



DMAVA Highlights

April 30, 2009

Volume 9, Number 15

*NJ Dept of Military
and Veterans
Affairs*

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609-530-7088

News For Your Views

Soldiers Armed... with Teddy Bears

As the sun shone and the convoy stopped, Soldiers from Bravo Company, 2-113th Infantry Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, eagerly awaited the dropping of the mighty MRAP vehicle's ramp so they could dismount. Soldiers ready to finally get some action in the streets of Iraq were given the opportunity - but instead of clearing rooms, these Soldiers are armed with teddy bears.

Members of Bravo Company were given the honor to win the hearts and minds of the community around the base.

"The time to kick down doors is a page turned in this chapter of Iraq; the time has come to help the community," said Staff Sgt. Heriberto Maldonado.

The idea to donate stuffed toys to the local community came from Maldonado's sister, Lourdes Diaz, when Maldonado worked in the Theater Internment Facility (TIF) Hospital, responsible for security working with the detainees. The Soldiers were supposed to give the teddy bears to the kids in the hospital. The idea unexpectedly came to a halt when the members of Bravo Company were sent to work inside a compound. He was now stuck with 80-plus bears scattered all over his living quarters.

"I really was torn about not being able to pass out the bears," he said.

Fortunately, he was assisted by Spc. Fernando Procel, Spc. Carlos Mora, and Sgt. Ernesto Rances, of his company, who were able to think of another option. The team managed to work out a small mission to give out the bears with the Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) Platoon who travel outside the wire.

"If I had a choice, I would do it over and over again. In my opinion, the experience I came across that day when Maldonado, Rances, Procel and I were add-ons to the ISR platoon was awesome," said Spc. Mora. "Not only were we outside the wire, but the main task of the day was to go to local towns, and hand out food and gifts to the local national children of the area. After we finished the hand out at both stops, it was a great feeling."

U.S. Army Soldier Show at Dix this weekend

The U.S. Army Soldier Show will be at Fort Dix this weekend. Come see the Soldiers perform on the stage of Timmerman Center. Showtime for Saturday, **May 2** is 7 p.m. and for Sunday **May 3** is 3 p.m. Admission is free. Call 609-562-6709 for details.

Essex Troop scholarships open for members, family

Applications for the 2009 Essex Troop Scholarship Program will be available at the annual meeting, Saturday, **May 9**. The meeting will be held at the West Orange armory at 4 p.m.

The scholarships are available for qualified Essex Troop members and their family members, 102nd Cavalry and 50th BSTB qualified personnel.

Applications can be found online at the Essex Troop Web site,

We're on the Web!
www.nj.gov/military



Veterans' Organizations

Contact Information

State Veterans Service
Council
Mr. Richard Clark
RJClark21@msn.com

BG William C. Doyle
Cemetery Advisory
Council
Mr. William Rakestraw
warjrjn@msn.com

Veterans Hotlines



Benefits & Entitlements

1-888-8NJ-VETS
(1-888-865-8387)

Mental Health
1-866-VETS-NJ4
(1-866-838-7654)

<http://www.essextroop.org/index.htm>, by requesting at etroop@verizon.net or by calling the Troop office at 1-973-736-0952. Deadline for submitting applications is **June 15, 2009**.

10 mile run at Dix on May 16

Put on those running shoes and lace them up for the Armed Forces Ten Mile Run at Fort Dix on **May 16** starting at Griffith Field House 8:30 a.m. Cost is \$19 during pre-registration, \$25 during same day registration. For more information go to www.dixmwr.com or call 609-562-4888.

Marriage Enrichment Seminars being planned

From the desk of Marie Durling, Family Programs Specialist

Marriage Enrichment Seminars are being planned for August and September. Dates and hotels are being worked and should be announced shortly. All married soldiers returning from deployment and their spouses are strongly encouraged to attend one of the seminars.

NJNG attends NGB Diversity conference in St. Louis

By Capt. Barbara Brown-Wilson, NJARNG State Diversity Officer/State Equal Employment Manager

The 2009 NGB Diversity Conference was held March 23-27, in St. Louis, Miss. The theme was *Diversity: Past, Present and Future – Shaping Tomorrow's Guard*. Twenty New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen attended the conference, including Col. Jorge Martinez, G-3 Director and NJARNG Diversity Committee Chairman.

The conference included workshops entitled *Building Community Partnerships, Corporate Best Practices, Current Operating Environment, and Culture and Cross-Cultural Competencies*. A General Officers workshop convened to provide diversity demographics of respective states and engage in dialogue on diversity challenges and how to overcome them.

Dynamic speakers were also incorporated into the conference schedule to inspire participants to foster a diverse Guard organization as well as transmit diversity as a way of life. The overall conference was made to equip participants to evaluate how personalities and different life experiences influence the organizational culture in the Guard. In doing so, Guard members should have the ability to shape its future by embracing diverse talents and promoting inclusive environments, which will better enable us to accomplish our various missions more effectively.

The annual awards luncheon resulted in New Jersey Air Guard Master Sgt. Ferdinand J.T. Bautista, 108th Air Refueling Wing, receiving the Air National Guard Individual Diversity Award for his notable efforts of promoting diversity within the National Guard and community at-large.

A bus tour took conference attendees through St. Louis to educate them on its rich history in historical sites and facts as well as the current cultural attributes that exist in the city known as the "Gateway to the West." St. Louis' Gateway Arch, which stands at 630 feet and is adorned with 900 tons of stainless steel, is a symbolic design representing the gateway to the west.

The tour guide indicated that people of African descent have played a large role in St. Louis since the city's founding in 1764 while under French and Spanish colonial rule. Japanese and Chinese cultures are honored at the Missouri Botanical Garden with the nation's largest Japanese garden and a peaceful Chinese garden donated by St. Louis' sister City of Nanjing.

N.J. Vietnam Memorial Remembrance day slated for May 7

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation will hold its annual Remembrance Day ceremony on **May 7** at 11 a.m. Legislation created May 7 as the day in New Jersey to honor all those who served in the military during the Vietnam Era, from 1959 to 1975. The guest speaker for this year will be Patrick Hurley, president of the United State Naval Academy Alumni Association, New Jersey Chapter.

NJ World War II Memorial



For information or to
make a donation, call
609-530-7049



Please submit
any articles
and all
information for
**DMAVA
Highlights**
to:

PAO Office
DMAVA Highlights
ATTN:
Tech. Sgt. Barbara
Harbison

DEADLINE IS
NOON
WEDNESDAY

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Hurley, of Summit, graduated from the Naval Academy in May 1987 and completed advanced flight training in Pensacola, Fla., to be designated a Naval Aviator in July 1989. Hurley's assignments included two deployments to the Caribbean in support of Counter Narcotics Operations and another to the Persian Gulf where he flew more than 60 combat contingency missions in support of Operation Desert Storm from the USS Ticonderoga. During his eight years of active duty, Hurley logged more than 1,300 flight hours and more than 300 small deck shipboard landings. When he left active service in 1995, Hurley moved to Summit and served four years in the Navy Reserve.

In addition to the Remembrance Ceremony, NJDMAVA will conduct an award ceremony, presenting the New Jersey state medals to combat veterans. More than 200,000 New Jersey residents served in the armed forces during the Vietnam War.

EANJNG opens scholarship season to members, dependents

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of New Jersey scholarship season is open. The CSM Baldassari Memorial Scholarship is open to all members of the Association and their dependents. Scholarship forms can be found at the association's web site – www.eanj-ng.org.

The Enlisted Association offers five \$1000 scholarships. All applications must be received no later than **May 15**. Previous winners are not eligible to reapply. The Enlisted Association would also like to announce the USAA Scholarship. This is a \$500 scholarship that is open to all members of the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard. Forms also may be found at the Enlisted Association web site.

For more information on either scholarship, contact retired Sgt. Maj. Michael Amoroso at 609-562-0754.

Guard, Reserve retirement seminar at Fort Dix on May 9

A Guard and Reserve Retirement Benefit seminar will be held on **May 9** at the Timmerman Center, Fort Dix, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. It is free to ALL Guard, Reserve, spouses and retirees. Civilian attire is authorized.

Presenters from military service centers, Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, and various military transition organizations will cover topics from Guard and Reserve perspective such as: Survivor Benefit Plan, Tricare/Dental, Veterans benefits, VA disability and more.

Contact Chief Petty Officer (Navy Counselor) Everett Currie at 757-445-7295, extension 2205 or Everett.currie@navy.mil for more details.

ANG Dinosaurs scheduled spring luncheon for May 20

The New Jersey Air National Guard Dinosaurs – the Air National Guard retirees – will be holding the Spring 09 gathering at Moore's Tavern, Freehold, on **May 20** at 1 p.m. All current Air Guard employees who are on the soon-to-be-retired list and all retired Army and Air Guard retirees are invited to come and enjoy each other's company.

Interested dinosaurs should RSVP with Mel Sylvester, 609-298-5970, NuffSaidMel@aol.com or Rich Donovan, 732-223-2051 or 732-223-4445, Donovan@exit109.com. Lunch menu includes salad, burger or sandwich, coffee, iced tea or soda for \$15 including tax and tip. Pay at the door. Alcoholic beverages are extra.

Nutter Run up and running for May 31

The fifth annual SGT Nutter Run will be held on **May 31**. Sergeant Sam Nutter (Jan. 28, 1966 – Jan. 2, 2005) was a member of the New Jersey Army National Guard and served in the U. S. Navy from 1989 – 1997. Each year the New Jersey Army National Guard Officer Candidate School holds a benefit 5k run in his memory and the proceeds raised are donated to a NJARNG family in need.

This year's beneficiary is Sgt. Raul Aponte of A Co. 2-113th Infantry. The Aponte residence was struck by lightning during a storm in 2008 and caught on fire, leaving the family without a permanent residence and under heavy financial burden. Sgt.

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

Phone
numbers and
Web sites to
remember

Directory
Assistance:

1-602-293-4907

Verizon Super Pages:
<http://www.superpages.com/>

AT&T:
<http://www.anywho.com/>

SBC Yellow Pages:
<http://www.yellowpages.com/>

Telephone and
contact information
on state employees
can be found at
<http://njdirect.state.nj.us/>

DMAVA
Emergency
Hotline:

1-866-232-5798

Aponte is currently deployed with the 50th IBCT.

Come join us as we band together to give a helping hand to a member of our National Guard family. Fun family events and a barbecue will follow the race.

Visit <http://www.NutterRun.com> for more information, and registration and donation forms.

OTF looking for speaker for local tournament

From Operation Tribute to Freedom

Operation Tribute to Freedom (OTF), is a Dept. of the Army community speaking and recognition program. They are looking for any local OIF/OEF veterans who might be interested in speaking at the third Annual New Jersey Bocce Invitational on **June 20** in Somerset County, N.J. at 1p.m.

You can find details about the invitational at www.newjerseybocceinvitational.com. Any Soldiers who are interested in participating, call Kryn Westhoven at 609-530-6950 as soon as possible.

Ocean County Provider Fair for Veterans' Families

Families and friends are invited to meet with Ocean County mental health and other service provider agencies to learn about support and resources available in Ocean County on Wednesday, **May 13**, starting at 6:30 p.m. The fair will be in the Ocean County Complex Cafeteria, 129 Hooper Ave. (second floor/parking garage third level) in Toms River.

The providers of Ocean County and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have teamed to provide this annual Providers Fair, as a part of Mental Health Month, to make available representatives from service agencies that support adults and children in Ocean County. Pick up free literature describing available services and meet providers to discuss their services and obtain answers to your questions. Light refreshments will be provided free of charge.

NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. NAMI-Ocean County meets in the cafeteria the second Wednesday each month for education and support 6:30-9:00 p.m. For more information or assistance, call 732-244-4401.

Education Program for Families of Veterans

The Veterans Health Administration and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have teamed to provide the NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program for families of veterans. The Family-to-Family Education Program (FFEP) is a free 12-week course for family caregivers of individuals with mental illness and is now offered at VA New Jersey Health Care System locations.

The course includes: Current information about schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, borderline personality disorder, and co-occurring brain disorders and addictive disorders; current research and treatments to promote recovery; up-to-date information about medications, side effects, and strategies for medication adherence; gaining empathy for a person with mental illness; learning skills for handling crisis and relapse; coping with care giver worry, stress, and emotional overload; and guidance on locating and advocating for appropriate supports and services for your family.

NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. NAMI New Jersey and VA New Jersey Health Care System are accepting family members of veterans for the class starting **June 25** at the Lyons Campus. Classes will be from 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings. For information/sign up contact Mike at 734-380-9400 ext. 3618. Visit www.naminj.org or call 732-940-0991 for additional information about NAMI New Jersey.

Catholic Charities holding focus groups to help veterans, families

ESGR office
JFHQ
3650 Saylors Pond
Road
Fort Dix, NJ
08641
Hank Pierre, 609-
562-0156,
hank.pierre@njdma
va.state.nj.us
Tammy
Cartagena, 609-
562-0157,
tammy.l.cartagena
@us.army.mil
Fax
609-562-0158

From the desk of retired Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Hughes, Family Assistance Specialist

The Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden, is in the process of holding focus groups of veterans and their families. They are looking to gather input from this vital part of the communities in southern New Jersey so they can better serve the veterans and their families. Veterans of all wars, especially Iraq and Afghanistan, and their family members are invited to join us for one of the following meetings (one per county).

All meetings will be from 7-8 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided.

❖ Tuesday, **May 5**, Cape May County

Haven House at St John of God, 676 Town Bank Road, North Cape May, NJ 08204

❖ Thursday, **May 7**, Atlantic County

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish Hall, 591 New Jersey Avenue, Absecon, NJ 08201

If you are unable to come to a focus group session, please fill out a short online survey on the Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden website: www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org.

Contact Kaitlyn Muller for more information at (856) 342-4175, or kaitlyn.muller@camdendiocese.org. Catholic Charities provides high quality services to more than 40,000 individuals and families throughout the Diocese of Camden on a non-discriminatory, non-sectarian basis. For more information, visit www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org.

Hopewell Valley holding Memorial Day ceremony May 23 at Alliger Park

From the Hopewell Valley Veterans Association

The Hopewell Valley Veterans Association (HVVA) is holding their fourth annual Memorial Day ceremony on **May 23** from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Alliger Park.

The event will include remarks by keynote speaker Brig. Gen. John Nunn, Assistant Adjutant General of the New Jersey National Guard. The ceremony will also include an unveiling of memorial bricks dedicated in honor of veterans. Peter J. Lunetta, aviator for the U.S. Navy, is scheduled to conduct a military fly-over. Naval Sea Cadets from Lawrence Twp. will present the National Colors and lunch will be provided.

This free event is rain or shine. Tents will be provided at the park, in case of inclement weather. Alliger Park is located at 203 Washington Crossing- Pennington Road, Titusville, N.J. and is adjacent to the Hopewell Township Public Works Building. For additional information and directions visit, www.HopewellValleyVeterans.org or call (609) 737-6681.

Vets, military invited to march in Memorial Day parade in Keansburg

Keansburg, N.J., invites all veterans and military members to march in the town's annual Memorial Day Parade on Sunday, **May 17** at 1 p.m., rain or shine. The parade will start at New Point Comfort Fire House 192 Carr Ave, continue for approximately two miles and end at Manning Place and Carr Avenue. Arrangements have been made to have buses for any vet that is unable to walk the parade route. In addition, there will have a special bus that is wheelchair accessible if needed for any vet wanting to participate.

Contact Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Hoff if you will be participating and if there will be any vets needing the special busing by May 11 at 732-309-3647 or cor9696@aol.com.

VA offers new site, blog for returning Veterans

WASHINGTON (April 20, 2009) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched its new "Returning Veterans" Web site -- www.oefoif.va.gov -- to welcome home Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with a social, Veteran-centric Web site focusing on their needs and questions.

"VA is entering the world of Web 2.0, because that's where this generation of Veterans is already communicating," said Dr. Gerald M.

Cross, VA's Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Health. "We're opening our doors to them virtually to let them know what they can expect when they step through our

QUOTES

Preparation for war is a constant stimulus to suspicion and ill will.

-James Monroe

Industry need not wish.

- Benjamin Franklin

When heroes go off the stage, the clowns come on.

- Heinrich Heine

A gifted leader is one who is capable of touching your heart.

- J.S. Potofsky

Through indecision opportunity is often lost.

- Latin proverb

doors in reality."

The Web site will feature videos, Veteran stories, and a blog where Veterans are encouraged to post feedback. The site also will restructure the traditional index-of-benefits format found on other VA pages into question-based, categorized, and easily navigated links by topic. This will allow Veterans to find benefits of interest easily and discover related benefits as they explore.

"We hope our returning Veterans find this site easy and helpful, but also engaging," Dr. Cross said. "As the site grows, we will be linking to Veterans' blogs and highlighting more of their own stories from their own views. We are their VA, so we are eager to provide a forum for Veterans to discuss their lives."

DMAVA Green

Keeping green and keeping your green can oftentimes seem to be working against each other. As in – I know I will save money in my energy costs if I replace my old windows, but who can afford new ones? But there are a few ways you can raise your greening of the environment without taking a hit to the pocketbook.

Use your own coffee mug and don't use the to-go cup when you pick up your morning coffee. Carry silverware from home for your lunch to keep the plasticware out of the landfill.

Be careful with the water when brushing your teeth or washing dishes. Make sure your dishes and clothing are dirty before washing and rinsing them. Some clothes, like jeans, can be worn more than once. While you are doing the wash, if you have the space and time – hang your clothes out to dry instead of using that dryer – the second largest consumer of home power. In wet and cold weather, indoor racks will do the same job.

It is suggested that you unplug chargers for phones and cameras, and your televisions and computers when not in use as they continue to use power even after you have hit the off button. Or, plug it into a power strip that you can turn off when you are not using the appliances.

Cloth napkins save on paper – and they are reusable.

Before tossing that old T-shirt, towel or sheet – tear or cut it into smaller pieces and use it for rags, thereby cutting down on your need for paper towels.

Buy fresh fruit and veggies from your local farm market. You are not only saving on transportation costs – for yourself and the farmer – you are getting local produce and supporting your local farmer.

Find a way to reuse whatever you can. Before tossing something in the trash, ask yourself if there is a way you can use it in another way. Save something saved from the landfill, YEAH!!

Reduce-Reuse-Recycle!

If you have a green tip or a site to recommend, drop me a line at Barbara.harbison@njdmava.state.nj.us.

FRG asks for donations for auction

From the State Family Programs Office

The Family Readiness Group for the HHC 1-114th, Woodbury, is having a Ticket Auction/Basket Auction on **May 17** at 1 p.m. at the Woodbury Armory.

We are seeking items for donations. Please go through your garage/basement/attic/kids rooms (as long as they have moved away) and see if you can find items in good condition that we can use for our auction.

Call Natalie Warner at 609-903-1061 for more information and to donate items.

Army Warrant Officer Association wants you

Join the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association, Fort Dix Doughboy Chapter. The USAWOA is the Warrant Officer's voice in The Military Coalition.

State Family Programs

101 Eggert
Crossing Road
Lawrenceville

Toll-free number
888-859-0352

Family
Assistance
609-530-6884
Teen Youth
Group
609-530-6836
Fax
609-530-6871

Call a Chaplain 24/7

609-694-0635

609-752-4355

(Sgt. 1st Class J.C.
Prather-JFHQ Senior
Chaplain's
Assistant)

Make your voice heard. AAAA member aviators receive a USAWOA membership discount. WO1's receive their first year membership free.

Contact nancy.rowbotham@us.army.mil to obtain a membership application.

DMAVA/JFHQ picnic is looking for volunteers

From the desk of Darlene Laarz, Construction Facilities Management Office

The DMAVA/JFHQ's picnic is right around the corner. If you are interested in assisting in either cleaning, cooking, food preparation or set up for this year's picnic, contact one of the people listed below and let them know. We have an excellent group of individuals working on this committee and are always looking for volunteers to assist us. Give it a try, the work is fun! At DMAVA Central e-mail Darlene Laarz Darlene.laarz@njdmava.state.nj.us or John Hastings john.hastings@njdmava.state.nj.us or at Fort Dix contact Barbara Alcott Barbara.alcott@njmcgu.ang.af.mil or Bonnie Gaskell bonnie.gaskell@njmgu.ang.af.mil.

104th Engineers Association's anniversary dinner on May 19

The 104th Engineer Association will hold its Anniversary Dinner on **May 19** at 6:30 p.m. All former members of the 104th Engineer Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, are invited to attend. Contact retired 1st Sgt. Alfred Roberts at alfred.roberts@us.army.mil or 973-776-1364 during duty hours for further information.

Scholarships available for DeVry University

The AMVETS are offering scholarships for DeVry University with a \$1,000 per semester tuition award and a \$9,000 total award. This is open to veterans of all branches of service, Reserve and Guard components. This offer is also extended to immediate family members (spouses, natural and adopted children). This scholarship is applicable for DeVry University and the Keller Graduate School of Management.

Deadlines to submit scholarship applications are **June 8** for the July 2 semester and **Sept. 28** for the Oct. 26 semester. For more information concerning the application or the application process contact AMVETS toll free at 877-726-8387 or devryscholarships@amvets.org.

NJNG museum announces sale of "A Tribute to New Jersey Veterans"

The National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey announces the publication of "A Tribute to New Jersey Veterans." This beautiful 128 page, historical hard-cover book will be available on July 4, 2009, and includes numerous unpublished photos from the museum's collections, the N.J. National Guard, and personal collections that chronicle the men and women of New Jersey who have protected democracy since the inception of our great country right up to today's conflicts. With photos from over the past 150 years as well as illustrations of the country's early history, this book captures New Jersey's men and women's contributions since the beginning. It is a deserving tribute dedicated to all who have served and sacrificed so much for our country and shows how the state has honored and supported our veterans in the past, and will encourage its citizens to continue their support for our military.

Part of the proceeds from the sale of this book will benefit the museum. If you have any questions, please contact the museum curator, retired Col. Donald Kale, at 609-530-6802.

Martin lectures on book at Vietnam Center, May 2

On **May 2**, at 1 p.m., the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation will host a lecture by New Jersey Vietnam Veteran Dave Martin about his book, *Crazy Asian War*. This program will be held at the Vietnam Era Educational Center in Holmdel, N.J.

Lecture attendees are asked to RSVP to (732) 335-0033.

Reunion briefing schedule announced for family members

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800-333-1795

or visit

www.GoDirect.org

2009

U. S.
Army
Year of
the NCO

<http://www4.army.mil/yearofthenco/home.php>

From the desk of Marie Durling, Family Programs Specialist

We know it is early to mention reunion briefs but we wanted to get the dates and locations out now so you can make plans to attend the one most convenient for you. All briefs are the same – they are not unit specific. Attend the one that is most convenient for you.

Soldier & Family Reunion Brief Schedule

Date	Armory	Time
May 11, 2009	Mount Holly	6:30 p.m.
May 13, 2009	Somerset	6:30 p.m. ** Date change
May 16, 2009	Woodbury	9:30 a.m.
May 21, 2009	Teaneck	6:30 p.m.

DMVA Veterans Outreach Campaign continues

The DMVA Veterans Outreach Campaign continues with kiosk displays at selected malls throughout New Jersey. The schedule is as follows:

May 7**	New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial
May 19*, 20, 21	Hamilton Mall
June	Wildwood Convention Center-see below
July 28*, 29, 30	Ocean County Mall
August 5	First Energy Park, home of the Lakewood Blue Claws, 6-10 p.m.

Wildwood Convention Center schedule is: (outreach only, no medal ceremonies)

- ❖ Elks State Convention – June 4-5
- ❖ American Legion State Convention – June 10-12
- ❖ VFW State Convention – June 17-19

*Medal ceremonies begin at 10:30 a.m. on these dates. The kiosk will be open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Medal Ceremony only; begins at 11 a.m.

No handbooks available for NJDIRECT

Inquiries about NEW handbooks and directories for NJDIRECT has prompted this reply from Pensions and Benefits:

"Unfortunately, we do not have NJ Direct Handbooks to give to members and will not be receiving a supply. Members may visit the NJ Direct website www.horizonblue.com/shbp. Members without computers are encouraged to use their local library or a relative's computer or call the plan directly".

You may also look up benefit information and visit the Unified Provider Directory on the Pensions and Benefits website under State Health Benefits Program.

Order a complimentary Blue Star Flag to show your family's service

From the desk of retired Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Hughes, Family Assistance Specialist

The Blue Star Flag first appeared in 1917, when Capt. Robert L. Queissner, who had two sons serving on the front line, designed it as a tribute to their dedication and service. He proudly displayed this flag in the front window of his home and the flag quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in the service. Also known as a Service Flag, the blue star stands for hope and pride. Order a complimentary Blue Star Flag to honor your loved ones in the service by visiting: www.grantham.edu/promo/freebluestar.php.

Help available to students studying for SAT/ACT

In cooperation with the Department of Defense, eKnowledge Corporation, a leading

supplier of interactive test preparation products for college entrance exams, along with a group of NFL players, have donated more than \$16 million worth of multimedia SAT/ACT Test Preparation products to service members and their families worldwide.

Now in its fourth year, the eKnowledge/NFL player sponsorship effort has shipped more than 90,000 free SAT/ACT test preparation programs, valued at \$200, to military servicemembers and their families.

The eKnowledge SAT and ACT test prep programs come in either a single DVD or two CD-ROM set that include more than 11 hours of high quality video training/instruction with up to 40 hours of student interactive learning participation. The SAT and ACT test prep programs can be used as a stand-alone instruction tool to prepare thoroughly for the SAT and ACT, or as a supplement to other SAT and ACT preparation materials. Each student can select the areas where they need additional or special training/instruction, and can then study at their own pace using the 120 video lessons which comprise the SAT and Act test prep programs. The program also provides the student with feedback on their learning progress, test readiness and more.

Those military families interested in receiving free eKnowledge products under this sponsorship can complete an online request form at <http://eknowledge.com/military> or visit the Department of Defense <http://militaryhomefront.dod.mil> Web site for more details. Copies can also be requested by calling 951-256-4076 or via e-mail at support@eknowledge.com.

Employees required to register for MBOS

From the desk of Lisa J. Dandrea, Human Resources, Personnel Assistant

MBOS is the Member Benefits Online System. Through MBOS, employees may review their pension contributions, loan status, health benefits information, update their beneficiary information, apply for retirement, as well as many other applications. It has been encouraged that all employees register for this helpful tool. However Pensions is now working on MBOS being a requirement in order for employees to make certain updates to their personal information.

Effective immediately, in all cases where an employee is eligible to become a member of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), the employer will be required to submit all enrollment information to Pensions via online. Important to note is that the online PERS Enrollment Application does not include the Designation of Beneficiary page. Instead, once the member is enrolled and issued a pension number, they must register for a MBOS account at: www.state.nj.us/treasury/pensions/mbosregister.htm and complete the online Beneficiary Designation form. Until the member completes his or her Designation of Beneficiary, the member's "Estate" will be the beneficiary of record.

Current employees –note, even if you are already enrolled into PERS, if you wish to make any changes to your beneficiary information, you too will need to be registered for MBOS. Members will not be able to submit the Change in Beneficiary Designation paper form since this will no longer be acceptable through the Division of Pensions and Benefits.

Visit the link above for complete instructions to register for MBOS. If you encounter any problems with registration, you may e-mail Pensions and Benefits with your questions/concerns and they can assist you through the process. You may also obtain a tri-fold brochure with MBOS instructions from your Human Resources Office.