



NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

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WINGS OF CHANGE

Col. Rick Gibney Assumes
Command of 119th Wing



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Guard Families Serve in Kosovo, Military Service Center Resources

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Commander in Chief
North Dakota Governor
John Hoeven

The Adjutant General
Maj. Gen. David A. Sprynczynatyk

Chief of Public Affairs
Lt. Col. Rick Smith

Editor
Sgt. Eric W. Jensen

Contributors
Capt. Penny Ripperger
Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp
Staff Sgt. Amy Wieser Willson
Chaplain (Maj.) David Johnson
Col. Michael Wobbema
Senior Airman Nathanael Baardson
Rob Keller
Bill Prokopyk
Spc. Chris Erickson
Sgt. Jordan Huwe
Spc. Joshua Dodds
Spc. Angie Gross
Sgt. Ann Knudson
Tech Sgt. Bradly Schneider
Master Sgt. Gary Weis

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Contributions to the *North Dakota Guardian* are encouraged! Send articles, photos and art to Editor, JFND PIO, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5511.

Electronic submissions are preferred. Please e-mail stories in Word format to:

eric.william.jensen@us.army.mil

Phone: 701-333-2195 Fax: 701-333-2017

Digital photos should be at least 300 dpi.

On the Cover



Change of Command: Col. Rick Gibney shares comments with Airmen of the 119th Wing and various guests at the Wing Change of Command ceremony Dec. 5. Gibney replaces Col. Robert Becklund who has served in the position for more than five years. (Photo by Tech Sgt. Bradly Schneider, 119th Wing)

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VIEW FROM THE TOP

Comments from North Dakota National Guard Leadership

Preparing for Success on the Path Ahead

Whew ... I'm sure glad to see 2009 come to a close. What a year! After re-reading Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk's View From the Top in the December issue of the Guardian, I was left with a sense of awe when noting all of the things that each of you have done over the past year; a sense of admiration, and of pride, in knowing that it was all accomplished successfully and professionally as you stepped up to your respective roles, honoring the citizens of this great state and nation with your sense of duty. To that end, I humbly salute you all.

Now it's time to re-orient to the future, and plan for what it has in store for us.

In pilot vernacular, it's a "new jet, new day." We need to take the lessons learned from this past year and apply them as we plan for the known and unknown of what challenges 2010

will bring us. How do we accomplish this task? Several simultaneous things need to take place, and each of us has a role. All of this may seem obvious, but I think that it is important to periodically discuss this so everyone can take advantage of the opportunity to excel.

At the macro level, leadership will have to predict what major events will impact our mission — storms, floods and such — while continuously preparing for deployments by training and equipping our warriors for what they will face in the field. Those preparations are well under way, they never really stop. As an example, many of you are getting ready to, or have recently accomplished, training in the Military Decision Making Process, and the Joint Force Headquarters unit training assemblies will have a heavy emphasis on flood operations preparation.

When we talk about preparing for the future, what's your part? The best thing you can do to advance these processes is to support the state leadership by mak-

ing yourself available, be willing to learn something new and be willing to cross the cultural barriers from Army to Air and Air to Army. Most importantly, in order to make these events successful, you must come to the training with a positive mental attitude.

On an individual basis, your preparation for 2010 and beyond is critically important for the N.D. National Guard, and you, to be successful. Are you preparing yourself fully for your job? Are you preparing yourself fully for your career? Have you given serious thought about what you want your career to be like? Do you have a career plan? These are just a few questions

you need to address at an individual level. There is no doubt that things are changing, and that change is coming at

an ever-increasing pace. Those of you who embrace change and best prepare for it will have the best choice of opportunities in the future.

Becoming technically proficient is the starting point to excelling in your current position. If the rest of what you desire for a career is to come to pass, you must work hard to become the best you can be in your career field. Become that "go-to" person that people seek out whenever a question needs answered or a job needs completed. Make sure that you are completing the necessary career education requirements to progress through your career field, and stay current with the professional military education requirements you need to complete to obtain your next promotion. From a leadership perspective, it becomes frustrating to want to consider a person for an advancement opportunity, only to find they are not eligible for promotion because they haven't completed the requisite course(s). Don't self-eliminate. It is the quickest way to lose an opportunity that may not come



Col. Michael Wobbema

Deputy Director Joint Staff
North Dakota National Guard

around again for a long time.

Everyone that I know who has spent an extended amount of time in uniform comes to a point in their career where they say, "I want to be in that position some day." My desire is that you recognize the importance of this desire much sooner in your career than later. In order to become successful in your own career, you must develop a series of goals for yourself. What do you want to do one year from now? Three years? Five years? If you don't set these longer range goals, you won't be able to determine the shorter range things you will need to do to prepare for them. While you are working to set these goals, find a mentor. Most people in leadership positions (officer or enlisted) have used the advice of someone they respected to help them along. If you ask someone you respect for this advice, you will find them ready and willing to sit down with you and share what they view as a successful way to achieve your goals.

Once you've crafted a plan for your career success, now comes the hard part — patience. To quote Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen when he was asked how to be most successful in a career: "You have to grow where you're planted." Become that expert, work hard, keep your plan updated, maintain a mentoring relationship, and you will achieve your goals, and more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Wobbema".

Col. Michael Wobbema

“Those of you who embrace change and best prepare for it will have the best choice of opportunities in the future.”

Fargo AirSho Wins Top Honors

The Fargo AirSho has been named the Blue Angels 2009 Air Show of the Year.

The prestigious honor is based on the many behind-the-scenes actions taken to put on a successful show, to include manual and checklist compliance, accuracy, timeliness and maintenance support.

Lt. Col. Michael J. Depree and Capt. Ryan L. Rastedt, who both served in liaison-type roles between the N.D. Air Guard and the Fargo AirSho committee, were praised for their outstanding support during a news conference at the Fargo Air Museum.

The Blue Angels are scheduled to be back in Fargo August 2011 for the next Fargo AirSho.

Army Band Plays Along With UND's Wind Ensemble

The N.D. National Guard's 188th Army Band had the opportunity to perform with the University of North Dakota's Wind Ensemble during a concert last month at the Chester Fritz Auditorium.

Sgt. 1st Class Don Nagle, of Grand Forks, directed the band, which opened with the Brazilian Folk Dance Suite of William Rhoads; The American Fanfare of Rick Kirby; and Pavel Tschnokoff's hymn Salvation is Created. Along with patriotic marches by E.E. Bagley and Henry Fillmore, the band also featured Sgt. Thomas Jankowski, of Grand Forks, as a tuba soloist on Oystein Baadsvik's setting of Amazing Grace.

Leadership Discusses Diversity

As part of the N.D. National Guard's strategic plan, leadership from both the Army and Air Guard met recently to discuss diversity and how it impacts people within the Guard, as well as how it can benefit the Guard's future.

According to Master Sgt. Arlyn Frederick, diversity among people is integral to unit success. As the Army's equal opportunity representative, he sees many advantages to bringing diversity into plans, operations and discussions about the future of the N.D. National Guard.

"Diversity celebrates differences amongst people and taps into their unique talents and abilities," he said

Frederick used this example to highlight how diversity impacts the organization: "Computers, for me, are a toolbox, but for younger people, it's a way of life. They definitely have insights that we can use to



Courtesy Photo

Lt. Col. Michael J. Depree of the 119th Wing holds the 2009 Air Show of the Year trophy given to the Fargo AirSho as Retired Maj. Gen. Darrol Schroeder and Dick Walstad, both of the Fargo Airsho Committee, conduct a news conference at the Fargo Air Museum Dec. 15.

better our way of doing business."

Chief Master Sgt. Ben Bush is a state human resource advisor in the Air Guard and he said that without diversity, the Guard would be a monocultural organization that sees things from a limited perspective.

"Incorporating diversity into the way we do business is the right thing to do. It gives everyone a little more opportunity. Plus, it gives the Guard a broader range of ideas," he said.

The group is looking into ways to develop diversity within the organization and to practically apply it to the Guard's future strategic planning.

Second Annual Clergy Day Planned

The second annual Clergy Day will take place Feb. 16. to create an understanding among area clergy of the wartime stresses placed on National Guard members. Soldiers and Airmen come together to give testimonies and presentations to area clergy equipping them with tools and resources that will help them meet the needs of military members and their families. This year, the event will take place in Bismarck. For more information, contact Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Flowers at 701-451-2676.

Guard Gifts Bring Smiles to Veterans

Guardsmen received Christmas presents in the form of smiles this year from the Lisbon Veterans' Home as they brought gifts as part of their annual journey to bring cheer to residents. Volunteer Soldiers

and Airmen left Dec. 17 with presents in tow for those who served before them.

The N.D. Army and Air National Guard alternate the coordination of this popular event each year. The Army side, under the leadership of State Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Miller, took the lead this year. A group of about 40 volunteers from both the Army and Air Guard spent the day with the Veterans singing Christmas carols, sharing military stories and creating memories.

Guardsmen began donating funds in October to purchase gifts, and then many volunteered their time to wrap the presents and make the trip to deliver the gifts.

Cass County Formally Thanks Guard for Flood Help

Soldiers and Airmen of the N.D. National Guard received recognition during a Dec. 21 Cass County Commission meeting.

Cass County Chief Deputy Jim Thoreson presented Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk an award on behalf of the sheriff's office and all of Cass County government to recognize the Guard's contributions to the spring 2009 flood fight effort.

"Perhaps the most important to the flood fight were the members of the North Dakota Guard. ... Equipment and Guard members were instrumental in saving a number of people as well as a large amount of property in our communities," Thoreson said.

Watch video of the award presentation at www.youtube.com/ndnationalguard.

You are invited to ...

The Adjutant General's Symposium for Military Families



Recently, the N.D. National Guard conducted the largest unit mobilization and deployment since World War II, bringing to more than 5,300 the number of North Dakota National Guard members, Army and Air, who have deployed in Federal service since the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Families have watched their Soldiers and Airmen answer the call to duty. Each service member who deploys leaves behind family members who make their own sacrifices and need our support.

With this in mind, I would like to invite you "The Adjutant General's Symposium For Military Families," a workshop focusing on how you, your family, your unit and others can work together in support of our military Families.

In addition, I am encouraging N.D. National Guard leadership to attend and offer their support to our Families.

The symposium will provide information on our system of support for all N.D. National Guard military Families.

I recognize your strengths, capabilities and resources as Families.

I invite you to join me to ensure that the homefront for our service member receives care and support.

So, "SAVE THE DATE" to attend the Adjutant General's Symposium For Families on March 19-21, 2010, at the Bismarck Radisson.

Please direct questions to the N.D. National Guard Service Member and Family Support at 701-333-4800.

Sincerely,

Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk

Learning Life's Lessons by **Trying** Again and Again

Calvin P. Titus was the chaplain assistant for the 14th Infantry Regiment during the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900.

When American Soldiers were pinned down by fire coming from Peking's Tatar Wall, Col. Daggett of the 14th Infantry asked for a volunteer to scale the 30-foot wall in an attempt to breach the defenses of the city. Titus' famous reply to

Col. Daggett's call was, "I'll try, Sir!" Titus scaled the wall and in doing so he inspired others to follow his lead to victory. "I'll try, Sir" became the motto of the 14th Infantry and Chaplain Assistant Calvin P. Titus earned the Medal of Honor for his heroism.

"I'll try..."



As we enter this new year, these words resound throughout our lives. A new year brings optimism about making positive changes in our lives. "I'll try to be a better _____, I'll try to eat better, I'll try to exercise more, I'll try... I'll try..." That said, in the midst of our trying sometimes we will find success and sometimes we

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain (Maj.) David Johnson
Joint Force Headquarters

The other thing about this kind of "trying" is that we don't go this road alone. In fact, we can't! Look at Chaplain Assistant Titus. In his "trying" he inspired others to do the same. So, you see, some days we are Calvin Titus and other days we are the ones that need to be inspired. We need

each other to learn and to grow ... to keep trying.

With this in mind, the following quotes are "foundations" in my life. They remind me that I am not alone and they give me hope.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10a

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Or put another way, "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need." Psalm 23:1

What about you? Where do you find your support? Where do you find inspiration/help/hope? My encouragement to you: Wherever it is, seek it often! Like Chaplain Assistant Titus, may you be inspired and may you have the strength to inspire others.

Blessings and Happy New Year,
Chaplain (Maj.) David Johnson

I'm scared
What's the point?
I'M ALL ALONE
Nothing makes sense
What should I do?
don't care anymore



Nothing's going to change
NO ONE CARES
I'm tired
I can't make it
Something's not right

M

any N.D. Guardsmen can remember a day when mobilizations to combat zones were virtually nonexistent. One weekend a month and two weeks a year wasn't just a recruiting slogan; it was a realistic training schedule. Times have certainly changed. The rigors of deployment cycles have transformed the way the Guard does business in a number of ways – the equipment that Soldiers and Airmen use, the types of missions they are called on to perform and the way they train and prepare for those mobilizations. Much of that preparation involves acclimating the body to diverse and oftentimes, unfamiliar, physically challenging environments. Of equal importance, is the conditioning of the mind; not just for the battlefield, but for the return home.

Help Before It's Too Late

The U.S. Army has reported that 2009 saw 147 suicides among active duty Soldiers (exceeding 2008's number of 140 and the most since Army suicides were tracked in 1980). The N.D. National Guard has responded by amassing a number of resources through its Service Member Family Support (SMFS) division to help combat potential mental health issues experienced by Guardsmen and their Families.

Warrant Officer Joshua Simmers,

who works with the Suicide Prevention program, said reducing the stigma that accompanies seeking mental health assistance is going to require an open dialogue among all ranks.

"One misunderstanding is that these issues are lifelong sentences," he said. "They are part of being human. They are things we can recover from and maybe even be better, stronger individuals in the future."

The Suicide Prevention program has been just one of the ways to keep people talking. It is designed to help service members identify warning signs of suicide in themselves and in others through a variety of training scenarios. The U.S. Army has mandated that 100 percent of its Soldiers complete the program and Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk, N.D. National Guard adjutant general, has required all N.D. Air National Guard personnel to complete it as well, although the training is not necessarily limited to those in uniform. Families may use it also.

"Hopefully it makes us feel empowered and gives us the firsthand experience in a training scenario on how to ask someone if they are thinking about hurting themselves or if they're having suicidal

In Good Hands

By Sgt. Eric W. Jensen
Joint Force Headquarters

North Dakota
National Guard Addresses
Mental Health Issues With
Variety of Resources

ideations,” Simmers said. “Ideally, this training will make asking these questions more familiar.”

Simmers acts as a liaison between National Guard Bureau and the N.D. National Guard and creates suicide awareness training, advertises resources and the suicide prevention program itself. The program, he said, can be bolstered and more effective with investment by senior leaders, which North Dakota has had no problem doing.

“We have a vast amount of leadership in the state supporting this,” Simmers said. “Ultimately, they think creating resilient, able Guardsmen is a good thing.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Miller, N.D. National Guard state command sergeant major, said creating a culture of caring in the Guard community is key to combating suicide and mental health issues.

“Leadership knowing their Soldiers, and us as Guardsmen knowing each other and really paying attention to one another, really can’t be underestimated. We, as a Guard Family, need to identify potential issues among our peers and extend our hands to assist them when they’re having problems,” he said.

Exploring the Options

In March 2009, Dr. Alan Fehr joined the N.D. National Guard as the Director of Psychological Health and is an all-inclusive source of information for Guardsmen and their Families on mental health issues. A former Army Reservist, he spent 2005-2006 deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as the officer-in-charge of a combat stress team, working with service members from all branches. He said that mental health can encompass a variety of problems, but mostly, depression and anxiety are the main issues being faced by service members and Families.

“In fact, to some extent, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is kind of a buzzword,” Fehr said. “People may use the term PTSD to label any emotional reaction to deployment. Getting help sooner rather than later may help with the adjustment process and prevent PTSD from developing.”

Additionally, the problems are not limited to those who have experienced long deployments. Service members serving at home can be affected as well.

Fehr explains that seeking out all avenues of treatment will yield the best re-

sults. Some rely on medications prescribed by their family practitioners. While effective, counseling and help from licensed professionals is encouraged for long-term improvement.

“The biggest thing with medications is that they don’t change things overall. They only change things temporarily,” Fehr said.

One option for military members and their Families for short-term help is Military One Source (MOS) — a 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year resource for service members, spouses and Families that provides a wide array of information, resources and referrals. It is a confidential resource that arranges face-to-face meetings with professional counselors within a person’s community. MOS will fund up to 12 sessions per issue per year for any military member or their immediate family.

It is programs like MOS that Fehr said are a step in the right direction.

“Most people have the mindset that

they can handle things on their own, which is unfortunate,” he said. “It’s a good thing to reach out to others for information and assistance.”

Chaplain (Col.) William Ziegler remembers when there weren’t as many resources available.

“Years ago, the Chaplain was it,” he said. “We are much more diverse.”

He notes that “one size does not fit all” in terms of the avenues Guardsmen might use to seek help.

“The variety is key,” Ziegler said. “And it is the thing that has most improved.

Access What’s Available

The SMFS has a robust staff of 37 technicians and contractors. The majority of their personnel is housed in the Military Service Center (MSC) in Bismarck — a building leased by the N.D. National Guard to serve as a comprehensive location for a vast assortment of services to Veterans of any era or military

A Phone Call Away: Mental Health Resources in North Dakota



CHAPLAINS:

Chaplain (Maj.) David Johnson, (W) 701-333-3006, (C) 701-425-4673, 1-800-317-4302 (Bismarck Area)
Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Flowers, (W) 701-451-2679 (Fargo Area)
Chaplain (Col.) William Ziegler, (C) 701-261-4958 (Fargo Area)

SOCIAL WORKERS:

Bernadette Ternes, (W) 1-333-3352, (C) 701-226-2905, 1-800-317-4302 (Bismarck Area)
Jane Johnson, (W) 701-451-6093, (C) 701-866-7933 (Fargo Area)
Carolyn Henderson, (W) 701-333-3351, (C) 701-371-6573 (State-wide)
Angie Christensen, (W) 701-451-6078, (C) 701-799-9704 (Fargo Area)
Dr. Alan Fehr, (W) 701-225-1050, (C) 701-590-0136 state Psychologist, (State-wide)

Military One Source - 1-800-342-9647 ~NOW A CRISIS LINE

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211 - an immediate resource referral service connecting you to local agencies, social workers, etc (www.211nd.org)

TRICARE - 1-888-TRIWEST

TriWest Crisis Line at 1-866-284-3743

1-800-273-TALK (8255) – press 1 for Vets (Suicide Hotline) or 1-800-799-4889 (Suicide Prevention LifeLine)

Troop and Family Counseling: 1-888-755-9355

Military Service Center in Bismarck, 800-242-4940

Vet Centers:

Fargo - 701-237-0942

Minot - 701-852-0177

Bismarck - 701-224-9751



Motorcycles belonging to members of the Patriot Guard line the parking lot of the Military Service Center (MSC). The MSC opened its doors for the Patriot Guard in June 2009 for a cookout to show appreciation for the organization's support of military members. Inset, Gov. John Hoeven and Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony at the MSC February 2009.

Rob Keller

Bill Protopyk

branch, current military members and their Families – one of the biggest improvements for service members seeking assistance in North Dakota. The center, which officially opened in January 2009, houses more than 20 employees including social workers, chaplains and professional advisors and assistants. Although the building is located in Bismarck, there are SMFS staff prepared to assist in communities throughout the state.

1st Lt. Rachael Walters, suicide prevention manager, sexual assault response coordinator and reintegration officer, said the concept of the MSC was born out of a need to procure a space where reintegration and family programs could work together. It also perpetuates N.D. National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk's analogy of the reintegration process being a three-legged stool relying on the bases of service members, Families and communities.

"It really has proven to be successful," Walters said. "People wonder what the building is and they come check it out."

Walters also cites the willingness of Guardsmen to access the building, due to its privacy.

"We really wanted an off-site location," she said. "Most service members don't want to go to the armory (in Bismarck). It's common for them to think 'Oh, my commander or someone will see me and wonder why I am seeking out a counselor.'"

The type of help the SMFS provides is not limited to the

centrally located MSC. They also rely on a team of outreach specialists known as the Military Outreach Team. Adopted from a Vermont National Guard plan, six outreach specialists comb more than 500 miles each across the state every month to aid Veterans from all eras in finding resources and benefits.

Walters explains that teams like these show the N.D. National Guard's commitment to serving Veterans, military members and their Families from all across the state.

"We will step through hoops to make something happen in 24 hours if needed," she said. "We're not about to say, 'That's too hard.'"

"This is not the last step of this process; it's the next big step in helping our military service members and their Families," said Rob Keller, director of SMFS. "We established Family Assistance Centers across the state years ago. This builds on that by bringing even more resources for more people into a single location."

Chaplain (Maj.) David Johnson, full-time Chaplain for the N.D. National Guard, is eager to build on ways to offer help in any way possible.

"We've come a long way," he said. "There's still much to do. It's one of the hardest things to do – to ask for help, but one of the best things you can do for yourself."

Ziegler agrees and acknowledges that it is very cultural to define asking for help as a weakness. He maintains, however, that "what appears to be weak, is really strong."

Diagnosis: 119th Wing Medical Group is in Great Health

By Capt. Penny Ripperger
119th Wing

The 119th Medical Group recently received an overall satisfactory score during a Health Services Inspection (HSI), which took place Dec. 3-6 at the 119th Wing.

"HSIs assess the functioning and execution of Air Force medical service programs and processes at the local level in order to provide senior leadership with accurate data upon which to base policy decisions," said Senior Master Sgt. Belinda L. Reep, superintendent of medical administration. "A big piece of this is ensuring our Wing members are medically qualified to deploy and our medical staff has the required training and certifications to make them qualified to determine medical readiness. We are excelling in these areas despite facing some critical manning issues these past few years."

The Air Force Inspection Agency reviewed numerous medical records and conducted interviews to evaluate 42 elements. Of the 42 elements, none were found to have critical discrepancies or programmatic failure.

"We looked at this inspection as a great learning tool. Our young Airmen were involved in the interviews, took notes and were mentored to gain experience and ensure continuity in our medical programs.

After all, these Airmen will be our up and coming leaders of tomorrow," said Master Sgt. Gary W. Weis, Medical Group first sergeant.

The importance of mentorship was stressed during the executive management in-brief as Lt Col. Thomas C. Meyer, Medical Group commander, explained their in-house mentorship program.

"We try to retain the good people and get rid of the low performers. We should be transparent; if an Airman doesn't understand what is going on, then shame on us," he said.

Capt. Tammy L. King, Medical Group readiness officer, described how the Education Training and Advisory Board (ETAB) incorporates the newcomer's orientation into the Medical Group's mentoring program by making sure new Airmen have a sponsor and that they are properly introduced to their supervisor.

"We incorporate things that may seem simple, but are very important — like ensuring they have someone to eat lunch with on a drill weekend. One of our priorities is to make sure new Airmen feel like they are part of the Hooligan family right away," King said.

Other areas of interest discussed with the inspectors included past medical deployments to Ghana, Africa, with the State Partnership Program and Operation Shared Accord, and the Medical Group's

locally developed Periodic Health Assessment process, also known as PHA-Quick.

"PHA-Quick is a mass-processing event that has been tailored to fit the 119th Wing's mission and assist our members with their individual medical readiness (IMR) status," Reep said.

The innovative PHA-Quick process has drawn the attention of other Air National Guard units, such as Louisiana and New Mexico, due to its efficiency and effectiveness.

Overall, the Medical Group is very proud of their satisfactory score. Meyer described the inspectors as tough, but fair, and appreciated their input to help make the Medical Group even more successful in the future.

During the out-brief, the Air Force Inspection Agency team chief, Col. James E. Hougas, gave his overall review of the 119th Medical Group.

"The 119th Medical Group is providing rock-solid support to the 119th Wing. A very dedicated, capable commander and cohesive executive leadership team have cultivated a vibrant team spirit that permeates the unit. The 119th Medical Group and senior line leadership maintain a robust working relationship, which enables them to actively engage key medical support issues for the Wing, the State of North Dakota and three (major commands)."



Master Sgt. Gary Weis

Col. James E. Hougas, Air Force Inspection Agency team chief, presents Lt. Col. Bryan S. Delage, 119th Medical Group state air surgeon, with a Superior Performance Award during the Health Services Inspection that took place at the 119th Wing Dec. 3-6. Inspectors give this award to deserving Airmen who perform above and beyond their duties. Capt. Jackie Pekarek, medical readiness officer, and Tech. Sgt. Katherine Morsch, unit training manager, also received the Superior Performance Award during the inspection.

THE *Happy Hooligans*

A Tradition of Excellence Continues

Col. Rick Gibney Steps Up
as 119th Wing Commander



The official party of the 119th Wing Change of Command Ceremony Dec. 5 consisted of, from left to right, Col. Robert J. Becklund, outgoing Wing commander; Col. Rick D. Gibney, incoming Wing commander; Brig. Gen. Alan W. Palmer, Air Component commander and Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, N.D. adjutant general. Becklund, who served as the 119th Wing commander for five years, officially relinquished command to Gibney during the ceremony. Prior to making his remarks, Gibney winks at his children sitting in the audience.

Tech Sgt. Bradley Schneider

By Capt. Penny Ripperger
119th Wing

It was a day of mixed emotions as the Happy Hooligans said goodbye to one commander — a man who led them through what appeared to be insurmountable change — and welcomed their new commander, a man who will no doubt continue to successfully overcome challenges and lead the Wing as it takes on its next conversion, to the new C-27 Spartan mission.

During a Change of Command Ceremony, Col. Robert J. Becklund officially relinquished command of the 119th Wing to Col. Rick D. Gibney on Dec. 5 at the Air National Guard. Attendees included Happy Hooligan retirees, N.D. National Guard leadership, community leaders and 119th Wing Airmen.

“It’s a day where we congratulate one of our outstanding officers for the fine job he has done these last several years and, more importantly, we transfer the authority to the new Wing commander and congratulate him on the job he has been assigned

and wish him well as we look to the future,” said Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, N.D. National Guard adjutant general.

Becklund, who served as the 119th Wing commander since 2004, recently accepted a two-year tour as the first National Guard officer on the Pentagon Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Taskforce Team in Washington, D.C. Upon his return, he will be assigned to Joint Force Headquarters in Bismarck, N.D.

“Col. Becklund successfully commanded the Wing through the largest transition in the unit’s history. The last five years have certainly been most challenging for Bob as a Wing commander, but I think the most important thing is that he met those challenges very well and with great success. That’s a credit to Bob for his leadership and to all of the Happy Hooligans,” Sprynczynatyk said.

Gibney has been a member of the Happy Hooligans for 24 years. Prior to transferring to the N.D. Air Guard, he served active duty as an Army Ranger and in the N.D. Army National Guard.



Col. Ronald W. Solberg, Mission Support Group commander, stands at parade rest with the rest of the 119th Wing Airmen in formation during the Change of Command Ceremony Dec. 5. During the ceremony, Col. Rick D. Gibney addressed the Airmen of the 119th Wing for the first time as their new Wing commander. "I look to the future with high expectations of what we will achieve and it will be an honor to work with each and every one of you to build your particular chapter in the history of this great organization," he said.

Throughout his tenure at the Air Guard, he has flown the F-4 Phantom, F-16 Fighting Falcon and the MQ-1 UAS Predator. Most recently, he served as the J-5 director at Joint Force Headquarters, and prior to that he commanded the 178th Reconnaissance Squadron, otherwise known as the Predator Squadron.

"We could not ask for a better person to lead us in the C-27 transition. He's been an Army Ranger, a fighter pilot, Langley commander, operations commander. He understands unmanned aircraft, manned aircraft and he understands jointness. We could not have asked for a better replacement for Col. Becklund," said Brig. Gen. Alan W. Palmer, Air Component commander.

During the ceremony, Palmer assisted in the formal passing of the unit flag from Becklund to Gibney, signifying the transfer of command from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander. After the transfer was complete, Becklund addressed the Airmen in formation.

"Five years ago we gathered at a ceremony just like this one, facing an incredible conversion as a Fighter Wing, and today we stand here as an exceptional Wing. I've done nothing here but enable you to do your jobs. To the Happy Hooligans, my personal congrats for a job very well done and for making this the best job that I have ever had. I could not have done it without you."

After a standing ovation, Gibney took

to the podium and made his first remarks at the new Wing commander.

"My leadership philosophy is something I heard 25 years ago as a new second lieutenant standing in formation: All you have to do to be successful as a leader in this organization is to put the right people in the right job, give them what they need to do their job, and then get the hell out of the way," Gibney said.

He also addressed the continually changing environment at the Wing with strong optimism toward the future.

"Change has a lot of names. It happens all the time and is the one constant we deal with. It is no stranger to this Wing and there is more change in store for the 119th. It's a time to be excited about the challenges that lie ahead. I look to the future with high expectations of what we will achieve and it will be an honor to work with each and every one of you to build your particular chapter in the history of this great organization."



Gov. John Hoeven converses with (then) Maj. Rick D. Gibney prior to an F-16 flight. Gibney has a long history of military service to include serving in the active duty Army and N.D. Army National Guard prior to enlisting in the N.D. Air Guard more than 24 years ago. As a Happy Hooligan, Gibney has flown the F-4 Phantom, the F-16 Fighting Falcon and, most recently, the MQ-1 Predator UAS, giving him a diverse leadership background in both manned and unmanned aircraft.

North Dakota Roots

Family Ties Run Deep in KFOR 12

By Spc. Chris Erickson
116th Public Affairs Detachment

Finding family members who are part of the same unit isn't an uncommon thing in the National Guard, but the Kosovo Forces 12 Multi-National Task Force-East mission has taken it to a new level.

Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and cousins have all found themselves as part of the same deployment. Some are within the same small sections, some are assigned to separate task forces, but one thing is certain: They're all in this together.

More than three dozen families are represented throughout MNTF-E, something the force's commanding general, Brig. Gen. Al Dohrmann, said was a testament to unit strength.

Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Cripe, Multi-National Task Force-East's command sergeant major, said the number of family pairings was unheard of prior to this deployment.

"I think a lot of it has to do with the mission – being that it is a peace enforcement mission there is a lower threat level," Cripe said. "The second part of it is that they volunteered to deploy together so their deployment cycle lines up together. This is a prime opportunity for them, as it will also allow them to be at home longer together.

Chaplain (Maj.) Maury Millican, brigade chaplain for MNTF-E, said the deployment to Kosovo was one that offered a rare opportunity.

"We have a unique opportunity on this mission to Kosovo to actually take family members,"

he said. "What I mean by that is that if they're in, they have a slot in the task force. There's a whole variety of family relationships that we see represented in the force. I think that is unique and new in the Army, and it's going to be interesting to see how those folks do."

"It's always easier on a day-to-day basis as well when people get to see family members," Cripe added. "It might be easier when issues come up to talk to a father or mother than to come to a sergeant major with an issue."

Spc. Heather Zimmerman is one of those lucky Soldiers who can do both – talk to her father and a sergeant major – at the same time.

Heather and her dad, Sgt. Maj. Alvin Zimmerman, both of West Fargo, N.D., are just one of the many families represented.

"It's very comforting to have a piece of home here with me," Heather said. "It's the opportunity of a lifetime to be on a deployment with my dad. We get to experience another part of the world side-by-side."

Although the Zimmermans don't work in the same section, they've both had the chance to see each other "on-the-job." That doesn't stop them from keeping each other company, though.

"We have more time, we bump into each other, we have more meals together," Alvin said. "We have more to talk about now, because we're getting out and digging in, doing our job. We're meeting a lot more new people with all the other armed forces that are with us. Not only that, but we're also getting to meet so many of the people of Kosovo."

This is Alvin's second deployment. He previously deployed with the 1-188th Air Defense Artillery to Afghanistan and said



Left to right, Sgt. Maj. Alvin Zimmerman and daughter, Spc. Heather Zimmerman; and Staff Sgt. Yancy Demoe and his wife, Staff Sgt. Erin Demoe are just a few of the Guardsmen who have deployed with family members to Kosovo.





although it was still tough to be away from home, he felt fortunate because Heather was deployed to the same location.

“We’ve always been very close,” Heather said. “I do seek his support and advice, as I do at home. I’m undoubtedly fortunate that my dad has wisdom and prior experience that he’s willing to share.”

Both father and daughter said that getting to Kosovo had been a welcome day. During mobilization training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., and then Hohenfels, Germany, they didn’t have much time to interact. Now at Camp Bondsteel, they could talk, have dinner and even communicate home at the same time.

“Our schedules differ at times, but we find times as often as we can to spend time together,” Heather said. “We Skyped home on Thanksgiving together!”

Alvin said having a family member with made things a little easier.

“I’m a firm believer that it doesn’t matter who you are, everyone gets homesick,” he said. “For a parent to be deployed with one of their children, it’s really a sense of pride. It’s great to be able to see your daughter work in a way that you’ve never experienced before; it’s not like you can go out in the workforce and see everyday how successful they are. It’s a thing that not a lot of parents get to experience.”

He continued, saying how it wasn’t uncommon for Soldiers of the N.D. National Guard to serve with family members.

“We’re a small state in population and we become very close with each other,” he said. “As we have family members that

“Having someone to lean on is the biggest thing.”

belong to the military — to the N.D. National Guard and they see all we’ve done, it’s almost like something that’s catching. Even some of my kids’ good friends — people they grew up with — are here on this mission. So I not only have Heather here, but I’ve got other men and women who I watched grow up with my children here on this deployment. It just goes back to our heritage; I would call it, coming from North Dakota. A lot of us coming from the N.D. National Guard get really close; it’s like a second family for us.”

“I think, obviously, they have the advantage,” Millican said. “They’re going to have those people on the ground that love them, present with them. In fact, I was kind of hoping I could sign my wife up in the Guard and get her to go along with too, but I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

Two of the Soldiers who were allowed to bring their spouses with are Staff Sgts. Yancy and Erin Demoe.

Erin and Yancy aren’t strangers to deployment, having met during their first tour of duty with the 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company when the unit was called to serve in Iraq during 2003-04. Although the two didn’t know each other well during the deployment, afterward they started to become close. They were married March ’09, after Yancy came back from his second deployment, this time with the 191st Military Police Co.

With Erin’s upcoming deployment to Kosovo looming, he decided to do what many caring husbands would — deploy again so that he and Erin wouldn’t have to spend another year apart.

The Demoes said they faced what many families did during mobilization training — little time together due to the intense training schedule made it hard to be a married couple.

“Our hug and kiss became a high-five on the way to work,” Yancy said.

Erin said now that the tough part — constant training and conflicting schedules — was over, she was looking forward to time together.

“It was hard to be apart and now we get to be together,” she said. “We’ll get to do and see some cool things, hopefully.”

As of now, the two are able to see each

other regularly — working in close proximity as the Battle Desk NCOs for the G2 and G3. Yancy said that was just one of the benefits, another benefit was having a friend and confidant so close.

“Having someone to lean on is the biggest thing,” he said. “If something were to happen at home we have each other. It’s just nice to finally be together after a year apart. Even though the location isn’t ideal, it’s not like we’re 6,500 miles apart.”

“It’s better here, we get more time,” Erin added. “It’ll be great here.”

Positive outlooks like those of the Demoes and the Zimmermans go far in helping families deal with the stresses that come with deployments, and Millican stressed the importance of communication for all Soldiers and families, whether they were deployed or not.

He said although there were so many families present in MNTF-E, all the Soldiers were deployed away from families back home. He offered a message for those families.

“God bless you to all the families, especially back home who are supporting us, loving us, praying for us. Your support means so much to us — even if it’s just a short little e-mail, a small care package — you don’t have to do extraordinary things, just the little things make a difference, especially communication. Please communicate with your loved ones, the Soldier you love and care about. Support them and soon they’ll be coming home back into your loving arms again.”



Top left, Sgt. Maj. Mark Nelson and his son, Derek Nelson, both from Grand Forks, N.D., serve with Charlie Co., 231st Maneuver Task Force deployed to Kosovo. Above, Sgt. Brett Miller and his mom, Master Sgt. Pam Miller, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, as part of Multi-National Task Force-East, KFOR 12. Brett is part of the Public Affairs Detachment and Pam works in the Joint Visitors Bureau.



Bill Prokopyk

Snow descends upon the Global War on Terrorism memorial outside of Fraine Barracks. Wreaths were placed on the memorial to pay tribute to the Fallen during the Christmas season.

Holiday wreaths adorn headstones at the North Dakota Veterans' Cemetery in Mandan. The seasonal tributes are sponsored by the Civil Air Patrol's Bismarck Composite Squadron. The local event is one of more than 300 such ceremonies nationwide, in 24 cemeteries overseas and aboard Naval ships serving across the world. This year, more than 2,600 wreaths were placed at the N.D. Veterans' Cemetery.



Sgt. Ann Koudson



Santa and Mrs. Claus wave to children in North Dakota, watching a video conference of their deployed loved ones. From left to right: Lt. Col. David M. Hays, Grand Forks, N.D.; Sgt. Maj. Jack Cripe, Dickinson, N.D.; Maj. Rob Fugere, Grand Forks, N.D., commander of the Liaison Squadron; and Brig. Gen. Al Dohmann, Bismarck, N.D., commander of MNTF-E; look on.



Children anxiously wait for Santa to call their names during a Christmas Party at the 119th Wing Dec. 18. This year, Santa and Mrs. Claus visited with 119th Wing firefighters.

GUA



Sgt. Angie Gross



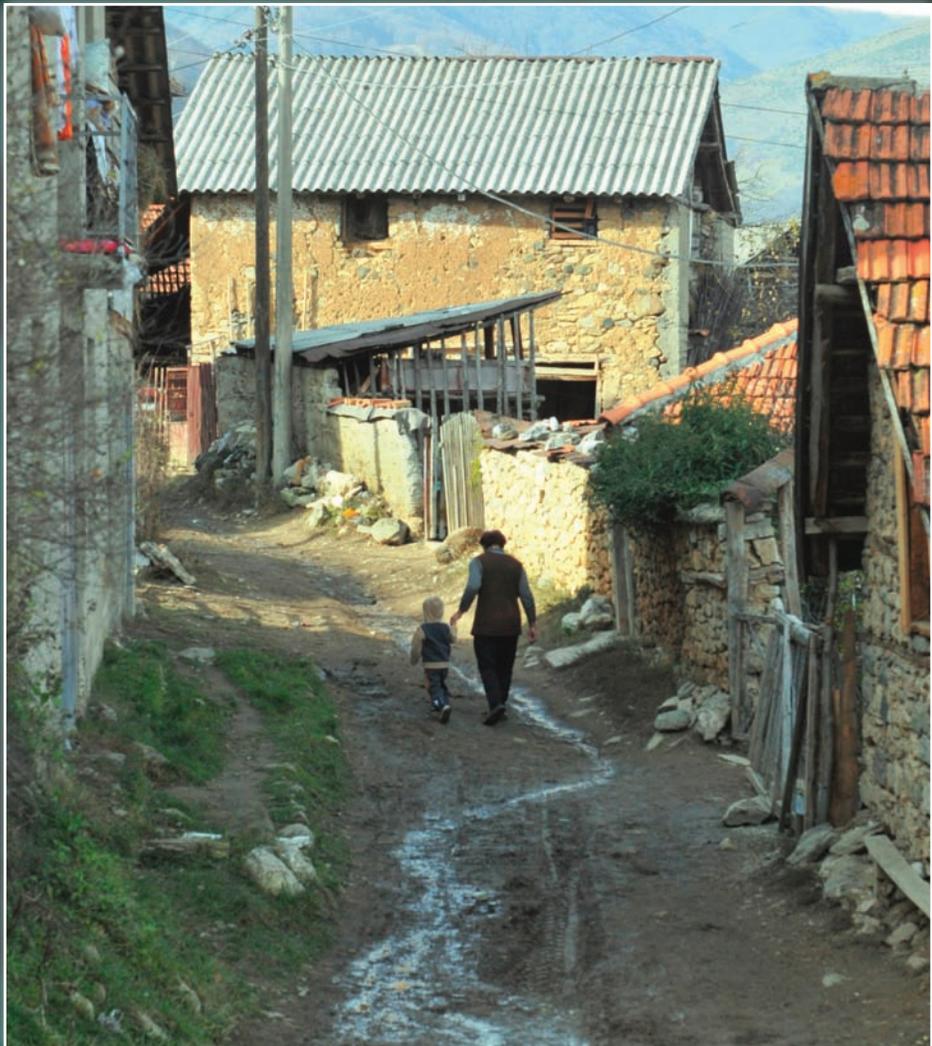
Soldiers and Airmen sing Christmas carols at the North Dakota Veterans' Home in Lisbon, N.D. The Guardsmen visited with Veterans and delivered Christmas gifts as part of an annual holiday event honoring the residents of the home.

Sgt. Jordan Huwe
 ...ed ones who are serving in Kosovo. Left to right, Com-
 Monitoring Team of Multi-National Task Force-East; and



Senior Airman Nathanael Baardson

...ame as he distributes gifts at the Children's Christmas
 ...ta arrived at the party via firetruck operated by the 119th



Spc. Joshua Dodds

Two generations of Kosovo Serbs (a grandmother and grandson) walk on a backstreet in Strpce, Kosovo. Spc. Joshua Dodds, of the 116th Public Affairs Detachment, recently took second place in the KFOR Chronicle, KFOR-wide photography contest — open to the thousands of multinational Soldiers that make up NATO's peacekeeping force in Kosovo. Dodds' photo placed among the more than 200 photos entries submitted into the contest.



Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

Airmen walk along a path of T-wall barriers painted to represent states and units that have served at Joint Base Balad, previously known as LSA Anaconda. At right is a T-wall for the N.D. Army National Guard's 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), which deployed to LSA Anaconda, Iraq from January 2003 through March 2004. It's a little worse for the wear, but still standing. The unit included Soldiers in Headquarters Support Company from Fargo; Company A from Oakes, Lisbon and Mayville; Company B from Wahpeton; and Company C from Camp Ripley, Minn. It also incorporated part of the 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company. Soldiers from the Bismarck unit served throughout Iraq from February 2003 through May 2004.