



# Family Deployment Supplement to the Connecticut Guardian

VOL. 4 NO. 8

HARTFORD, CT

AUGUST 2003

## Sharing concerns, expressing emotions: Families gather for dinner and briefing

STAFF SGT. STEVEN MARKOWSKI  
65<sup>th</sup> PCH

Approximately 300 family members shared concerns, expressed emotions and had their questions answered, as they learned that their loved ones are performing well, and are keeping each other safe within a war zone.

Family members of deployed soldiers from the 248<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company received a first-hand account, accompanied by dozens of photos, assuring them that their loved ones are properly equipped and are as safe as they can be, working in Iraq. Following the unit's deployment to Iraq, via Kuwait, negative rumors and allegations surfaced on the home front, prompting State Adjutant General Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno to call for all charges to be investigated.

"All rumors have been investigated. All complaints have been investigated," Cugno said. He continued to explain that the investigations have proved the rumors and allegations false.

"Every allegation was investigated with no findings, or substantiations or evidence of any allegations being factual," Cugno said. The investigations have been conducted by Connecticut National Guard Inspector General Col. Michael Durand, as well as the inspector general assigned to the Iraqi Theater. Cugno also explained that future complaints will also be handled in a prompt manner and will be investigated thoroughly.

In addition to ordering the investigations, Cugno went to the theater of operations to see for himself. He and State Command Sergeant Major Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Zastuary, Jr. recently visited troops in the theater. During his presentation to the families of the 248<sup>th</sup>, Cugno showed slides of the region, and spoke of his meetings and ongoing contact with the unit.

"I have spoken to the commander of the unit. My command sergeant major (Zastuary) speaks to the first sergeant of the unit very often. Morale is outstanding," Cugno said.

The troops are also looking to come home, just as all of the other American troops in the region are, Cugno said. But, he stressed that the 248<sup>th</sup> engineers know they have a job to do, and they are doing it very well.

The answer that was bound to draw the most interest was the anticipated return date for the unit. The adjutant general said a definite return date is not known, but a likely return date will be one full year after the mobilization date. Paraphrasing the Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld, Cugno said the deployments are for one year, from the time the unit was mobilized stateside until they return home.

When Cugno, Zastuary and Maj. Fran Evon, the adjutant general's executive officer, arrived at Kuwait's international airport, it was 104 degrees, at 2 a.m., Cugno said.

"The wind was about 40 knots, and sand was blowing. If there was a vehicle ten feet away, we couldn't see it, because it was total 'brownout' conditions." Daytime temperatures reach 130 degrees.

"Anyone who tells you that it's nice there, is a liar," Cugno said. "It's disgusting.

"But there's a tremendous amount of synergy among the unit members. There's also a high level of esprit de corps that we depend on. They (the 248<sup>th</sup> engineers) are not alone. There are 156,000 troops in the theater. My job is the 5,500 members of the Connecticut National Guard," he said. As much as 50 percent of the Connecticut National Guard has been on active duty for various missions during 2003.

One of the most common complaints from



Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno shares a joke with members of Spec. Matthew Lisee's family at a recent meeting of the Family Support Group of the 248<sup>th</sup> Engineer Co. at the Norwich Armory. The family members are his sister, Natalie Lisee, his mother, Lucie, and his father, Roger. Photo by Staff Sgt. Steven Markowski, 65<sup>th</sup> PCH)

families of soldiers deployed throughout the theater of operations has been slow delivery of mail.

"The U.S. government has made this a priority. Part of the problem has been the volume – thousands of tons of mail going forward – people sending their well wishes, in addition to items that they think the troops need," Cugno said.

He added that many services to the military are contracted and that several buildings at the camps are air-conditioned. He displayed a photo of a dining facility proudly displaying a Connecticut flag, and he stressed that the food is excellent, and that quite a few soldiers put on some weight thanks to the cuisine. But, he added that not all U.S. military units in the region have such amenities.

The main assignment of the 248<sup>th</sup> is to rebuild the Al Asad Air Base. The facility, which lies west of Baghdad, was destroyed during the war. Cugno showed photos of the engineers from Connecticut performing that mission, as well as repairing a pontoon bridge on the Tigris River. In the photos, members of the 248<sup>th</sup> are seen wearing equipment that is standard while operating in a combat zone: Kevlar helmets, flak vests and battle dress uniforms. The flotation devices necessary for operating in and around bodies of water could not be seen, because they are worn under the flak vests.

After arriving at Camp Virginia in Kuwait, on May 14, the unit had some idle time awaiting the arrival of its engineering equipment. One rumor that was proven blatantly false was that the unit's equipment

was all under water.

"That's impossible," Cugno said, as he showed photos of graders and other engineering used by the 248<sup>th</sup>, safely being unloaded from secure ships.

While at Camp Virginia, troops from the 248<sup>th</sup> were in an austere, remote environment, in a compound with a perimeter of a berm constructed with sand, with concertina wire around it.

On his trip into Kuwait, Cugno went through the same in-processing that all troops do when they enter the theater of operations. He recounted the sequence for the families, showing them photos of tent cities, desolate landscapes, old equipment that had been destroyed in the first Gulf War, and equipment left behind by the 248<sup>th</sup> as the unit moved forward into Iraq.

Cugno displayed various maps of the region, to give the families a perspective on where their loved ones are, and have been.

"As the equipment came in, the troops moved forward. They went up the road into Iraq," Cugno said. Included among the many slides shown during his 40-minute discussion were several projects completed by the 248<sup>th</sup>, including offices built for their colleagues from the 1109<sup>th</sup> AVCRAD. The Groton-based unit, which was activated before the 248<sup>th</sup>, is handling all helicopters that are being shipped in and out of the region.

While family members seemed especially interested in photos of the 248<sup>th</sup> troops, a slide that drew a great deal of interest, along with open smiles and expressive gasps, was a close-up of "Freedom." The puppy, seen napping on a plywood floor, is the "adopted mascot of the 248<sup>th</sup>," Cugno said.

Cugno also told the family members that if they need help, the Connecticut National Guard is there, while their loved ones are away. He spoke of the "Handyperson Hotline," which consists of volunteers who will help families with household chores. (See article on page S2.)

# Handyperson Hotline needs your help

SPEC. JEFF AUSTIN  
65<sup>TH</sup> PCH

The Connecticut National Guard has many soldiers and airmen deployed throughout the world. And you can help those soldiers and airmen to preserve the cause of freedom by supporting their families at home.

The Handyperson Hotline is a program for family members of deployed soldiers and airmen. The program was created to help a family repair, install, or remove anything in their household with no charge for labor. Items may include cleaning gutters, performing minor plumbing chores or fixing light fixtures.

Also, if the repair is complex, the diagnoses of a problem can be referred to a competent person or business for repair.

The Handyperson Hotline is design to ease repair problems for soldier airmen families. The hotline was created to have someone perform simple repair tasks that would normally be performed by the deployed soldier/airmen.

Guardsmen, spouses of Guardsmen, or retirees are all welcome to participate. You are

greatly needed if you have the skills in home repair but it is not a requirement for the program.

The program was created after a friend of Sgt. Maj. Toby Cormier, 85<sup>th</sup> Troop Command, was deployed to the Middle East. Cormier offered his handy services to his friend's family, but later that night, he decided to help other families throughout the state as well.

That's when the Handyperson program was created.

The program is set to work this way. A

member of a deployed soldier/airmen family would call the Handyperson Center. The center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Handyperson Center would then contact a Guardsmen or retiree to meet with the family. After the problem is examined, a decision would be made with the family member to determine if a professional is needed for the task or a Guardsman.

However, the program is now facing some trouble. Cormier does not have enough personnel for the program.

Cormier needs everyone's help to serve the needs of deployed soldiers and airmen families.

"What is really needed is unskilled labor," said Cormier. "Things like trimming hedges, cutting grass, sink and shower repair seem to be the most in demand right now."

Moreover, one company that is

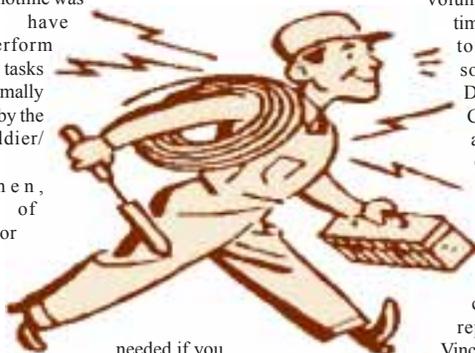
volunteering their time and energy to support soldiers is G. Donovan Consulting and Contracting.

"We wanted to help the military," said company representative Vince Young. "We

are a company that is trying to do a good deed, and this program is a great way to help people in need. We are behind this program 100 percent."

Guard members who are not deployed and their family members can help their colleagues who are deployed.

You can make a difference, fight for the cause of freedom, one family at a time. Call the Handyperson Hotline at (860) 209-0770 or you can e-mail Sgt. Maj. Toby Cormier at toby.cormier@ct.ngb.army.mil.



## HANDYPERSON HOTLINE

"CARRYING THE HOMEFRONT"

**SERGEANT MAJOR TOBY P. CORMIER**  
**Ph: 860-441-2984**  
**Cell: 860-209-0770**  
**toby.cormier@ct.ngb.army.mil**

## Manchester Family Assistance Center announces events, guidelines for participation

All activities need to have an RSVP as soon as possible

Many of these activities require knowing if there are enough people to get discounted tickets (if needed) and to plan accordingly.

Most evening events begin at 5 p.m. with a pot luck, with activities running from 6 to 8 p.m.

### Potluck/Scrapbooking

First Wednesday of every month. This is a great opportunity to have a memory book for your deployed soldier when he/she returns.

### Potluck/Welcome Home Quilting

Second Wednesday of every month. Participants will be making a Welcome Home quilt.

### Potluck/Movie Night/Parents' Night Out

Third Wednesday of every month. There will be movies and activities for children to give those that are caring for them a chance to get out for a couple of hours.

Volunteers are needed to stay at the Manchester armory while the adults go out.

Adults and teens can volunteer for this duty.

### Event Day

Fourth Wednesday of every month. This will be a day to go somewhere fun together. In August, it's Rocky Neck State Park. In September, it's the casino.

### Family Round-Robin

Aug. 11, Hartford Armory. This event will start with a potluck dinner at 5 p.m. with short discussions on TRICARE, finances (including how to read an LES), and a question and answer period following.

There will be a portable ID card machine, a station to sign up for family mailings and a JAG will be on hand to answer legal questions.

All Family Center coordinators will be there.

### Hiking

If you are interested in hiking, the Manchester FAC is trying to get a group together for Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please contact

lauri.tinelle@ct.ngb.army.mil or (860) 347-2286 if interested.



A helicopter crewmember is silhouetted against the landscape while transporting soldiers of the 1109th AVCRAD. (Photo courtesy of the 1109th AVCRAD)

### Attention Soldiers, Airmen and Families The Connecticut Guardian wants your photos!

If you have photos you wish to share with the rest of our Guard family, we would like to publish them in the Guardian.

We are looking for photos of soldiers and airmen who are deployed either relaxing or working. We are looking for photos of family members at home or at play. We are looking for photos of families packing care packages to send to their loved ones.

We will print them in the Guardian as space allows so they can be seen and shared by Connecticut Soldiers, Airmen and families around the world.

Please e-mail your photos to ctguardian@ct.ngb.army.mil

# Finding out you're not alone: ACS families share a common bond during cookout



Terri and Lauren Johnston enjoy the afternoon with other Air National Guard families and military personnel at the 103<sup>rd</sup> Air Control Squadron Operation Enduring Freedom picnic. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Carolyn A. Aseilton, 103<sup>rd</sup> FW Public Affairs)

STAFF SGT. CAROLYN A. ASEILTON  
103<sup>rd</sup> FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Gabrielle and Lauren Johnston like their pillowcases with their father, James', picture on them the best. Equally as comforting for the girls are his emails and phone calls from overseas.

"They're happy, they talked to him this morning," said James' wife, Terri, at a picnic for family members of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Air Control Squadron's deployed members June 29.

After speaking with her husband, she drove with the girls from their home in Litchfield to Wallingford. There, family program coordinators, recent deployment returnees, and the detachment commander lunched with the Johnstons and other families who have loved ones serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Maj. Tanial P. Lowe, detachment commander, 103<sup>rd</sup> Air Control Squadron, told the group that she had an open-door policy.

"Make sure you know we are all here as resources for you," she said.

The picnic itself was a great resource for the Johnstons. Terri said there are no other children her daughters' ages in her small town whose fathers had been activated.

Gabrielle "didn't understand why only her dad had to leave," she said. But at the picnic the girls were able to spend time with other families just like theirs.

"She was happy to find out she was part of a community, and not part of one family who had to give up her dad," said Terri.

Family members spent the afternoon

eating hotdogs, hamburgers, and watermelon at picnic tables decorated with small American flags. Red, white, and blue balloons hung on the surrounding trees and swayed in the breeze while the youngsters tried their hands at flying toy airplanes.

Donna Rivera and Jane Soloman, family program coordinators, spoke about the hardships both the families and the unit members experienced. They agreed that families need to be prepared for the members

return, noting the members will be unaccustomed to quiet.

"They'll need noise, let them have noise," said Rivera, explaining that on the deployment it was likely never quiet, even while the member tried to sleep.

She said it was normal for the member once home to want to have the radio or TV on low all the time.

She also said children will be worried a parent will leave again.

But for now families wait for their loved ones to return.

"They ask every night when he's coming home," said Terri.

In the meantime she and her daughters have made James' activation a learning experience. They brought home a globe. Gabrielle now reads stories about the country and president. They talk about what daddy is doing so far away. Terri said she told her daughters that if their father was not doing his job the planes wouldn't be able to fly.

The girls keep their father in their prayers every night Terri said. "They say, 'Please help keep the country safe.'"

"She was happy to find out she was part of a community, and not part of one family who had to give up her dad."  
Terri Johnston

## COMMISSARY & EXCHANGE DIRECTORY

Here is a current directory of area commissaries and exchanges along with their phone numbers. Always call ahead to verify hours as they may change without notice. A valid i.d. card is necessary to use these facilities. Contact your unit administrator if you or your dependants need a card. If you have trouble, contact the State Family Program Office at 1-800-858-2677.

<p><b>AIR NATIONAL GUARD</b> East Granby TUESDAY – FRIDAY: 10:00 – 5:00 SATURDAY: 10:00 – 4:00 SUNDAY &amp; MONDAY: Closed UTAs: Open Saturday &amp; Sunday: 10:00 – 5:00 Phone: (860) 653-6994</p>	<p><b>CAMP ROWLAND POST EXCHANGE</b> MONDAY: Closed TUESDAY – SATURDAY: 10:00 – 5:00 SUNDAY: 10:00 – 4:00 Phone: (860) 739-9672</p>	<p><b>WEST POINT, NEW YORK</b> Exchange Hours: SATURDAY – WEDNESDAY: 10:00 – 6:00 THURSDAY &amp; FRIDAY: 10:00 – 7:00 Phone: (914) 446-5406 Commissary Hours: MONDAY: Closed TUESDAY &amp; WEDNESDAY: 10:00 – 6:00 THURSDAY: 10:00 – 7:00 FRIDAY: 10:00 – 6:00 SATURDAY: 9:00 – 5:00 SUNDAY: 11:00 – 5:00 Phone: (914) 446-5406</p>	<p><b>SUB BASE, NEW LONDON</b> Exchange Hours: MON., TUES., WED., FRI.: 9:00 – 6:00 THURSDAY: 9:00 – 7:00 SATURDAY &amp; SUNDAY: 9:00 – 5:00 HOLIDAYS: 9:00 – 4:00 Phone: (860) 694-3811 Commissary Hours: MONDAY: Closed TUE., WED. &amp; FRI.: 9:00 – 6:00 THURSDAY: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. SATURDAY: 8:00 – 5:00 SUNDAY: 10:00 – 5:00 Phone: (860) 694-2244</p>	<p><b>WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE</b> Chicopee, Mass. MONDAY – FRIDAY: 10:00 – 5:00 SATURDAY: 10:00- 5:00 SUNDAY: 11:00 – 5:00 Phone: (413) 593-5583</p>
<p><b>COAST GUARD ACADEMY</b> New London MONDAY – FRIDAY: 9:00 – 5:00 SATURDAY: 9:00 – 3:00 SUNDAY: Closed Phone: (860) 444-8488</p>	<p><b>COAST GUARD STATION</b> 120 Woodward Avenue New Haven, CT MONDAY – FRIDAY: 9:00 – 4:30 SATURDAY: 9:00 – 2:00 SUNDAY: Closed Phone: (203) 468-2712</p>			<p><b>ARMY RESERVE CENTER</b> 700 South Quaker Lane West Hartford, CT MONDAY – FRIDAY: 10:00 – 1:00 SATURDAY – FRIDAY: 1:45 – 4:00 SATURDAY &amp; SUNDAY: Closed Phone: (860) 236-3393</p>

# Family Assistance Center locations

Family Assistance Centers are set-up in the following armories around the state:

Bristol Amory  
61 Center Street, Bristol, CT 06010  
(860) 582-1206 Toll Free 866-347-2283 1st Lt. Lynda Hedenberg

Waterbury Amory  
64 Field Street, Waterbury, CT 06702  
(203) 574-2406 Toll Free 866-347-2291 Sgt. Jonathon Duffy

Manchester Amory  
330 Main Street, Manchester, CT 06040  
(860) 646-0780 Toll Free 866-347-2286 Capt. Lauri Tinelle

Windsor Locks, AASF  
Bradley International ARPT-BLDG 85-152, Route 75, Windsor Locks, CT 06096  
(860) 627-7942 Toll Free 866-347-2292

Groton - AVCRAD  
71 Tower Avenue, Groton, CT 06340  
(860) 448-3346 Toll Free 866-347-3346 Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Ives

103rd FW, Bradley ANG Base  
Bldg 8, East Granby, CT 06026  
(860) 292-2730 Mrs. Donna Rivera

Newington SASC  
555 Willard Avenue, Building 2W, Newington, CT 06111  
(860) 878-6723 (860) 878-6724 Toll Free 800-858-2677  
Mrs. Kim Hoffman, Spec. Jessica McKenna and Staff Sgt. Christopher McCarty

Branford Amory  
87 Montowese Street, Branford, CT 06405  
(203) 481-3874 Toll Free 866-347-3351 Sgt. 1st Class Cheryl Gilbert

Stratford Amory  
63 Amory Road, Stratford, CT 06614  
(203) 375-8269 Toll Free 866-347-3356 Spec. Tanara Jex

Middletown Amory  
200 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457  
(860) 344-9201 Toll Free 866-347-3355 Ms. Michelle McIntosh

Norwich Amory  
38 Stott Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360  
(860) 887-3911 Toll Free 866-347-3357

103rd Air Control Squadron  
206 Boston Post Road, Orange, CT 06477  
(203) 795-2983 Charlie and Jane Solomon

Volunteers are needed in each facility,  
Those wishing to help out can contact Mrs. Kim Hoffman, Family Program Manager  
at 1-800-858-2677.

Any family member or loved one of a deployed soldier who has questions about  
benefits or deployment issues may also get answers to their question at the following  
email addresses: kim.hoffman@ct.ngb.army.mil or julian.muller@ct.ngb.army.mil

## Back to School Time!

What are your goals for this year? Write them down on the chart below and send them to your loved one so he or she knows what your plans are.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My Goals for the school year 2003-2004

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

This is how I think I will achieve my goals: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I will get help from: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Kids' Coloring Corner

A MONTHLY FEATURE  
OF FUN AND  
EDUCATIONAL  
ACTIVITIES TO HELP  
MILITARY CHILDREN  
LEARN ABOUT  
DEPLOYMENTS