatives from the New Jersey Army National Guard, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Rowan University received the Federal Energy and Water Management Award from the U.S. Department of Energy at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. From left, Maj. Jeanne Falchek, New Jersey Army National Guard; Christopher Moore, DMAVA; Vernon Hicks, DMAVA; Sam Valentine, Rowan University; Joan McCloskey, DMAVA; CWS Tom Comyack, New Jersey Army National Guard.



VETERANS AFFAIRS



COAST GUARD VISIT VINELAND



Coast Guard members from the Atlantic City station and Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May visited the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home on Dec. 8 to spread holiday cheer to the residents. Courtesy photo

MVC DELIVERS CHRISTMAS TO VETS HAVEN

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission Chief Administrator Raymond P. Martinez, center next to Santa, joined the volunteers from Home Instead Senior Care delivering Christmas presents to every resident at Veterans Haven North on December 14. Photo by Mairin Bellack, MVC-PI



VETERANS AFFAIRS



SEASON OF SERVICE



Christopher S. Porrino, Attorney General of the State of New Jersey, left, visited the Menlo Park Veterans Memorial Home on Dec. 6 as part of the Governor Chris Christie's Season of Service program. Joseph Brandspiegel, CEO, Menlo Park VMH and Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General, New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs greeted Porrino and his senior staff as they assisted residents with a bingo game. Photos by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA-PA

MILITARY SALUTES MERCER SHERIFFS



Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden, left watches as Ray Zawacki, deputy commissioner, New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs congratulates Sheriff Officer and Senior Airman Tina Valle for receiving the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal during the Patriot's Pride event on December 7. The New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal was presented to eight sheriff's officers by Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General and at the event held in Freehold. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to seven additional officers who served in the military.

Photos by Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA-PA



Happy



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AND VETERA



Holidays!



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**Highlights submissions deadline
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Life doesn't have to be a battlefield



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