



Family Deployment Supplement to the Connecticut Guardian

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CTNG hosts family Christmas party

Sgt. JEFF AUSTIN
65th PCH

On a day that snow and cold winds blanketed the entire state of Connecticut, with winds driving the snow into blizzard conditions; there was a place, a warm and joyous place, that seemed to bring family and friends together to create a special bond that can last a lifetime.

The mood was festive and the invited guests showed their enjoyment through smiles, laughter and songs throughout the entire afternoon.

The Connecticut National Guard (CTNG) sponsored a Christmas party for the family members of all deployed Soldiers on Dec. 14.

The CTNG Family Support Program joined with the CTNG in planning the event that was held at Maneeley's Banquets in South Windsor, Conn.

The large hall was full of donated Christmas presents along the entire right side of the room, with decorated Christmas trees



on both ends of the hall.

"I thought we got a lot of presents," said Eliana Echevaria. Echevaria's stepfather is deployed with the 143rd Military Police stationed in Baghdad, Iraq.

While Echevaria was speaking, her mother looked on and added to what her daughter said.

"He writes and calls but when he is busy we don't hear from him," said Carmen Morales.

"We weren't expecting the governor or lieutenant governor, but it was nice that they came."

The day began with the families enjoying a dinner that included bake ziti, tossed green salad, ice cream and pasties.

Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno, adjutant general and commander of the Connecticut Army National Guard began the presentations by reading the Christmas story to a large audience of young children.

Forty minutes later, Gov. John G. Rowland and Lt. Gov. M. Jodi Rell attended the dinner and took time to talk with many of the family members of deployed Soldiers.

Then moment finally arrived that everyone was waiting for. The arrival of Santa Claus sent the entire banquet hall cheering. Santa had the assistance of the CTNG Family Support Program staff members to give presents to all members of the families attending.

"This is wonderful," said Jocelyn Butcher. "I did not want to miss this because this is for the children."

After Santa gave out the presents everyone talked among each other and left early to avoid the worst part of the snow storm that was beginning.

"We thought about doing a breakfast with Santa Claus but it was changed to this," according to Kim Hoffman, CTNG Family Support Program. "Maj. Gen. Cugno wanted to kick it up and everyone felt the same. We have very few events to bring families of deployed Soldiers together and Lt. Gov. Rell and members of Operation Elf really helped us to get sponsors for this event.

"I just want to thank all of the contributors

to this event," said Hoffman. "The entire event was created through donations by businesses and private citizens."

"It's for the men and women deployed," said Pam R. Jordan, Maneeley's Banquet waitress who took time out to reflect on the event. "My father was in Vietnam and I have friends over in Iraq. I think this is a good cause and this day was very special."

Anyone wanting to know about future programs for families of deployed Soldiers should contact the CTNG Family Support Program at (860) 883-0155.



Two young girls enjoy themselves at a Christmas party for families of deployed Soldiers and Airmen. (Photo by Pfc. Jordan E. Werme, 65th PCH)



Chloe Zampaglione joined Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno and recited "Twas the Night Before Christmas" from memory. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)



State Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond Zastaury donned antlers and joined the children of deployed Guardsmen on the floor for carols and laughter. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)

Benefits to benefit our new war veterans

SPEC. JESSE J. STANLEY JR.
65th PCH

When the men and women who have served their country in active duty in this recent conflict come home, they will come home changed. They will be heroes and veterans. With this new status also come new benefits available to them in Connecticut.

When our Soldiers come home part of the demobilization process will be a briefing on their new benefits as veterans.

"The most important information they need, I think, is their service connected disabilities claims," said Sgt. Maj. John Lankford, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs. "Claim it now while the evidence is fresh. There is not a day that goes by without an 80-year-old man coming to me and saying he cannot hear because of his days as a gunner. The time to document that was 50 years ago."

There are other medical benefits that are important to consider. The Soldiers have 90 days from coming off active duty to initiate any dental treatment at the VA. This treatment would be at no cost to the Soldier.

For two years after Soldiers come in from a combat zone they can be treated for any condition at the VA.

"I encourage all veterans to enroll in the VA health care system," said Lankford.

These benefits are statewide and many are also federal benefits.

For more information veterans are encouraged to call: 1-800-827-1000 or go to the Hartford regional office at 450 Main Street, 8:30 to 4, and speak to a benefits counselor, no appointment necessary.

A breakdown of some of the benefits available to our veteran Soldiers:

- Tuition Waivers: Veterans may attend Connecticut public colleges and universities tuition free. This also covers many technical schools within the state.
- Retirement: State Police and corrections officers may receive credit for their period of service overseas.
- Property Tax Exemptions: Eligible for a \$1,500 exemption for property tax purposes (property or automobile)
- Medical: Eligible for admission to the Veterans Hospital as a result of wounds, disease or accident.
- Motor Vehicle: Free motor vehicle registration and special plates for former P.O.W. and recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

- Burial: Eligible for burial in a state veteran's cemetery with a grave marker provided. Spouses are also eligible for this benefit.



Handyperson Hotline for families and volunteers

Calling all soldiers and airmen, retirees or spouses. This is your opportunity to stop being a spectator and start doing something to help the Connecticut Army and Air National Guard during these unprecedented times.

Volunteer to donate some of your time and expertise to the CTNG Family Program's Handyperson Center. If you are a tradesman or an all around handyperson or a laborer, the Handyperson Center is looking for you!

E-mail your name, phone number skill, status (active, retired, spouse) and hometown to Sgt. Maj. Toby Cormier at toby.cormier@ct.ngb.army.mil or call (860) 209-0770.

The Handyperson Hotline is designed to reduce the stressors on the families of deployed soldiers and airmen by having everyday household problems diagnosed and repaired or referred to competent businesses at no cost for labor.

The program is also designed to get seasonal chores such as window air conditioners installed/removed, pools

opened/closed, leaves removed, items brought to the dump and so on.

All of this can be performed by fellow Guardsmen, retirees or spouses of Guardsmen who are willing to donate their time and expertise to this program.

Here's how the program works:

A deployed family member calls the Handyperson Hotline with a clogged drain.

The Hotline manager contacts a plumber from the Handyperson Database who will contact the family member and attempt to walk the person through correcting the problem (if possible.)

If not corrected, the Hotline will dispatch a qualified person (fellow Guardsman) to the house to correct the problem.

It is designed to give the deployed family somewhere to turn to keep the home operating smoothly without having to pay to get things done around the house that were normally done by the deployed soldier or airman.

To volunteer or for more information, call (860) 209-0770 today.

Project Home Front by Home Depot

Home Depot stores, through the volunteer program "Project Home Front," are providing up to \$1,000 for home repairs to families whose military sponsors are deployed. There is an application process at their website: www.projecthomefront.org. Please pass this info on to family members you know whose military sponsor is deployed.

The American Legion's Family Support Network: Help for your family

The American Legion's Family Support Network stands ready to assist you and your family as you serve our country. You have enough on your mind. Your thoughts shouldn't include worrying about daily chores and the problems that sometimes arise around the house. With nearly 15,000 American Legion Posts across the nation, chances are there's a local Legion family member willing to lend a hand.

What kind of help can be available? Grocery shopping, childcare, lawn care, fixing the family car and countless other challenges to a military spouse.

Family members simply call toll-free: 1-800-504-4098. Provide details of the need and then let Legion family volunteers take over. An American Legion post in the vicinity of your family will be called and asked to help. Members will contact your family to determine if and how assistance can be provided.

Legionnaires and their families have been in your shoes. We understand the problems and stresses that go with separation of loved ones during war. We stand behind you all the way and are anxious to help when you need it...no charge. Just our deepest "thanks." Legionnaires strongly believe we shall not fail those with whom we serve...no matter what war era. To request assistance, call 1-800-504-4098, complete the electronic request form or e-mail familysupport@legion.org

VA Launches 'Kids Page' on Internet

WASHINGTON (Nov. 4, 2003) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced the launch of VA Kids, a new Web page designed to help young people understand what it means to be a veteran.

"The ideals of military service and patriotism can be unfamiliar to some children and young adults," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "The VA Kids Web page supports President Bush's initiatives on education and volunteerism by providing an entertaining and informative way for young people to learn why veterans are special."

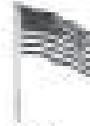
The Web page, at <http://www.va.gov/kids>, contains areas for students in kindergarten through grade 5, for grades 6 through 12 and for teachers. VA Kids also has information about VA, Veterans Day, scholarships, student volunteer opportunities, rehabilitative and special events for disabled veterans and links to veteran-related sites.

For younger students, VA Kids has interactive activities such as puzzles, coloring pages, matching contests and age-appropriate language to describe a number of patriotic topics. For older students, there is information on volunteer programs, scholarships and more sophisticated educational resources, games and reference links. The teachers' section contains additional information, links and suggested classroom activities.

"The title 'veteran' is bestowed by a grateful nation on citizens willing to sacrifice everything to preserve our freedom," said Principi. "It is our responsibility to honor these heroes by ensuring that each American generation understands what this prestigious title means."



HANDYPERSON HOTLINE





"CARRYING THE HOMEFRONT"

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

Our first Christmas apart: Coping with deployed loved ones during the holidays

PFC. JORDAN E. WERME
65TH PCH

Every year some Armed Forces families are separated for the holidays. These families feel the absence of a son, daughter, husband, wife, father or mother. And this year is no different than any other in that regard.

However, more Connecticut National Guard families are feeling that absence this year than in recent years due to the high number of men and women deployed to Iraq and elsewhere.

Irene P. Lane and her sons John, 10, and Sean, 6 are feeling this particular absence for the first time this holiday season.

"It's a little rough," said Lane of being without her husband this time of year. Her husband, Sgt. 1st Class John W. Lane, of the 247th Engineering Battalion, is currently stationed in Iraq and will be spending Christmas with his unit in a Catholic monastery and orphanage.

"They will all get clean sheets, hot meals and hot showers," she said. "And everyone will be able to do laundry."

The conditions faced by her husband and other Soldiers change all the time, she said. They move around a lot and can never be sure when the next meal-not-ready-to-eat will come.

And though most of us have a hard time imagining a desert being very cold, winter time in Iraq is coming and keeping warm while on the move can be tricky.

Mrs. Lane says that even with all that is going on, her husband has confessed that missing his kids is by far the hardest part of this holiday season for him.

"He just wants to see their faces on Christmas morning," she said. "He usually

does the tree with the boys, and they really miss that, too."

Mrs. Lane was born in Bavaria, Germany and came to the United States in 1979. She and John have been together since 1983 and this will be their first Christmas apart. But even with this new challenge she understands the importance of her husband's mission and that of all the country's service members.

"I just thank all the American people, our neighbors and communities," she said, "for supporting us and our husbands. Everyone has been very supportive. You don't find that every where, that's why I came to America. Especially being from another country, I can see that the spirit of America is catching."

With the recent capture of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, Lane's Christmas wish seems nearly at hand.

"I just hope now for John to come home safe," she said. "Without the driving force behind all the hatred we can stop evil at the roots."

Sgt. 1st Class Lane is expected to return home with his unit in the summer, said Mrs. Lane. And for all of the families missing members of the 247th, Christmas may not truly come until July.



"I Am the Guard"

Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War...of security and honor for three centuries I have been the custodian...I am the Guard!

At Concord's bridge, I fired the fateful shot heard 'round the world. I bled on Bunker Hill. My footprints marked the snows at Valley Forge. With Washington on the heights of Yorktown, I saw the sword surrendered...I am the Guard. These things I know - I was there! I saw both sides of the War Between the States - I was there! The hill at San Juan felt the fury of my charge; the far plains and mountains of the Philippines echoed to my shout. In France the dark forests of the Argonne blazed with my barrage; Chateau-Thierry crumbled to my cannonade.

I am the Guard. I bowed briefly on the grim road at Bataan. Through the jungles and on the beaches I fought the enemy...beat, battered, and broke him. I scrambled over Normandy's beaches - I was there! I flew MiG Alley to the Yalu - I am the Guard! I fought in the skies above Vietnam - I was there! In the skies and on the ground, I made the Arabian desert feel the fury of the storm. I am the Guard!

Civilian in peace, soldier in war...the stricken have known the comfort of my skill. I have faced forward to the tornado, the typhoon, and the horror of the hurricane and the flood. I saw the tall towers fall - I was there!

I am the Guard. For three centuries the custodian of security and honor, now and forever...I am the Guard.

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.

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

East Granby
TUESDAY - FRIDAY:
10:00 - 5:00
SATURDAY: 10:00 - 4:00
SUNDAY & MONDAY: Closed
UTAs: Open Saturday &
Sunday: 10:00 - 5:00
Phone: (860) 653-6994

CAMP ROWLAND POST EXCHANGE

MONDAY: Closed
TUESDAY - SATURDAY:
10:00 - 5:00
SUNDAY: 10:00 - 4:00
Phone: (860) 739-9672

WEST POINT, NEW YORK

Exchange Hours:
SATURDAY - WEDNESDAY:
10:00 - 6:00
THURSDAY & FRIDAY:
10:00 - 7:00
Phone: (914) 446-5406

Commissary Hours:
MONDAY: Closed
TUESDAY & 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

SUB BASE, NEW LONDON

Exchange Hours:
MON., TUES., WED.,
FRI.: 9:00 - 6:00
THURSDAY: 9:00 - 7:00
SATURDAY & SUNDAY:
9:00 - 5:00
HOLIDAYS: 9:00 - 4:00
Phone: (860) 694-3811
Commissary Hours:
MONDAY: Closed
TUE., WED. & 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

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE

Chicopee, Mass.
MONDAY - FRIDAY: 10:00 - 5:00
SATURDAY: 10:00 - 5:00
SUNDAY: 11:00 - 5:00
Phone: (413) 593-5583

COAST GUARD ACADEMY

New London
MONDAY - FRIDAY:
9:00 - 5:00
SATURDAY: 9:00 - 3:00
SUNDAY: Closed
Phone: (860) 444-8488

COAST GUARD STATION

120 Woodward Avenue
New Haven, CT
MONDAY - FRIDAY:
9:00 - 4:30
SATURDAY: 9:00 - 2:00
SUNDAY: Closed
Phone: (203) 468-2712

ARMY RESERVE CENTER

700 South Quaker Lane
West Hartford, CT
MONDAY - FRIDAY:
10:00 - 1:00
MONDAY - FRIDAY:
1:45 - 8:00
SATURDAY & SUNDAY: Closed
Phone: (860) 236-3393

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 & Mrs. Michelle McCarty

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

Manchester Amory & AVCRAD
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
Sgt. Michael Bartoli

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 Mrs. Marina Sedor

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

Norwich Amory
38 Stott Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360
(860) 823-1342 Ext. 12 Toll Free 866-347-3357
Mrs. Andrea Lathrop

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

118th Medical Company
Location to be announced
Sgt. Geanabelle Bumdez (860) 883-6936
Sgt. Elizabeth Crouthamel (860) 883-6935

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 address: kim.hoffman@ct.ngb.army.mil

Kids' Creative Corner

**A MONTHLY FEATURE
OF FUN AND
EDUCATIONAL
ACTIVITIES**

Valentine's Day is Coming

Write or draw your Valentine greeting to your
deployed loved one, or any of the CING deployed
Soldiers or Airmen and send them to Editor:
Connecticut Guardian, Public Affairs Office,
National Guard Amory, 360 Broad Street,
Hartford, CT 06105-3795 no later than Jan. 25. We
will print as many as we can in the February issue
of the Guardian.