



# DMAVA

# HIGHLIGHTS



SEPTEMBER 20, 2012



Incoming New Jersey Air National Guard commander Col. Robert C. Bolton, right, is presented the NJANG guidon by Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General of New Jersey.

## Bolton assumes command of NJ Air National Guard

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, 108th Wing Public Affairs

**JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST, N.J.** – Air Force Col. Robert C. Bolton assumed command of the New Jersey Air National Guard at the Joint Training and Training Development Center here, Sept. 15.

Bolton will command the state’s Air Guard, which has more than 2,000 Airmen and includes the 108th Wing at JBMDL and the 177th Fighter Wing at Egg Harbor Township.

“What I ask of all of you is to do your current mission well but keep an open mind,” said Bolton. “Continue what you’ve done for years: safely and effectively perform your mission with outstanding professionalism.”

The new commander has a firm grasp of what his new duties will be: To provide mission ready Citizen-Airmen, aircraft, and equipment to both federal and state leadership in support of taskings across all spectrums.

“My job will be to ensure the Wings’ have what they need to meet that mission and to ensure we can provide whatever support is requested of us by both the Federal and State governments.”

Bolton assumes command of the NJANG from Maj. Gen. Maria A. Falca-Dodson, the first female to be promoted to the rank of major general in the New Jersey National Guard and also the first woman to hold the position of assistant adjutant general for the air component, which she has held since 2004.

“The future is bright for the New Jersey Air National Guard and I am truly honored and blessed to have this position,” Bolton said. “I look forward with excitement to the challenges ahead.”

Bolton’s military career began when he was commissioned in 1983 after attending the University of Massachusetts on an Air Force ROTC engineering scholarship.

In 1990, Bolton joined the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard as an F-16 Fighting Falcon instructor pilot.

In 2006, he deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the unit’s Assistant Operations Officer. In 2009, Bolton assumed command of the 177th Fighter Wing and held this position until March 2012, at which point he became the NJANG Deputy Commander.

## NJ ChalleNGe cadets complete grueling program, graduate with confidence

By Sgt. Sherwood Goodenough, 444th MPAD

A flood of cheers drowned out the master of ceremonies as 80 graduates from the New Jersey National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program filed neatly into the Patriot's Theater at the Trenton War Memorial Saturday.

The ceremony for the 36th graduating class was the capstone of a 22-week program of intense academic training as well as rigorous physical conditioning that allows 16- to 18-year-old high school dropouts to earn a high school diploma and continue on to college, or the job market or enter military service.

The program is sponsored by the New Jersey National Guard and the National Guard Bureau and shares many outward similarities to Department of Juvenile Justice "Boot Camps," but there are stark contrasts. While juvenile justice programs focus on young offenders, the all-volunteer Youth ChalleNGe program aims at unlocking potential in students before they fall through the cracks and are involved in antisocial behaviors. Youth ChalleNGe cadets cannot have any court dates pending, be on probation or be convicted felons.

"This is my favorite program in the entire National Guard, not only because of what it does for the youth but also for the impact it has on the community," said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Denise M. Jelinski-Hall, the highest ranking noncommissioned officer in the National Guard.

Jelinski-Hall, who visited the cadets during their course at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and promised to return for their graduation, told them that character is built with the same tools for Youth ChalleNGe cadets as it is for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines.

"For everything we do, the foundation rests on the same core values," Jelinski-Hall said. "The transformation where we build leaders and warriors – the same thing happens here at Youth ChalleNGe."

In his remarks, Brig Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, the Adjutant General of New Jersey, highlighted some of the achievements of



**Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, the Adjutant General of New Jersey, second from right, and Chief Master Sgt. Denise M. Jelinski-Hall, the Senior Enlisted Leader for the National Guard Bureau, right, give the oath of enlistment to four graduating members of the 2012 New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Academy Class No. 36. The four cadets finished the 22-week residential program and enlisted with the 108th Wing. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Adrian R. Rowan, 108th Wing Public Affairs)**

the class as a whole and the rigors they overcame to earn a diploma and transition into the next phase of their lives.

"This class initially started out with 127 cadets and there are only 80 standing on stage today," he said. "So what you are looking at is truly the best of the best."

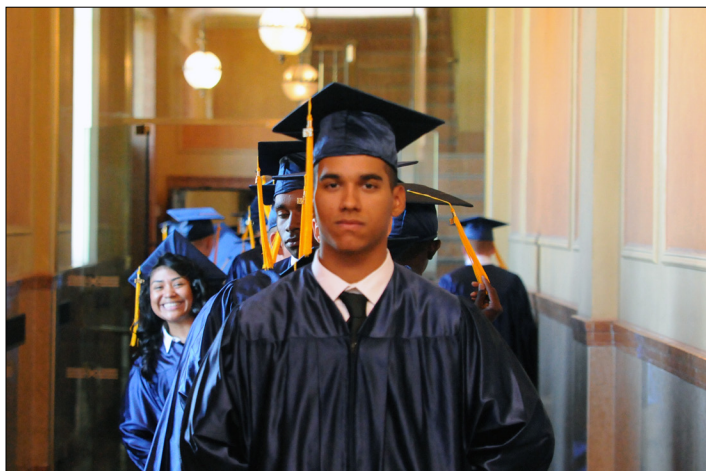
The program, while voluntary, maintains drum-tight standards on personal behavior as well as advancement he explained. Also, in addition to discipline and academic goals, physical fitness training is ever-present in the academy and collectively the graduating class lost more than 545 pounds. Furthermore, four of the cadets enlisted in the 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard.

The emotional acknowledgement of the cadets' accomplishments could be heard in the roaring cheers of proud friends and family members as they gathered near the stage taking snapshots of loved ones in caps and gowns as the 63rd Army Band played provided triumphant moment.

"I'm so very proud," said Bella McQueen whose 17-year-old son Michael William McQueen exemplified the kind of transformation the program seeks to nurture. "He's more confident, he's more determined. He wasn't like that before. He was shy and afraid to talk in front of people."

McQueen, not only walked away with a new sense of his value and potential, he earned two scholarships worth more than \$11,000 as a result of his performance in Youth ChalleNGe. Brimming with freshly minted confidence, McQueen said he plans to attend a private vocational school and after completing a 10-month program he wants to enroll in college and earn a bachelors degree.

"It's the hardest work I've ever done," McQueen said. "I'm thankful for that. It gave me hope. It gave me power. It gave me what I need to succeed in life."



**New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe cadets prepare to enter Patriot's Theater at the Trenton War Memorial. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)**

## *Veteran's widow volunteering to honor husband's memory*

By Donna Clementoni, NJ ESGR director of Employer Outreach

When Martha Kremer's husband, Kirk was serving as an Army paratrooper in Vietnam, he was hesitant to come home following his tour of duty. His mother would send him newspaper articles outlining the negative treatment of returning U.S. Soldiers and he considered if he was 'better off where he was' with his battle buddies who 'had his back.'

Many of them never returned.

With a certain amount of guilt for being 'the lucky one' he tattooed their names on his right forearm so that he would always keep them in his memory - 15 friends and comrades whose lives were cut short on a battlefield in a hostile country.

Kirk Kremer kept a secret, too. He never wanted anyone to know he had earned a Purple Heart during his tour in Vietnam when he fell into a booby trap of Punji stake. This rudimentary weapon of war are sharpened bamboo sticks placed at an angle in a pit and coated with plant poison and/ or excrement. The contraption was then covered with natural brush to camouflage it from the advancing army.

Once a soldier like Kremer was entrapped, it would slow the unit as they had to carefully maneuver the soldier out of the trap that was designed to pierce the skin and create injury and infection. Consequently, Kremer developed Hepatitis C from his wounds which later was attributed to the liver cancer that ultimately took his life several years later in 2007.

As he was dying, Kirk Kremer warned his wife he would "come back to haunt her if she mentioned he was a Purple Heart recipient." Martha Kremer opted to tell.

"Let him haunt me - I'd love to see him, again!" said Martha Kremer.

"He deserves that respect in death," said Martha Kremer, as she concluded on her decision of disclosure.

Today, Martha Kremer has a new purpose - a mission, which for her, will help right the wrong that saw so many of our nation's young men and women return from a war to a home front where they were shunned and disrespected.

Thus recently, Martha Kremer became a member of the New Jersey Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

Ironically, after the Vietnam War, when America abandoned the draft and transitioned to an all-volunteer force, ESGR was established as a mostly volunteer, Department of Defense agency that seeks to create a culture where all American employers value and support the military service of their employees.

With 48 percent of our nation's total force currently coming from the National Guard and Reserve, employer support is critical to enable them to transition from their civilian jobs to their military service when they are called to put on the uniform for our stateside emergencies and international deployments.



**Martha Kremer, fourth from front left, joins New Jersey employers during a recent refueling mission with the 108th Wing. (Courtesy photo)**

Retired after 28 years in local government - Martha Kremer was the Director of Community Development for Stafford Township in Ocean County - her new mission is a way to help other service members while "bringing her closer" to the husband she lost.

The new volunteer has wholeheartedly embraced her new role, "grateful," she says, "to be a part of such a high energy, great group of people."

Recently, ESGR's task of creating awareness for the National Guard and Reserve enabled Martha to "go airborne" when she boarded a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 108th Wing, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, as an ESGR escort to employers that had the "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to witness an in-air refueling mission.

Though her outreach isn't always this exhilarating, it does serve a very worthy purpose. ESGR recognizes outstanding employer support through a tiered level of awards, educates guard and reserve members and their employers on their rights and responsibilities as outlined by the law, and acts as a neutral mediator to resolve employment issues.

In addition, ESGR is helping "citizen soldiers," veterans and their spouses find employment opportunities through their innovative website, Hero to Hired, [www.h2h.jobs](http://www.h2h.jobs).

Kirk Kremer, his wife explained, "jumped out of perfectly good planes into combat" when he served with the Army's 173rd Airborne. Now his widow, Martha, had the opportunity to board another military aircraft and has taken flight to actively do her part to insure that America's military is treated with the respect that they deserve.

Her husband would be proud.



# HIGHLIGHTS



Senior Master Sgt. Tania C. Prairie, right, is awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal during her retirement ceremony at the 108th Operations Group's conference room at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Sept. 16. Prairie joined the New Jersey Air National Guard in April of 1990. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 108th Wing Public Affairs)




Cpt. Kevin Ryan, center, uncases the 508th Military Police's guidon with 1st Sgt. Anthony Padin during the transfer of authority ceremony conducted Sept. 12, in Afghanistan. Tasked with force protection, quick reaction force, personal security, and more the 508th supports five different locations throughout the Kabul Base Cluster. (Photo by Sgt. Katherine Coy)



Chief Master Sgt. Daryl Fortner, right, accepts the 108th Wing's guidon from Col. Kevin Keehn, commander of the 108th, during a Change of Authority ceremony at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. Sept. 16.

Fortner assumed authority as the command chief for the 108th Wing from outgoing Chief Master Sgt. Vincent Morton. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Kellyann Novak, 108th Wing Public Affairs)

**Regional Conference  
for New Jersey  
Veterans**  
on State and Federal Civil Rights Laws



**Saturday, September 29, 2012**  
USS Battleship New Jersey  
Museum and Memorial  
62 Battleship Place - Camden, NJ  
10 AM to 2 PM

Contact:  
Keegan Ferrell, Event Coordinator  
NJ DCR, 609-984-7092  
Shalana McNeil, Outreach Assistant  
NJ DCR, 609-292-7711




Scan for directions

  
 NJ Office of the Attorney General  
**DIVISION OF  
CIVIL RIGHTS**


  
 US Equal Employment  
 Opportunity Commission

  
 US Department of Labor  
 (OFCCP)

  
 The American Legion  
 State of New Jersey

Co-Sponsors: Battleship New Jersey • The American Legion, State of New Jersey  
Camden County American Legion • Camden County Office of Veterans Affairs • Camden County

**Congressman Bill Pascrell's  
Veterans Resource Fair**



**Saturday, September 29, 2012**  
10:00 am - 1:00pm

**Haledon Boys & Girls Club**  
83 Roe Street  
Haledon, NJ 07508

- ◆ Speak to Veterans Service Officers and learn more about current veterans issues and your rights as a veteran
- ◆ Visit with representatives from VA NJ Health Care System, NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, VFW, and other veterans' organizations
- ◆ Sign up for Congressman Pascrell's veterans' mailing list

VA Medical staff will be available to take blood pressure and disburse free flu shots

For More Information, please call 973-523-5152

## National POW/MIA Recognition Day, Sept 21

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is Friday, Sept. 21. Each year, the President issues a proclamation asking Americans to recognize the nation's service members who were held prisoner or are still missing, and their families.

The day's events include a Pentagon commemoration ceremony hosting former prisoners of war, family members, military service members and distinguished guests. Traditionally held on the third Friday in September, the event will include formal military honors. A flyover of military aircraft is scheduled to conclude the ceremony.

Also, in New York City, Department of Defense (DoD) representatives will participate in the New York Stock Exchange's Closing Bell Ceremony to honor prisoners of war and those missing in action. The New York Yankees will acknowledge the day with a home plate tribute to service members, past and present, during a game that evening.

In addition, observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day are held across the country on military installations, at state capitols,

in local communities, schools and at various veterans' facilities.

As a result of resolutions passed in Congress, the first official commemoration of POW/MIAs was in 1979, when the first national ceremony was held. The observance is one of six days of the year that Congress has mandated flying of the POW/MIA flag, created by the National League of Families', at major military installations, national cemeteries, all post offices, VA medical facilities, the World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the offices of the secretaries of state, defense and veterans affairs, the director of the selective service system and the White House.

The DoD has more than 600 people dedicated to the worldwide mission of accounting for the more than 83,000 missing service members from conflicts as far back as World War II.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO website at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call 703-699-1169.

**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](mailto: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