



# DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS

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December 12, 2013



## *Jersey Guard Soldier goes from Afghan patrols to pageant runway*

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

To walk a mile in the shoes of Spc. Francesca Vollaro requires a wardrobe change. Swapping out her combat boots for a pair of pageant heels, Vollaro took the title of first runner-up at the Miss American Coed Pageant Nov. 25, in Orlando, Fla.

Vollaro, a military police Soldier with the New Jersey National Guard's 508th Military Police Company, earned her spot at the national competition after being named Miss New Jersey Coed on July 21, 2013 – three weeks after returning home from a deployment to Afghanistan.

While overseas, the Bloomingdale resident planned for her first pageant as motivation during the nine-month deployment.

With limited opportunities to prepare for the pageant, Vollaro purchased her formal dress online and took the stage during the interview segment of the competition wearing a handmade suit from Afghanistan.

"In my interview, I share that I am in the National Guard, and I say it with pride," said Vollaro.

While other contestants trained with coaches and honed their presentation and communication skills, Vollaro relied on her military training and support from her battle buddies.

Transitioning from her active duty role to a poised pageant contestant, Vollaro had the support of her MP unit. In a live video stream, Vollaro's fellow Soldiers were able to watch as she took her most current title.

"My experience in the National Guard boosts my confidence," said Vollaro, 21, who is majoring in justice studies at Montclair State University.

"I do it to show girls that you can do anything," said Vollaro.

Furthermore, Vollaro said she joined the National Guard as a way to follow in the footsteps of her great-grandfather,

who served in World War II.

She hopes to make a career in the National Guard and would not hesitate to serve another tour of duty in Afghanistan.

She says that one of the most satisfying opportunities during her deployment to Afghanistan was the opportunity to work with children in orphanages.

According to the Miss American Coed Pageant website, the pageant has awarded more than \$12 million in scholarships and prizes since its inception in 1983. The purpose of the pageant is to help develop tomorrow's leaders. As the contestants go through the competition process, they gain poise and self-confidence and hone their communication skills.

Vollaro will use her time in the spotlight to solicit support for those serving in the armed forces.

"I want the community to remember them and to support them," said Vollaro.

# Selfless volunteers recognized by ESGR

The Jewish War Veterans Furer-Barag-Wolf Post 126 of Cherry Hill, N.J., and Eric and Barbara Spevak were recently honored by the New Jersey Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) with the Seven Seals Award at a recent gathering.

Recipients of this award, such as the JWV Post 126 and the Spevak family, do not necessarily employ Guardsmen or Reservists, but have demonstrated outstanding support, commitment and extreme patriotism to the United States military.

Retired Marine Col. Alan Smith, State ESGR chairman, addressed the Jewish War Veterans at the gathering, saying to the awardees, “you are important. You are the threads in the fabric that make America great!”

It was a morning to honor great patriots, including the Spevak family, who never ‘wore the uniform’ - although Eric’s father was a World War II veteran - but follow in the ‘give forward’ tradition of their family members.

Members of the New Jersey National Guard’s 328th Military Police, along with Capt. Jason Cornwell, Troop Charlie, 1-102nd Cavalry, were in attendance to show their appreciation.

“Nobody does it better – you are a role model...you have laid the foundation for volunteerism,” said Brig. Gen. James Grant, the Director of the Joint Staff to the Adjutant General of New Jersey.

In addition, Grant, a decorated Army veteran, pointed out the importance of civilian contributions to our total defense and the significance of community involvement and support toward the morale of the less than one percent of Americans that serve in the Armed Forces.

Noting that Eric and his wife Barbara have passed to their children, Marshall and Michelle, the torch of patriotism and the enormous effort of organizing Thanksgiving meals to troops, their families and homeless veterans, Grant said, “it is by design that a father teaches his son and daughter about patriotism that he learned from his father and which will continue for generations to come!”

For a decade, the post and the Spevak family rallied more



**Barbara, center left, and Eric Spevak, center right, pose for a group photo with Brig. Gen. James Grant, left, and retired Marine Col. Alan Smith after receiving the Seven Seals Award. (Courtesy photo)**

than 9,000 greeters and volunteers to host and organize a surprise traditional Thanksgiving meal at a Cherry Hill hotel ballroom for more than 2,500 deployed soldiers from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, which included VIP entertainment, livened with patriotic fanfare.

This November, JWV post 126 and the next generation of the Spevak family joined forces with their sponsors, the Battleship New Jersey, the Camden County Freeholders and the Camden County Veterans Affairs Council and provided a full-course Thanksgiving dinner and entertainment for more than 200 people on the Battleship New Jersey.

The Spevak family and the Jewish War Veterans Post 126 exemplify ESGR’s motto, *‘We All Serve.’*

## Changes to Army Tuition Assistance program take effect Jan. 1

The Army National Guard will lose part of a recruiting incentive when the Army tightens its tuition assistance (TA) program beginning Jan. 1.

The new rules require all Army personnel—active, Guard and Reserve—to complete a full year of service after they finish their initial entry training to qualify for the program.

This means the Guard may not be quite as attractive to potential recruits who are planning to attend or are already enrolled in college full time.

About 4,000 active-component soldiers, 3,000 Army Guard troops and 1,200 members of the Army Reserve have used TA money before serving one year, according to Army officials.

Soldiers will also be limited to 16 semester hours during each fiscal year, a change that, according to the Army, will affect about 20,000 active-component soldiers, and more than 18,000 Guard and Reserve members. Soldiers are currently allowed to take up to 18 credit hours.

REQUEST FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE - ARMY CONTINUING EDUCATION SYSTEM											CONTROL NUMBER
Data required by the Privacy Act of 1974 found on Continuation Sheet which must be completed once per fiscal year.											
<b>1. APPLICANT DATA</b>											
A. APPLICANT'S NAME (Last, First, MI)	B. SSN	C. ETS	D. MOS	E. DEGREE PLAN	F. BPED						
G. ORGANIZATION AND LOCATION OF ASSIGNMENT											
<b>2. SCHOOL DATA</b>											
A. NAME OF SCHOOL						B. ADDRESS					
Name:											
Phone:											
<b>3. COURSE DATA</b>											
A. DEPT # NUMBER	B. TITLE	C. DAYS OF THE WEEK	D. HOURS OF MEETING	E. COST PER HOUR	F. NUMBER OF CREDITS	G. FEES	H. TOTAL COST	I. DELIVY MODE	J. PAID BY ARMY	K. PAID BY SOLDIER	
L. COURSE BEGINS	M. COURSE ENDS	N. CAP APPLIED AMT	O. TOTALS								

In addition, Soldiers using the program to receive their bachelor’s degree will also be required to complete 10 years of service before they use it for a higher degree.

The amount paid per semester hour—set at \$250—will not change, Army officials said.

Army officials said a motivating factor behind some of the changes to the TA program is the “fiscally constrained environment.”



# HIGHLIGHTS

## CFC Nexus Online Pledging

Available for all Federal Employees in our Campaign Area

Approved by OPM

Voluntary, Secure and Confidential

Links to Local Campaign Agency Listings

Conforms to official CFC Pledge Form

- Option to Release Name, Contact Info and/or Amount of Gift
- Designate to multiple charities
- You may also elect a payroll deduction

Log on to our website [www.cfc-eastpa-southnj.org](http://www.cfc-eastpa-southnj.org)

Click on the link to Nexus under "How to Contribute" - "Online Giving"

Find your campaign - Eastern Pennsylvania & South Jersey

Register with Username and Password

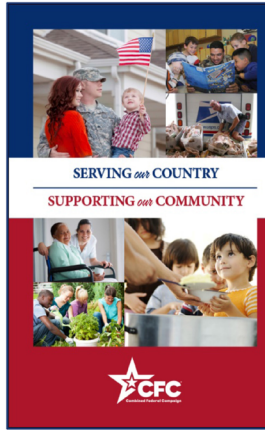
Follow online instructions and make your pledge

Receive an email notification with a copy of your pledge for your records.

**\*IMPORTANT:** Once you receive your email notification, please ensure that you email a copy of your pledge form, NLT 1 January 2014, to [Jo.A.Miller2.civ@mail.mil](mailto:Jo.A.Miller2.civ@mail.mil) so that I can notify the Payroll Office!!!!



Thank You for Supporting the 2013 CFC!



New Jersey **NATIONAL GUARD**

Programs for Parents, Inc

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[www.programsforparents.org](http://www.programsforparents.org)  
1-866-429-1667



## Spreading Some Holiday Cheer!

*Soldiers from Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 385th Regiment, 4th Brigade, 98th Division, visited the Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park Dec. 7, 2013. The U.S. Army Reserves' Soldiers helped the Home's staff serve coffee to their residents and at 10 a.m., they performed some drill and ceremony maneuvers. Following the D&C, the Soldiers assisted the Central Jersey Red Cross and the Home's residents with assembling holiday bags to send to U.S. military troops. (Courtesy photo)*



# HIGHLIGHTS



*New Jersey Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno and Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, the Adjutant General of New Jersey, hung a wreath presented by members of Wreaths Across America (WAA) during a ceremony in the New Jersey State House in Trenton, N.J., Dec. 9, 2013. Each year, the organization coordinates wreath laying ceremonies at state and national veteran's cemeteries. To heighten awareness of the WAA's mission, a special ceremony was held nationwide at each state's capitol. (NJDMAVA photo by Mark C. Olsen)*



US Family Health Care, a Tricare Prime option providing a civilian based managed care network, will be holding Question and Answer sessions to provide information for servicemembers and families.

USFHP pushes forward effective Jan. 1, 2014, and they are adding an extra benefit to their already robust benefit package! Eye glasses for \$0 to low cost. To hear more about USFHP and this added benefit, come to one of their upcoming information sessions listed below:

**Joint Military and Family Assistance Center**  
1048 US Highway 206, Bordentown  
December 3 & 12  
12 to 4 p.m.

**JB-MDL McGuire Library**  
2603 Tuskegee Airmen Ave, JB-MDL  
December 3 & 16  
12 to 4 p.m.

## **Pemberton Community Library**

Brownmills, NJ 08015  
December 17  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## **Mount Laurel Library**

100 Walt Whitman Ave, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054  
December 6 & 13  
12 to 4 p.m.

## **Camden County Veterans Affairs**

3 Collier Dr., Lakeland Complex, Blackwood, NJ 08012  
Daily  
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## **NJDMAVA Bldg**

IASD Section,  
101 Eggerts Crossing Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08234  
December 4, 11 & 18  
Contact Josephine Gray at 347-501-2308 for hours

## **177th Fighter Wing**

Bldg. 229, 400 Langley Rd., Egg Harbor Twp, NJ 08234  
December 10 & 17  
12 - 4 p.m.

Call 1-800-241-4848 option 3 or visit [www.usfhp.net](http://www.usfhp.net) for more information.



## HIGHLIGHTS

# DMAVA push for veterans jobs heads to Holmdel

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, NJDMAVA/PA

Since 2011, the New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran Affairs and the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development have joined forces to conduct more than 50 job fairs specifically for veterans.

The latest was Thursday, Dec. 5, at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Holmdel. Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General, attended the event and was joined by Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno and Labor and Workforce Development Commissioner Harold Wirths.

Cunniff said the job fairs aim to connect employers with the people that often end up being their best employees.

"Military veterans have everything employers are looking for," Cunniff said. "They are highly trained and know how to work as part of a team."

Additional sponsorship for the job fair was provided by the New Jersey Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve, the American Legion and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which has launched the "Hiring Our Heroes" campaign with the goal of



Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno, left, and Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, listen to J.B. Hunt Transport Services mechanical technician, Owen Martindale, talk about opportunities for veterans at his company.

finding jobs for 500,000 military veterans and their spouses by the end of 2014.

More than two dozen employers sent representatives to the job fair in Holmdel.

The transportation logistics giant, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc., sent two men with a strong military background.

Mechanical technicians Owen Martindale, a current Army Reservist, and Jeff Goulet, a Navy veteran, said the skills they learned in the military helped get them hired.

"The corporate culture here is a great fit for military veterans," Goulet said. "We drive, drive, drive and don't stop."

## Spreading cheer and reducing holiday stress for deployed Soldiers' families

By Staff Sgt. Landis Andrews, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

It's the time of the year when people travel far and wide to spend time with the people they love the most.

But this holiday season, the Military Assistance Team IV (MAT4) will be more than 7,400 miles from their families.

This does not mean that the wives, husbands and children will be alone. On Saturday, Dec. 7, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program and the National Guard State Family Programs gathered families to teach them about benefits and spread some holiday cheer when it is needed most.

Maj. Kevin Murphy, the commander, and the rest of MAT4 have been in Afghanistan since April, training local armed forces. Back home, their families are getting a whole new perspective on what it takes to keep the household intact.

Charity Santos-Murphy, the major's wife, says that Family Programs has helped her get through this holiday season.

"This is my first deployment as a spouse



Donovan "The Popcorn Scout" presented popcorn to the families of the New Jersey Army National Guard soldiers deployed to Afghanistan at the Joint Military and Family Assistance Center in Bordentown. (Photo by Sgt. Joseph Kennedy, 444th MPAD)

and it is taking a lot of adjustment from me," said Santos-Murphy. "I kept my full-time job, we just moved into a new house and our daughter just went to a new school, so it was a huge help when Family Programs sent a Thanksgiving basket and a holiday gift package. Things like that take some of the edge off during these tough times."

Laetonia Taylor, the girlfriend of Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Wilfong, said the Family Programs support network has made a holiday with a deployed loved one easier.

"I'm so glad that I came to this meeting," said Taylor. "It has decreased my stress level so much. Now I know why Daniel kept telling me to contact Family Programs. Now I am aware of all the programs and benefits that our family has access to."

Filling out paperwork, something common in military life, gave Taylor fits. Now she knows that she can get help with it.

"There were so many benefits that I didn't take advantage of because I didn't want to fill out all of the paperwork that came with it," said Taylor. "Today, I found out that we have the resources available to have that done for me. That really makes me feel like I'm not alone in this struggle."

"During these holidays, with Daniel so far away from me, it's great to be surrounded by that family feeling," said Taylor.





Chaplain, Brig. Gen. Alphonse J. Stephenson, Director of the National Guard Bureau Office of the Chaplain, left, pins shoulder boards with colonel rank on Steven Herman along with Herman's wife, Mildred, right. The Richwood resident has served

as chaplain in the New Jersey Army National Guard for 23-years. Chaplain Herman was pinned on Dec. 10 at the New Jersey National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (Photo by Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA-PA



## Retirement seminar at Lawrenceville Armory

Marie Durling, Retirement Services Officer and Retirement Points Accounting manager, will conduct a career/retirement seminar Jan. 11, 2014 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Garden Room in the Lawrenceville Armory.

This training is not for retirees only. If you are planning on making the military a career, you should plan on attending.

The following issues will be discussed:

1. How to read an RPAM statement.
2. What you need to do to correct your retirement points.
3. Obtaining your 15 or 20-year letters.
4. Reserve Component Survivor Benefits Plans.
5. Tricare and US Family Health Plans.
6. Investments for retirement.
7. What to do if you can't find document for retirement packet.

Individuals interested in attending should e-mail [marie.s.durling.civ@mail.mil](mailto:marie.s.durling.civ@mail.mil).

E-mail your Photo of the Week or Highlights submissions to:

[wayne.woolley@njdmava.state.nj.us](mailto:wayne.woolley@njdmava.state.nj.us) OR  
[armando.vasquez@njdmava.state.nj.us](mailto:armando.vasquez@njdmava.state.nj.us)

GUARDLIFE IS ONLINE



## FROM FLIGHT SUIT TO LAB COAT

*Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs*

“Challenging, Exciting and Hard work.” Most would think these are words Air Force Capt. Brian Bradke would use to describe his experiences as an F-16C Fighting Falcon pilot with the New Jersey National Guard’s 177th Fighter Wing. Instead, this Citizen-Airman uses them to describe his academic activities.

“I am enrolled at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., pursuing a doctorate in biomedical engineering,” said Bradke. “My thesis is on orthopedic biomechanics of the spine and age-related changes of fracture resistance.”

An Iraq and Afghanistan combat veteran, Bradke was drawn to the Air National Guard because it was compatible with both his personal and professional goals.

“I wanted to be an officer and an aviator, to serve my community and nation, to have the opportunity to deploy to a combat zone, as well as afford my family stability,” said Bradke. “For me, the Air National Guard was the option that allowed me to have it all.”

Bradke called deploying the best experiences of his life.

“Despite the uncertainty and trepidation, the constant attacks, and knowing that if your jet goes down you will be all alone in hostile territory...it is also a rewarding and fun experience,” said Bradke. “Partly because you are actually executing the mission for which you have spent years training, but more so because of the esprit de corps you share with your squadron.”

The complexity of flying a high performance fighter and the experiences gained in the New Jersey Air National Guard eased Bradke’s transition into the laboratory.

“Military experience absolutely helped pave the way for me by teaching leadership and communications skills as well as a strong work ethic,” said Bradke. “Attention to detail and integrity are a few of the core competencies shared between scientific research and the military.”

Even with long hours in the lab during the week, Bradke continues to serve as a combat mission ready F-16 instructor pilot.

“If the need arises for the 177th Fighter Wing to deploy to a combat theatre, I would volunteer without hesitation,” said Bradke. “As for civilian life, after graduation, I am beginning a career at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., which requires me to combine my fighter pilot experience and mechanical engineering experience as a test and evaluation engineer.”

“It certainly requires more sacrifice than the typical 9 to 5, but with the right priorities, it is doable,” said Bradke. “For me, it is about being able to pursue all the things I am passionate about: science, technology, flying and serving the community.”



*Capt. Brian Bradke boards his aircraft prior to a combat sortie to provide close air support to coalition ground forces on Dec. 21, 2011*



*Capt. Brian Bradke prepares his aircraft for a combat sortie on Dec. 21, 2011*



*Capt. Brian Bradke, left, with Staff Sgt. Brian Cooke, an F-16C crew chief, prior to a combat sortie to provide close air support to coalition ground forces on Dec. 21, 2011.*

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