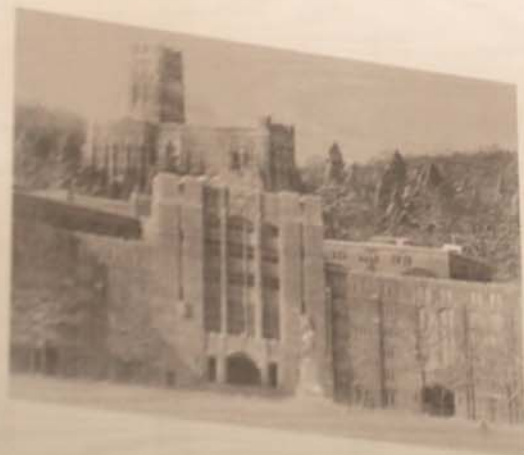


NJDMAVA HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 8, 2015



Following the dream from the Guard to West Point



*Story by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, New Jersey Air National Guard*

Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour, center, and fellow Soldiers prepare to tow a vehicle at the Morristown Armory in Morristown, N.J., March 27, 2015.



Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour learned early that following a dream requires sacrifice.

When the New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier was three, his mother sent him to Ghana to live with her family while she followed her dream of becoming a nurse. She brought him back to New Jersey after she'd completed bachelors and masters degrees and landed a job as an intensive-care nurse at a prestigious Manhattan hospital.

The example led Okyere-Bour to set lofty goals as he grew up in a small Jersey City apartment. He achieved the first by gaining admittance to Jersey City's McNair Academic High School. As graduation from the elite magnet school approached, the target shifted to top colleges, including Duke University and the University of Chicago. He got in. But the money wasn't there.

So Okyere-Bour enlisted in the New Jersey Army National Guard in 2013 with the aim of using a tuition waiver to attend Rutgers University. But something happened at basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C. Okyere-Bour got a new goal.

The battalion commander spoke to us. He talked about how he went to West Point and what it meant to him. I thought, 'That's what I want.'

Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour
F Company
250th Brigade Support Battalion

"The battalion commander spoke to us. He talked about how he went to West Point and what it meant to him," Okyere-Bour recalled recently. "I thought, 'That's what I want.'"

On June 29, Okyere-Bour will join the U.S. Military Academy Class of 2019. He will be among 25 Army National Guard Soldiers accepted directly to West Point this year. Eleven others will attend West Point's preparatory academy.

In the end, Okyere-Bour's New Jersey National Guard leaders helped pave the road from Fort Jackson to West Point.

When Okyere-Bour joined F Company of the 250th Brigade Support Battalion as a wheeled vehicle mechanic two years ago, the unit's leaders say he caught their attention with stellar performance – and

Continued on page 4

Cover photo

Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour stands in his Jersey City home with his acceptance letter from the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., March 17, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)

On June 29, Okyere-Bour will join the U.S. Military Academy Class of 2019. He will be among 25 Army National Guard Soldiers accepted directly to West Point this year.



Elizabeth Okyere-Bour shows off cell phone photos of her son, Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour, in their Jersey City, N.J. home, March 17, 2015.

Continued from page 3

his insistence that he had what it took to get into West Point.

They ultimately agreed. All of the officers and non-commissioned officers in Okyere-Bour's chain of command wrote letters of recommendation.

"How could we not? He's one of those Soldiers who does everything right the first time and does it when you ask and never, ever asks 'Why?,'" said Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Mahon, his platoon sergeant. "We knew it would be a hell of an achievement if he did it, and we were pulling for him. Who knows, he may be a general someday."

Sgt. James Diana, his squad leader, said the unit made accommodations to allow Okyere-Bour to make up drill time that he missed during the arduous application process.

"We knew that if he got in, it would reflect well on all of us, our unit and the Guard," Diana said. "West Point isn't going to be easy. But I know he can do it."

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***Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Mahon
Platoon Sergeant
250th Brigade Support Battalion***

It turned out that the person who taught Okyere-Bour to dream big, his mother, Elizabeth, at first didn't realize the magnitude of her son's achievement.

"I grew up in Ghana," she said with a laugh. "I didn't know anything about West Point."

But it became clear when and she told a co-worker at Mount Sinai Hospital about the acceptance letter.

"He was like 'What?' The next thing I knew there was a crowd of intensive-care nurses jumping up and down," Kathleen Okyere-Bour said. "Then I understood what my son had done. It was a very big deal."

Okyere-Bour says he hasn't decided what he'll study at West Point. He's not sure what branch he'll request either, although he said the officers in the field artillery unit his company supports have assured him there's only one branch to pick, and its acronym is 'FA.'

In the meantime, Okyere-Bour will finish out his first year at Rutgers. Although the credits will not transfer to West Point, he said the classes will prepare him for the academic rigors that await.

"I'm just excited to get there and start," Okyere-Bour said. "And I know that if it took that much work just to get in, what's coming isn't going to be easy."

Okyere said he's ready.

"I realized I love the Army when I was at basic training," Okyere-Bour said. "I want to do everything I can for the Army and I think the best thing I can do is become a leader. I believe I can make it."

He'll have a lot of Soldiers in New Jersey pulling for him.

When Mahon, the platoon sergeant, announced at a recent drill that Okyere-Bour had made it into West Point, the formation applauded for more than a minute.

"Private Okyere worked very hard to achieve something most people just can't do," Mahon told them. "We should be proud of him – and remind ourselves that only through hard work do we achieve what we want."

GUARD CHAPLAIN PROVIDES 'MINISTRY OF PRESENCE'

By Spc. Devon Bistarkey, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Life support is what Capt. Vincent E. Stokes, Chaplain for the 119th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, is in the business of.

An often behind-the-scenes-role, chaplain services bolsters morale and community within the ranks.

"My goal is to make an impact on Soldiers' lives," said Stokes.

Responsible for providing ministry in a pluralistic environment and performing a variety of family centered and spiritual support services, Stokes is an advisor to battalion of Soldiers comprised of truck drivers, medics, military police and many more.

His work strengthens each mission by acting as a multiplier, says Stokes, who offers a message of hope and resiliency through a three-prong approach to ministry. One: Nurture the living, Two: Care for the wounded and three: Honor the dead.

Through what he calls a ministry of presence, most often his greatest service to Soldiers is providing a listening ear.

"We don't provide answers; we are mentors," Stokes said. "Most Soldiers just want someone to listen and a safe place without judgment. Without saying a word I can be there for them."



(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph Kennedy/Released)

We don't provide answers; we are mentors. Most Soldiers just want someone to listen and a safe place without judgment. Without saying a word I can be there for them.

Capt. Vincent E. Stokes
119th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion

A true serviceman, Stokes started his military career in the Marine Corps in 1980 as an infantryman, went on to enlist in the Air Force and has been serving in the Army National Guard since 2010. A varied career of service that makes him one relatable guy. The emotional needs of the modern soldier are complex and Stokes has the experience to share in their needs and concerns.

With the goal to meet the religious needs of all his Soldiers, recently his job has been focused on preparing Soldiers with the 328th Military Police Company for their deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Stokes has hosted services during the unit's annual and pre-mobilization training as well as counseling sessions. In his role he also conducts military weddings, hospital visits and connecting Soldiers with specific religious needs.

It seems there isn't a part of a Soldier's experience that Stokes doesn't play a part in; but, for the Soldiers who don't fully understand what chaplain services and resources are he wants them to know that his is always there.

"The most rewarding part of my job is being available for Soldiers," said Stokes.



The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps

The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps provides religious support to America's Army while assisting commanders in ensuring the right of free exercise of religion for all Soldiers.

Since July 29, 1775, approximately 25,000 Army Chaplains have served as religious and spiritual leaders for 25 million Soldiers and their families. From military installations to deployed combat units and from service schools to military hospitals, Army Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants have performed their ministries in the most religiously diverse organization in the world.

Always present with their Soldiers in war and in peace, Army Chaplains have served in more than 270 major wars and combat engagements. Nearly 300 Army Chaplains have laid down their lives in battle. Eight members of the Chaplain Corps have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

Their love of God, Country and the American Soldier has been a beacon of light and a message of hope for all those who have served our nation.

Currently, more than 3,000 Chaplains are serving representing more than 140 different religious organizations.

OUTREACH AND OPPORTUNITY

NJDMAVA VETERANS OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

A DMAVA VSO will be present at each event to assist any veteran

April 14 – 16

Outreach Program

Kiosk Hours 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.,
daily

Medal Ceremony April 14 at 11
a.m. in Sears Court

Woodbridge Center Mall
250 Woodbridge Center Drive,
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

April 23

DMAVA “Commanders Call”
10 a.m.

Veterans Haven North
200 Sanatorium Road, (Suite
101), Glen Gardner, NJ 08826

Skylanders **MILITARY** APPRECIATION GAME

Sussex  County
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Skylanders Baseball team will host
the SUNY Orange CCC Colts on

APRIL 7TH | 7 PM

at Skylands Stadium, Augusta, NJ
Rain Date: April 11th | 12 Noon

Donations accepted and proceeds will benefit the
Student Veterans Emergency Relief Program (SVER).

For more information contact
Mike DeVilliers at 973.300.2109

EVENT INFORMATION

- Military personnel & veterans will be honored
- Nikki Briar, will sing the National Anthem
- The Ogdensburg VFW will provide the Color Guard
- Frank Arminio, Vietnam Veteran & Veteran Advocate will throw out the first pitch
- The Sussex County Veterans Committee will accompany him to the mound along with Visions Federal Credit Union
- Various Veteran Service providers will be in attendance at the game

Military Appreciation Day

Place: Casino Pier, Seaside Heights
800 Ocean Terrace

Date: Saturday, June 27, 2015

Time: 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. for bracelet pick-up
Waterpark opens at 10 a.m.

Rain Date: Please check “NJ State Family Programs” on Facebook for information. Changes will be made by the State Family Programs Office and will be posted on their Facebook page. Please **DO NOT** call the Casino Pier.

Soldiers/Airmen and Family members of the N.J. National Guard are cordially invited to attend “Military Appreciation Day” at the New Jersey Shore.

You will be required to show a Uniformed Services Military ID to obtain waterpark bracelets for you and your dependants only. Friends and extended family members will not receive bracelets.

** Check in through the side entrance of the Breakwater Beach Waterpark on 800 Ocean Terrace off Grant Avenue between 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

** Waterpark opens at 1000 hours.

** Each Military Family will receive a debit card (one) worth \$25.00 to be used to play games at the Casino Pier. (slot machines, ski ball, pin ball games)

Thank you for serving our Country!



HIRING OUR HEROES[®]

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

2015 Hiring Our Heroes – Camden, NJ

A Free Hiring Fair for Veterans,
Transitioning Service Members, and Military Spouses
Susquehanna National Bank Center
One Harbour Boulevard, Camden, NJ 08103
Wednesday, May 6, 2015

EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP: 8:30AM

EMPLOYER BRUNCH & LEARN: 8:30AM

HIRING FAIR: 10:00AM – 1:00PM

A Workshop for job seekers that focuses on resume writing, tips for successfully navigating hiring fairs, military skill translation, and interviewing will start at 8:30AM.

A Brunch and Learn presentation for employers that focuses on best practices for recruiting, hiring and retaining veterans and military spouses will start at 8:30AM.

EMPLOYERS

Must register for FREE at HiringOurHeroes.org/events

JOB SEEKERS

Register for FREE at HiringOurHeroes.org/events

Thanks to our local partners:

- American Legion Camden County Executive Committee
- Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey
- Camden County Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Camden County Board of Freeholders
- Camden County Office of Veterans Affairs
- Live Nation
- New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- New Jersey ESGR
- And all of our other local partners

For registration questions, please email hiringourheroes@uschamber.com or call 202-463-5807.



HIRINGOURHEROES.ORG

Find Hiring Our Heroes online:     

Download the free Hiring Our Heroes mobile app! All our powerful tools and resources at your fingertips.



HAPPENING AROUND THE STATE

ENERGY CONSERVATION TIP OF THE WEEK

Save energy and money by
grilling this summer

Did You Know...

Break out the kabobs and grill outside more often during the summer. By grilling outside, your air conditioner will not have to work as hard to offset the heat generated from cooking with your stove and oven.

You can enjoy the weather and save energy at the same time!

If you would like more information about DMA-VA's energy and water conservation efforts, contact Christopher Moore, energy manager at christopher.moore@dmava.nj.gov

E-mail your Highlights submissions to: mark.olsen@dmava.nj.gov by close of business Wednesday

MILITARY CAREER AND RETIREMENT BRIEFING

DATE: Saturday, April 11, 2015

TIME: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

LOCATION: Westfield Armory, 500 Rahway Ave., Westfield, NJ

The Military Career and Retirement Briefing is for ALL New Jersey National Guard Soldiers. The retirement section will be reviewing how to read your RPAM (points) statement and make corrections if needed as well as what is needed to do if you are planning on retiring from the Guard.

In addition, the following topics will be discussed: education benefits, state archives, VA mortgage benefits/reverse mortgage, financial planning and Tricare/US Family Health Plan.

RSVP to event to marie.s.durling.civ@mail.mil



MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER, GUARD, RESERVE
& VETERAN JOB AND RESOURCE FAIR WITH
CAREER WORKSHOPS

Thursday, April 30, 2015

9:00 am – 1:00 pm, including Resume Writing and Interview Skills
Workshops

Lawrenceville Armory, 151 Eggerts Crossing Rd. Lawrenceville, NJ 08625

BRAND NEW – A WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN VETERANS!

The Department of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with The American Legion, presents an interactive overview of medical and mental health services available to current and former women service members."

Many NJ and national employers will be present with current job openings. The NJ LWD (Labor and Workforce Development) will be present to assist with all labor concerns. Homeless, criminal justice and mental health providers will be present to offer those confidential services including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for all veterans benefits. The NJ State Parole Board will be present to discuss various criminal justice initiatives. The NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will have service officers, outreach managers, and homeless veteran representatives.

RSVP – EMPLOYER & SERVICE PROVIDERS - Employers with current job openings or entities that can offer services MUST PRE-REGISTER by April 24, With Paul McIntyre, State Parole Board, at VeteranReentry@spb.state.nj.us or call 609 777 0181.

RSVP – SERVICE MEMBERS & VETERANS - All Active Duty, National Guard, Reservists, Veterans, and their spouses are encouraged to pre-register, also on VeteranReentry@spb.state.nj.us. Fair day "WALK-INS" are welcome!

CONTACT: Bob Looby, boblooby@embargo.com, 908-894-0746.

CONDUCTED BY:



25 Apr 2015

For our FIRST

Joint - Retiree Appreciation Day

At

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst

Join us for:

- ☐ A personal welcome from the Joint Base Commander
- ☐ Outstanding speakers on subjects of key interest to military retirees
- ☐ Updates on retiree benefits and privileges
- ☐ Many Information Tables for face-to-face Q&A with experts

Invited to this special event are retirees from all Branches of Service, including:

- ☐ US Army Retirees
- ☐ US Marine Corps Retirees
- ☐ US Navy Retirees
- ☐ US Air Force Retirees
- ☐ US Coast Guard Retirees
- ☐ Retirees of the Reserves of all service branches
- ☐ Retirees of the Army and Air National Guard
- ☐ Retirees of the uniformed US Public Health Service

For additional information and updates, visit

<http://www.jointbasemdl.af.mil/library/rao.asp> and click on the tab for any of the retiree programs. A full program for the day's events will be posted during the first quarter of 2015.

Joint Committee for J/RAD 2015 with members representing:

- ☐ McGuire Retiree Activities Program
- ☐ Ft. Dix Retiree Council
- ☐ Navy Lakehurst Retiree Volunteers

New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

PO Box 340
Trenton, NJ 08625-0340

1-888-8NJ-VETS(8387) or www.state.nj.us/military



Raymond L. Zawacki, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs (609-530-7062)
Laura Branham, Executive Secretarial Assistant (609-530-7045)
Chuck Robbins, Assistant to DCVA/Outreach Coordinator (609-530-6855)

Fax: 609-530-7191

Veterans Healthcare Services (DVHS)

Brigadier General Steven Ferrari, Director
609-530-6967
Donna Myers, Sec
609-530-6766
Ernie Razzano, Health Professions Recruiter
609-530-6767
Virginia Fiess, QA Coordinator
609-530-6979
Vacant, Admin Analyst
609-530-6940
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Menlo Park Veterans Memorial Home
Joseph Brandspiegel, CEO
Jennifer Pajak, Sec
132 Evergreen Road, PO Box 3013
Edison, NJ 08818-3013
732-452-4102 Fax: 732-603-3016

Paramus Veterans Memorial Home
Dianne Tabron-Felder, CEO
Diane Callaghan, Sec
1 Veterans Drive
Paramus, NJ 07652
201-634-8525 Fax: 201-967-8658

Vineland Veterans Memorial Home
Boris Reissek, CEO
Sharon Davis, Sec
524 North West Boulevard
Vineland, NJ 08360-2895
856-405-4207 Fax: 856-696-6714

Veterans Services (DVS)

Albert J. Bucchi, Director
609-530-6962
Cheryl A. Henderson, Sec
609-530-6975
Fax: 609-530-7075

Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery
Iven Dumas, State Supt – 609-738-2424
Genia DiBella, Sec – 609-738-2404
Cyndi Dzurisin, Interment Office Supervisor – 609-738-2407
Dennis Macomber, Honor Guard – 609-758-7505
350 Provinceline Road, Wrightstown, NJ 08562
609-738-2400 Fax: 609-758-0169
Maintenance/Cemeteries/Memorials
Joseph Arroyo & Kenneth Smith Supervisor, 609-738-2408 Fax: 609-758-3490

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
1 Memorial Lane, PO Box 648, Holmdel, NJ 07733
732-335-0033 Fax: 732-335-1107
Korean Memorial
Boardwalk/Brighton Park, Atlantic City, NJ 08401
War World II Memorial
W State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608

Veterans Haven South
Walter Nail, Supt – 609-561-4948
Vacant, Asst, Supt – 609-567-3715
301 Spring Garden Road, PO Box 80
Winslow, NJ 08095
609-561-0269 Fax: 609-567-5186

Veterans Haven North
Sean VanLew, Supt – 908-537-1960
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200 Sanatorium Road, Suite 101
Glen Gardner, NJ 08826
908-537-1999 Fax: 908-537-1990

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Vacant, VSO (Robert Maulano-Tuesday/Thursday)
Michael Dorobis, Sec
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William McDonnell, VSO
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*Flemington, 4 Gauntt Place, **Flemington**, 08822 (Wednesday) 908-284-6146

NJ VETS-1007 – March 2010



NEW JERSEY YOUTH CHALLENGE ACADEMY

The New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Academy's mission is to provide a highly disciplined environment fostering academics, leadership development, physical training and personal growth to educate and train unemployed youth who have ceased to attend high school.

For more information contact:
NJ Youth ChalleNGe Academy
5910 West 16th Street
Fort Dix, NJ 08640
(609) 562-0577



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