

Like Us On
facebook 

FOLLOW US ON
twitter 


flickr

DECEMBER 14, 2012

DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS



A Vineland Veterans Memorial Home resident has a new friend with Tech. Sgt. Debra Zygmunt, 108th Wing, who was among the Airmen from the 108th Wing and the 177th Fighter Wing that were joined by fourth graders from the Seaview School in Linwood, N.J. for the Annual Holiday "Songfest" at the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home, Vineland N.J., Dec. 13, 2012. This is the 12th year the Wings have visited the Home during the Holiday Season to show support for New Jersey Veterans. (Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

Medical unit continues mission despite Sandy's destruction

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, 444th MPAD

It's a place most New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers can picture in their minds: the Medical Clinic at Sea Girt, the place with the chest-high service counter at the entrance.

The roiling tidal surges of Hurricane Sandy put water two feet over that counter top.

Brackish water overturned monstrous vaccination refrigerators, leached salt water into X-ray machines and wiped out more than \$1 million worth of medical supplies, computer equipment and durable items.

"When I first saw it, a tear came to my eye," said Staff Sgt. Doreen Jones, a medic who has worked there full time for 13 years. "Then I caught it. I realized that while this is devastating, we have to drive on. We are passionate about what we do and we have a mission to do."

Indeed the New Jersey National Guard Medical Detachment has a mission to do: ensuring the medical readiness of more than 6,000 Soldiers.

Col. Deborah Burr, the State Surgeon and detachment commander, said her team of 70 Soldiers will continue with that mission, despite the loss of their facility.

"We are still here," Burr said. "And we are still taking care of Soldiers."

A big reason they are able to do that is because the Medical Detachment scrambled to move more than 12,000 medical and dental records out of the clinic and into safe storage in a nearby location. Those records form the backbone of everything the Medical Detachment will do over the next year as it conducts Periodic Health Assessments for every Soldier and Soldier Readiness Processing for anyone entering or leaving a deployment cycle.

For the next 10 months, the Medical Detachment will be sending most of its Soldiers to PHAs and SRPs at Timmerman Center at Joint Base Dix-McGuire-Lakehurst. The detachment's temporary headquarters will be in Building 7 at Sea Girt. It's phone number – 732-974-5910/5971 and fax 732-974-5924 – remain unchanged.



Staff Sgt. Doreen Jones of the National Guard Medical Detachment stands by the service counter in the now uninhabitable clinic on Sea Girt. Hurricane Sandy's tidal surge put more than five feet of water into the building.



Sgt. Diana Torres of the National Guard Medical Detachment with some of the more than 12,000 medical and dental records they removed from the clinic in Sea Bright before Hurricane Sandy struck. The records are now in a secure location on Sea Girt. Torres led the effort to organize the files for easy transport to Periodic Health Assessments.

“ We are still here... We will find you. ”

Col. Deborah Burr, New Jersey National Guard Medical Detachment

Burr said some good will ultimately come from Sandy's wrath. The World War II era building that housed the clinic has been deemed uninhabitable and a replacement building most likely will be constructed. In addition, much of the equipment that was destroyed was aging and will ultimately be replaced with new equipment.

In the near term, the destruction of the clinic pushed New Jersey to the top of a National Guard Bureau initiative to scan and digitize medical records. The work has already begun, with detachment Soldiers transporting the records to a facility in Maryland for scanning and then returning them to New Jersey.

Short term shortages in equipment will make the Medical Detachment more reliant on contractors.

But Burr said that does not mean a

diminishment in the quality of care or of the attention to detail surrounding every aspect of a Soldier's medical readiness.

"Even when contractors are used, we, the uniformed people have the ultimate responsibility for Soldier medical readiness," Burr said.

One of the casualties of the hurricane were more than 2,000 flu vaccinations that detachment Soldiers rescued from the clinic and transported to refrigeration units in a warehouse where the power ultimately failed. Replacement vaccines are now arriving and are being stored in new refrigeration units.

Members of the Medical Detachment are ready to inoculate.

"There are about 1,200 Soldiers who still need a flu shot," said Burr with a laugh. "We will find you."



NJNG Museum celebrates 5th anniversary of Rider University history internship collaboration

Lawrenceville, NJ – The National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey recently recognized the 5th Anniversary of its internship collaboration with Rider University’s Department of History at a reception held in the University’s new North Hall.

The NGMMNJ presented the University with its most prestigious award, the board of trustees’ Robert A. Dennin ”Minute-man” Award, which was presented by retired Col. Leonard Luzky, president of the Museum’s board of trustees, and Lawrenceville Museum co-curators, retired Col. Jon Gribbin, retired Col. Donald Kale and retired Lt. Col. William Kale.

In his remarks, Luzky thanked the university’s president Dr. Mordechai Rozanski and professor Joseph Gowaskie, leader of the history department’s intern program, and stated “The program has been quite successful in many respects, the most important of which has been the positive experience and impact this program has had upon the students. The importance of this “win-win” program is how it benefits and has a real personal effect on the students who participate and also upon those who mentor them.”

In addition, Luzky went on to state that “This tribute is given with gratitude, in commemoration of our collaboration and in recognition of the substantial accomplishments of the interns who have helped the museum to continue our mission. We are extremely grateful to the university, its leadership and administration, to professor Gowaskie and the history department and especially to the extraordinary Rider interns. They are exemplary students, conscientious citizens and patriots, and a credit to the university.”

In accepting the award on behalf of the university, Gowaskie stated “It is with great pleasure that I accept this award. We are extremely proud of the success of this program, of our students, and their significant achievements at the museum. We look forward to many years of association with the museum “.

The National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey has three locations: Lawrenceville, Sea Girt and Trenton. Admission is free and open to the public. For more information, please visit the museum’s web site at <http://www.nj.gov/military/museum/> or call 609-530-6802.



Staff Sgt. Jessica Brooks, fifth from left, Company G, 250th Brigade Support Battalion, New Jersey National Guard, is recognized on the field of the Army-Navy game at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, Dec. 8, 2012. Brooks was among the Soldiers being recognized for receiving an Army medal with a “V” device, which stands for valor. (Courtesy photo)



NJ Gold Star Mothers honored by Wreaths Across America

Wednesday, Dec. 12, was a crisp New Jersey day and the famous Wreaths Across America convoy rested at the Vietnam War Memorial in Holmdel before moving to its final destination at the hallowed grounds of Arlington Cemetery.

Their mission is furthering remembrance of our military heroes. Accordingly, 14 New Jersey Gold Star Mothers and their lost heroes were honored at a heart-warming ceremony at the center of the Vietnam War Memorial.

The ceremony was attended by the National Gold Star Mothers president, Mary Beyer, members of Gold Star Families from across the country who were traveling with the convoy, New Jersey Gold Star Mothers and their families, and numerous members of military and government organizations.

The WAA convoy continued with its mission Thursday, Dec. 13, with a stop at the great Battleship New Jersey and with another planned stop at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery Saturday, Dec. 15.

Complete info on the WAA program visit can be viewed at www.wreathscrossamerica.org.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



Officials offer guidance for GI Bill recipients activated for Hurricane Sandy operations

By Sgt. Darron Salzer, National Guard Bureau

After the activation of more than 12,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen along the East Coast in response to Hurricane Sandy, officials want to make Guard members aware of the steps they need to take to ensure they don't lose their education benefits.

Guard members receiving any Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits for the current semester – and who were also put on state active duty orders for Hurricane Sandy response and recovery – are encouraged to immediately contact their educational institutions and notify them of their activation. Guard officials also recommend these Soldiers and Airmen request alternate arrangements for making up missed assignments and/or completing their courses.

Schools will authorize alternate arrangements based upon their individually published policies, but it is again up to the Soldier or Airmen to discuss these policies with their institutions, officials said.

The VA does not require schools to allow students to make up assignments or to grant students incompletes.

Officials said the VA will allow individuals up to 12 months to complete coursework for a course in which they receive an "incomplete" grade, but Guard members must discuss incompletes with their education institutions. If individuals do not complete the coursework within the 12 months, the VA will create a debt for the course that will need to be repaid by the student.

If schools do allow students to make up coursework without dropping the class, an individual's Basic Allowance for Housing will not be affected. However, officials said that if a student receives an incomplete and the course is not completed within the 12-month period, the VA will create an overpayment for the course to include payments for tuition, fees, books and the Basic Allowance for Housing.

Officials warned that students who are not successful in making arrangements with their schools to stay enrolled will stop receiving BAH payments on the date they are dropped from a course.

For more information, please contact your respective educational institution or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-888-GIBILL-1 or click [here](#).



Nominate a young patriot for 2013 Military Child of the Year!

Operation Homefront has announced that nominations for the Military Child of the Year Awards are being accepted online at MilitaryChildOfTheYear.org through Dec. 15. Winners will be recognized April 2013.

The Military Child of the Year Award recognizes children who stand out among their peers. Ideal candidates for the award demonstrate resilience, strength of character, and thrive in the face of the challenges of military life. These young heroes embody leadership within their families and communities.

This award is presented to an outstanding child from each branch of service – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The winners each receive \$5,000 and a laptop, and are flown with a parent or guardian to Washington, D.C., for a special recognition ceremony on April 11.

In previous years, recipients have had the honor of meeting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, and first lady Michelle Obama, who were guest speakers for the event awards ceremonies.

"With so much uncertainty living in a military family, from constantly having to move to knowing that a parent is fighting for our country, it is amazing to see how strong these young people are to excel in the face of these challenges," said Jim Knotts, president and chief executive officer of Operation Homefront. "It's not just the military members who serve, but their families as well. We think these young patriots deserve to be honored for their sacrifice and their leadership."

For more information on how to nominate a child in your community, to become a sponsor, or to see photos from past events, please go to MilitaryChildOfTheYear.org.

DMAVA Highlights is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, the National Guard, Veterans Affairs or the state of New Jersey. Letters may be sent to: NJDMAVA, DMAVA Highlights, Public Affairs Office, PO Box 340, Trenton NJ 08625-0340. e-mail at pao@njdmava.state.nj.us.

New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff – The Adjutant General

Brig. Gen. James J. Grant – Director, Joint Staff

Raymond Zawacki – Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Patrick Daugherty – Public Affairs Officer

Air Force Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez - Public Affairs Specialist

Army Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley – Public Affairs Specialist