

The Monthly Magazine of the Texas Military Forces

November 2008

The DISPATCH



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Funerals for Texas Guardsmen Killed in Iraq



The DISPATCH

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Cover: **Honor Guard member Texas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Kevin Simmons renders his salute during the opening ceremony of the 2nd Annual Partners Across Texas Oktoberfest & Volksmarch Oct. 18 at Camp Swift. (Photo by Master Sgt. Brenda Benner, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs)**

CORRECTION— Last month's cover photograph was not attributed. The correct caption is: Staff Sgt. Miguel Perez, crew chief, and Rick Bering, a Swift Water Rescue Swimmer from the San Antonio Fire Department rescue a resident of Crystal Beach after Hurricane Ike. (Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Rick Dillenbeck) The Dispatch sincerely regrets this error.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

TRAVEL CARD CHANGEOVER

Citibank will be the new GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CARD vendor. Cards will be issued to existing Bank of America Cardholders beginning in August 2008. Soldiers mobilizing between now and November 2008 will turn in their cards at the SRP. All cardholders who are traveling on the turnover date (29 Nov 08) must have both cards with them. Expenses incurred through 29 November will be charged on the Bank of America card; expenses incurred 30 November or later will be charged on the Citibank card.

Point of contact for question is Ms. Paulua Sloan, Agency Program Coordinator for the TXARNG, 512-782-5368.

GOLDEN CORRAL ANNUAL APPRECIATION DINNER

All Golden Corral restaurants are once again offering a complimentary "thank you" dinner on Monday, Nov. 17, 2008 to any person who has ever served in the United States military (active duty, Guard and Reserves, veterans, retirees). To date, Golden Corral Restaurants have provided over 1.8 million free meals and contributed over \$2.53 million to the Disabled American Veterans organization.

36TH INFANTRY DIVISION WWII REENACTMENT

The Camp Mabry Military Forces museum will be sponsoring an historical reenactment on Nov. 8 and 9, 2008 in honor of Veteran's Day. The reenactment will take place on the Camp Mabry Basketball Court Field. There will be two shows each day, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., rain or shine. Uniforms and equipment will be on display and the museum will be open for tours.

For more information, contact the Texas Military Forces Museum at 512/782-5770 and Garrison Command at 512/782-6909.

FREE LEGAL HELP FOR NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS

Attorneys will provide free, "on-the-spot" legal advice to qualified Active Duty, National Guard, Reservists, veterans and family members on Friday, Nov. 14, 2008 at the Travis County Veteran's Office, at 100 North IH-35. Cases will be handled on a walk-in basis from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Cases not resolved at the clinic will be reviewed to see if further legal services can be provided at no charge. NO CRIMINAL CASES.

For more information and income qualification guidelines, contact the Travis County Veteran's Office, 512-854-9340

HUNTING ON CAMP BOWIE

National Guard members and their family members with DOD ID cards, DOD civilians of all military services, Active and Reserve with Department of Defense ID cards, retired military and family members with DOD ID cards, all other TXMF employees without a DOD ID card, are eligible to fill out an application to hunt on the Camp Bowie Training site, in Brownwood, Texas at http://www.agd.state.tx.us/rr/camp_bowie_hunting.htm.

Available hunting dates are published on the above listed web link, and the point of contact for Camp Bowie is 512-782-7361

MENTOR/TRANSITION OPPORTUNITY FOR VETERANS

American Corporate Partners (ACP), a new nationwide mentoring program for veterans, National Guard and Reserve personnel is pleased to announce a unique mentoring and networking opportunity with professionals from some of America's finest corporations, including Campbell Soup, Home Depot, General Electric, Morgan Stanley, PepsiCo and Verizon.

This program will assist veterans in their career development and transition from military service to private enterprise. Military veterans, National Guard and Reserve personnel may currently participate in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

To apply to the program as Protégés or for more information, please visit: <http://www.acp-usa.org> or email Christie Cowart at info@acp-usa.org

POC for this announcement is Col. Tom Palladino, ext 6748.

The DISPATCH

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November

Gov. Rick Perry
Commander in Chief

Lt. Gen. (TX) Charles G. Rodriguez
Adjutant General of Texas

Col. William Meehan
Public Affairs Officer

Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada
Public Affairs Chief

Public Affairs Staff
Capt. James Campbell
Spc. Jennifer Atkinson
Cheryl Barbeau
Susan Ribeiro

Managing Editor
Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

Design and Copy Editor
Sgt. Jennifer D. Atkinson

Contributing Writers
and Photographers
Maj. Keith Moore

Capt. James M. Campbell

Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

Master Sgt. Brenda Benner

Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Staff Sgt. Daniel A. Griego

Sgt. Jennifer D. Atkinson

Tiffany Anderson

Tara Mogan

Gary Owens

Articles and photography are welcome and may be submitted to JFTX-PAO, P.O. Box 5218, Austin TX 78763-5218, or by e-mail to paotx@tx.ngb.army.mil. Deadline for submissions is the **10th day of the month** for the issue of the following month.

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Oktoberfest 2008 Brings Communities, Texas Military Forces Together

By Master Sgt. Brenda Benner

Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

CAMP SWIFT, Texas – Local residents said the sight of vintage U.S. and foreign military vehicles and tanks being trucked and trailered in on highways 290 East and 95 had stirred their interest. Some of them had noticed the fliers posted in the windows of Elgin and Bastrop businesses and knew a battle was on the horizon. Others were left to wonder what the sky invasion and booming thunder of weapons were all about.

More than 1,100 Bastrop County residents visited historic Camp Swift during the 2nd Annual Partners Across Texas Oktoberfest & Volksmarch Saturday, Oct. 18. They were entertained by Texas Military Forces paratroopers who showcased their current airborne capabilities and also by dozens of WWII battle re-enactors who demonstrated the rigors of low-tech combat from decades past with their Salerno, Italy “battle.”

A wide range of activities included confidence course and rappelling demonstrations by Soldiers of the Camp Mabry-based 136th Regional Training Institute (RTI), pony rides and a petting zoo for the children, numerous displays of vintage WWII equipment, plus music by the 36th Infantry Division Band and many other local music groups.

Texas Military Forces recruiters offered opportunities to climb a rock wall or Sumo wrestle in huge puffy suits for those willing to “muscle it up.”

Participants of all ages joined the German-based fun during the 1-mile family hike or the 5K/10K volksmarches through the military training camp. More than 230 Oktoberfest visitors hit the trails.

Elgin mayor Marc Holm said he recognized many Elgin residents enjoying their day of physical fitness, live music performances, food and a little military education.

“A walk through the pines ... it’s a wonderful way for families to get together for healthy activities,” said Holm. “I think Camp Swift’s presence is taken for granted because this a great place for our community to connect with the military.”

Bastrop County area businesses, vendors and service organizations set up temporary sites to raffle off items and provide food and refreshments for visitors. As expected, the famous Elgin sausage and barbeque treats were a hit.

While adults marveled at either the simplicity or the surprising complexity of a particular military relic, children enjoyed the chance to wear military uniforms of the era and sit in or



on vintage equipment from Allied Forces or the German military. A favorite was a weapon-toting German military motorcycle with a side-car.

“Besides the official sanctioned folksmarch, this is a fun event for history buffs too,” Mayor Holm added. “Seeing all of the old military equipment gives us a tangible connection to the past, something we can see and touch.”

After watching Soldiers rappel from a 45-foot tower, Elgin residents Melissa Ramsey, her husband and her son, said they enjoyed the activities more than last year’s inaugural Oktoberfest.

“I’m glad there are more demonstrations to watch than last year,” Ramsey said. “Our favorite was watching the paratroopers jump this morning. Last year, my son George got to sit inside a helicopter. We’ll be back next time.”

Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Locklear of the 136th RTI said he and his fellow infantry Soldiers entertained twice as many spectators than he expected.

“Civilians usually don’t get to come out here and see this,” Locklear said while referencing the confidence course and tower. “They have no idea how hard it is for Soldiers to earn their air assault badges. They’ve been asking lots of questions about our training.”

Many organizations that support military members and their families were on hand to share information about their ser-



vices. Texas Military Forces members informed visitors regarding the many specialized jobs in the National Guard and the various ways Texas citizen-Soldiers support their communities ranging from mentoring and anti-drug programs to providing emergency assistance in times of natural disasters.

The Oktoberfest activities provided an excellent opportunity for the community to learn more about their military neighbors both near and far and most visitors departed a little more aware than when they arrived.

Many organizers and spectators expressed they were pleased with the day's events and hopeful that next year's Oktoberfest 2009 can build upon this year's success.



Clockwise from top left- Texas Military Forces paratroopers demonstrated their skills.

Infantry Soldiers provided air assault demonstrations from UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters .

Texas Adjutant General Charles G. Rodriguez leads off the Volksmarch during Oktoberfest.

Soldiers from the Camp Mabry-based 136th Regional Training Institute provided rappelling demonstrations.

1st Lt. Liam Fowler and daughter Aleshanee enjoy some family fun in a simulate historical dig.

Elgin-based Pleasant Grove Swing Band entertains.

Gary Haas of the Arrowhead Chapter of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association, fires a 75mm Pack Howitzer during the Salerno battle re-enactment. (All photos by Master Sgt. Brenda Benner and Sgt. Jennifer D. Atkinson)

Purple Heart Award, Hail and Farewell at Camp Mabry

By Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

CAMP MABRY, Austin, Texas (Oct 23, 2008)— During a ceremony hosted by the Adjutant General Texas here Thursday, new personnel were hailed, others recognized for demonstrated heroism and several long-time employees honored for their long-time service.

During a ceremony attended by Texas House of Representatives Charles Anderson, Purple Heart officials, Lt. Gen. (TX) Charles G. Rodriguez, The Adjutant General Texas, and most of Camp Mabry's employees, two brave Soldiers were awarded the Texas State Purple Heart on behalf of Governor Rick Perry.

Sgt. Douglas Bennett and Sgt. Johnny Reed received the Texas Purple Heart after both of them had previously been awarded the Federal Purple Heart for what General Rodriguez termed, "tremendous distinctions."

Sgt. Bennett while assigned to 336th Military Police Battalion, 124th Cavalry, 89th Military Police Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Corps Iraq, sustained a serious neck injury from an improvised explosive device (IED).

Sgt. Reed sustained serious injuries while assigned to the 124th Cavalry in Kuwait when shrapnel from an IED hit his face.

The general said: "The Texas Purple Heart symbolizes the willingness to serve where called." He added: "The Purple Heart dates back to 1775 when General Washington recognized deserving Soldiers for paying a high physical and emotional price for their patriotism. The Soldiers you see before you have demonstrated a commitment to Texas like many Army, Air and State Guard Soldiers and Airmen before them who have demonstrated a 'Can Do' and 'step forward at all cost attitude.'"

The MC ordered the audience to stand and read: "To all who shall see, the Texas Purple Heart is being presented to Sgt. Bennett and Sgt. Reed for wounds received." The Adjutant General also awarded the two Soldiers the Texas Cavalry Medals.

Some new personnel being hailed were Lt. Col Chris Shelstad, Maj. Smith, Lt. Col. Daugherty and 1LT. Raelina, Lt. Col. Nettles, Capt. Collura, Ms. Ribeiro and Staff Sgt. Wilson.

Long-term Camp Mabry employees retiring were Sgt. Maj. Kirkpatrick, Ms. Figueroa and Ms. Guerra. All were presented with retirement certificates and coins. Sgt. Maj. Kirkpatrick received the President's Legion of Merit. After an emotional start of his speech, Sgt. Maj. Kirkpatrick lightened the mood by saying: "It was a trip [an understatement for military service spanning 40 years] and reminisced on some good times hunting hogs." Mrs. Kirkpatrick was honored with the Yellow Rose of Texas.



Clockwise from top right: Members of the Order of the Purple Heart Salute during the National Anthem. Col. West welcomes 1st Lt. Raelina. Col. Paladino welcomes Cpt. Collura, the Adjutant General shakes Sgt. Reed's hand after being awarded the Texas Purple Heart. Ms. Guerra receives her certificate of appreciate. Sgt. Maj. Kirkpatrick and his wife. (Texas Military Forces photos.)

Tell the Flu to Split; Tricare Covers Flu Vaccination

By Tara Mogan
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

Although flu season typically peaks in February, those of us with kids know we're lucky to get through October without one of them bringing more than just homework home from school. Then it's only a matter of time before that bug jumps from one member of the family to the next. But TRICARE can help you to swat that bug into the gutter to keep your family from being bowled over.

A flu shot is a covered preventive services benefit for all TRICARE Prime, Standard and Extra beneficiaries. Flu vaccination is recommended in October or November, but may still be beneficial if received as late as December, as the season typically runs from October through May.

There are two TRICARE-covered options available:

The **flu shot**, which is an inactivated vaccine administered by needle. It is recommended for people age 6 months or older, to include people with chronic medical conditions.

The **nasal-spray flu vaccine**, made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu. This is recommended for people age 2-49 years that are not pregnant.

Does the flu shot cause the flu?

No. "A coincidental virus or cold may creep up on you post-vaccination, but the virus that causes influenza will *not* come from receiving a flu shot," says Dr. Len Tamsky, vice president of Health Care Services and senior medical director for TriWest Healthcare Alliance.

Who should get vaccinated?

As a general rule of thumb, anyone who wants to spare themselves or their family from the flu should get vaccinated. People at high risk for flu-related complications, include but are not limited to:

- ✦ Children age 6 months to 5 years
- ✦ Women who will be pregnant during the flu season
- ✦ People of any age with certain chronic diseases
- ✦ People 50 years of age and older
- ✦ People living in a nursing home

Health care workers.

Regardless of your age or health, be sure to consult your

primary care manager (PCM) about getting the vaccination, especially if you:

- ✦ Are ill
- ✦ Are allergic to eggs
- ✦ Have ever had an allergic reaction to a vaccine

Have ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome.

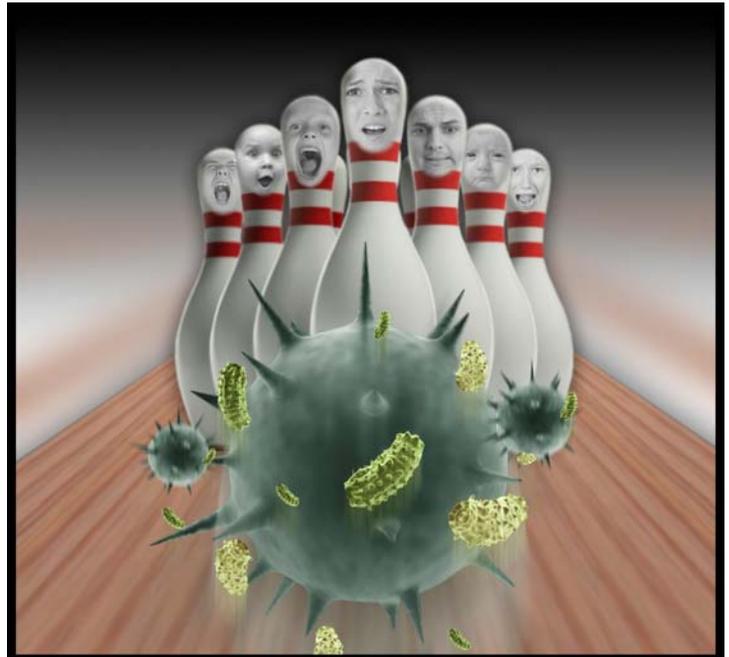
Where to go

If you are enrolled at a military treatment facility (MTF), contact your MTF to find out if and when flu shots are offered and then obtain the vaccination from your PCM. If you get a flu shot from a TRICARE network provider, you do not need a referral or authorization from your PCM.

Flu shots received from a non-network provider—one who does not accept TRICARE—are subject to point-of-service charges for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries. Vaccines provided at civilian pharmacies and drugstores are not covered by TRICARE.

For more information about TRICARE coverage for flu vaccinations, visit www.TRICARE.mil, or the Healthy Living Portal at www.triwest.com.

Don't let the flu bug strike your family. A little prevention can go a long way.



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Guard's Top Marksmen Complete Warfighter Training Exercise

By Maj. Keith Moore

Public Affairs Officer, Arkansas National Guard

CAMP JOSEPH T. ROBINSON, Ark. – About 350 of the Army and Air National Guard's best marksmen representing 38 states and two U.S. territories packed the Davis Auditorium here at the National Guard Professional Education Center Oct. 16 for award presentations to the top individuals and teams in the 38th annual Winston P. Wilson Warfighter Sustainment Training Exercise.

Maj. Gen. William Wofford, adjutant general of Arkansas, congratulated all of the Guard members gathered for the exercise for their conduct of another safely-run and combat-focused event aimed at sustaining a critical soldier skill -- combat marksmanship.

"Our marksmanship center is known throughout the world as the place for basic and advanced marksmanship training," he said. "The events we host each year – the Wilson and AFSAM matches -- increase our readiness for success in the war zone."

During the week-long exercise, individuals and teams were tested in not only their physical conditioning, but their levels of marksmanship skill. The exercise was a live-fire event putting the shooters through multiple simulated combat scenarios each day incorporating "move-and-shoot" tactics.

The target hits were scored and, once again, Alpha Team from Texas led the way in demonstrating outstanding skill and focus under stressful conditions. The team consisted of First Sgt. Shawn Clary, Chief Warrant Officer Richard Tanner, Sgt. First Class Charlie Blackwell and Sgt. Cris Green.

Addressing the Guardsmen gathered for the awards presentation retired Lt. Gen. Herb Temple, a former chief of the National Guard Bureau, said, "These events were named after another former chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. Winston P. Wilson. We called him Wimpy. Wimpy would be proud to see how this center has grown and how each of you here tonight are carrying what you learned this week back to your own units. I'm confident the future of our country is secure when I see the fine work all of you are doing here."

The Winston P. Wilson Warfighter Sustainment Training Exercise is the pinnacle of combat shooting equivalent to a

national championship for the National Guard. The exercise pits marksmen in stress-induced scenarios, whether they are timed, require physical maneuvering between firing positions, require reloading or changing weapons, or incorporate all three conditions under live-fire conditions.

Col. Steve Miles, commander of the National Guard Marksmanship Training Center, a fierce proponent of the value of sustained small arms skills, explained the importance of the matches. "These exercises are about sustaining the force, improving readiness and combat marksmanship training.

"Each (shooter) is a combat force multiplier, and these training exercises provide critical value to combat relevant warfighter skills. Proficiency in small arms must be a TOP priority in today's and tomorrow's war fight environment."

Members of the Texas Alpha Team won the All States Trophy, Winston P. Wilson Combat Rifle Individual Trophy, the Novice Winston P. Wilson Combat Pistol Individual Trophy, three of the top six spots for the Lloyd Nelson Trophy, Rapid Fire Engagement Team Trophy, Apache Alley Trophy, third place for the Grant R. Bacon Memorial Trophy, Machine Gun P.O.W. Trophy, and the CATM Trophy.



The Alpha Team from Texas, made up of 1st Sgt. Shawn Clary, Chief Warrant Officer-4 Richard Tanner, Sgt. 1st Class Charlie Blackwell and Sgt. Cris Green



For more information on the Texas National Guard Marksmanship Program, go to www.txmarks.org

Czechs share training, camaraderie with Texas Soldiers

By Staff Sgt. Daniel A. Griego

100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP SWIFT-Bastrop, Texas
With beads of sweat running down their seasoned faces, the Soldiers advance forward through the simulation. As a smoke grenade detonates, they instinctively press on, unafraid of the lingering dangers all around them. With instruction still fresh in their minds, they put into practice the training they'll soon take home and disseminate.

The Soldiers come upon a small group of costumed players, impersonating combatants commonly found on contemporary battlefields. An aggressive signal from the lead enemy sends a Soldier forward to subdue and restrain the threat. Orders from the squad leader resonate throughout the fragile building as his voice overpowers the cries of the opposing forces. These commands, however, do not resonate in a familiar or local language. These commands are in Czech.

Continuing their partnership of more than 15 years, Texas and the Czech Republic frequently cross-train together in a collaboration of soldiering, culture and leadership.

The 136th Regional Training Institute (RTI) hosted this two-week training program at Camp Swift in Austin, Texas, for the cadre and officers of the Czech Republic's eminent training facilities, The Training Base and the Military Academy, both housed in Vyskov.

Taking place from August 23 to September 6, the program devotes one week each to two regularly requested areas of U.S. Army expertise: combat lifesaver training (CLS) and military operations on

urban terrain (MOUT).

Representatives from the Military Academy, similar to the U.S.'s noncommissioned officer education system (NCOES), placed a much higher emphasis on the combat lifesaver training. "The CLS was outstanding preparation," said Sgt. 1st Class Ondres Zeman, NCOIC of the Czech teams. "They are outstanding, well-experienced instructors. I really appreciate the opportunity to train with another unit."

"They really excelled in the IV portion," said Staff Sgt. Machin M. McHargue, the CLS NCOIC. "It's clear they've done medical training before. We really want them to be prepared on the battlefield for whatever comes at them."

Some trainees here won't take what they learn into battle. Staff Sgt. Jitka Dolezalova works with chemists and medical personnel at the Military Academy. "We are going to train NATO civilians," she said.

Training Base in Vyskov, comparable to the U.S. Army's basic combat training, begins a new recruit's life in the Czech Army. There, unlike its American counterpart, officers train Soldiers. To this end, two Czech officers joined the 20 Czech NCOs at Camp Swift to gain techniques they'll pass onto new troops.

"They're tactically very disciplined," said 2LT Gregory H. Bowling, the Opposing Forces (OPFOR) commander for the training. "They integrate their CLS skills very well."

This session was the 26th event shared by Texans and Czechs this year. The State Partnership Program provides opportunities not just for Czechs to travel

here, but also for Texas soldiers to serve with their foreign partners in the Czech Republic.

Sgt. Sportlan T. Jones, International Affairs NCOIC, enjoys the close ties shared by Texans and Czechs. "They really want this training," he said. "They're ready to progress."

Growth and further cooperation are certain as more events are planned together, including eight Czechs attending Camp Swift's Air Assault Course, scheduled for September 10 through 28.

Further solidifying their esteemed partnership, the visiting Czechs have even taken to wearing on their uniforms the "T-Patch" of the Texas 36th Infantry Division, and worn by the 136th RTI. "They looked up the history and are honored to wear it," said Jones.

A long-standing partnership such as this garners much growth for all participants. Strengthened by new exposures and cultures, both Armies come away from these exchanges with a fuller understanding of identity and training foundations.



Left- Prap Jiri Rajtmajer watches his lane as he covers his teammates during the training.

Above- Nprap Tomas Chylik and Prap Ondrej Zeman exit a cleared room and move on to the next stage in their training exercise.

(Prap is Chief Warrant Officer 2. Nprap is Chief Warrant Officer 3.)

Angel Flight Brings Heroes Home to Texas

By Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

Four Texas Army National Guard Soldiers and three Oklahoma Army National Guard Soldiers died as the result of a helicopter crash on 18 Sep, 2008 in Iraq but were brought home to Texas by the 136th Airlift Wing and its crew.

In the words of one of the Air Guard members: “During times like these it is our honor and privilege to take care of our brother-in-arms and their family.”

The three Soldiers from the Fort Worth area came home as family and friends gathered at Dallas-Fort Worth, Alliance Airport and finally Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth Carswell Field. Sgt. Major Ordonez was greeted by his family in San Antonio.

At each of the locations, the heroes were welcomed by an honor guard detail and at some the aircraft taxied underneath an arch of water that glistened in the sunshine—an American flag placed atop the cockpit of the aircraft.

Members of the Angel Flight transporting these fallen Texans, Maj. Brad Freeman, Maj. Mike Pullin, 1st Lt. Chris Armstrong, Master Sgt. Jim Moser and Senior Master Sgt. David Brewster, took the utmost care to deliver them safely home.

The respect and dignity offered these fallen heroes by the crew, the honor guard, friends and families was at times almost overwhelming. There were many differences in the way the families elected to honor their loved ones, but what stood out during each of the vigils, wakes, memorials and funeral services was the pride exhibited by the widows of these brave men. Invariably they would be the ones consoling children, family and friends, in what must have been the



loneliest days of their lives.

There were many poignant moments—the lone bagpipe at Staff Sgt. Mason’s funeral; the sonogram photo of Capt. Vallejo’s yet to be born baby Robert; the relative who testified that his life had been turned around by one of these heroes; family members of Sgt. Major Ordonez patiently speaking with the media with such pride in their voices; Mrs. Edwards so eloquent and proud, and the mournful sound of the Liberty bell chiming outside the church during many of the funerals. Those who did not have the privilege of meeting these men personally came to know them through the stories told by their loved ones.

To all those who worked with the families and those who had the honor of bringing these men home, thank you for this difficult but most honorable job. May our Guard family prayers sustain the families during their darkest days.



Patriot Riders, family and friends, of National Guard soldiers killed in action in Iraq pay final respects and tribute. (Texas Military Forces photos)



Texas ChalleNGe Academy Moves After Hurricane Ike

By Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker
Joint Counterdrug Task Force
Public Affairs

Cadets and faculty at the Texas ChalleNGe Academy are quickly adjusting to the West Texas environment. Cadets attending the Texas ChalleNGe Academy (TCA) are transitioning to new facilities, teachers and team leaders in Sheffield, Texas.

Hurricane IKE flooded the Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps' Galveston facility in September forcing the move to Sheffield in West Texas.

Serving at-risk Texas youth, Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps is an initiative of the National Guard. Students who are at risk of dropping out of high school (ages 16-18) may apply for the 17.5 month program. Class 2008-1 first assembled July 19.

During the first 5.5 months cadets are housed under residential supervision. After completing this residential phase, students return to their communities across Texas and are mentored by adult volunteers locally for the next 12 months. These mentors assist the youth in their life plans and help the program track the students' progress.

About 90 Seaborne Challenge Corps cadets made the move to facilities formerly occupied by the Texas Youth Commission in Sheffield, TX. The facility has the capacity to house 128 cadets and in time, will receive new paint and upgrades to soften the image and feel of the former juvenile facility under the control of Texas Youth Commission.

For some, it has been a huge transition. Many of the current cadets are from inner-city communities and have never been to West Texas or even seen a mountain. The desire to go and "climb the mountain" visible from the facility is a great temptation.

A few curious cadets walked out of the facility during the first week to visit the local convenience store and explore the area. All returned a short time later when they realized it was in their best interest to return to TCA. Ranchers and oilmen take trespassers seriously, not to mention the

possibility of encountering a rattlesnake or spider. It doesn't take long to realize West Texas is no place to be wondering around.

Unlike the former tenants, the cadets at the TCA are high school drop-outs who now have a second opportunity to earn a GED or a high school diploma from ChalleNGe High School. The TCA is not a boot camp, but a facility where Texas youth can regain control of their lives and become productive citizens.

All team leaders and staff at the TCA are trained professionals and a part of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program. A program designed to help at-risk youth sort out their lives.

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program's mission is to intervene and reclaim the lives of at-risk youth to produce program graduates with the values, skills, education and self-discipline necessary to succeed as adults.

"Our cadets are here voluntarily," said TCA Director Michael Weir. "These young men and women have come to the realization that their life needs an adjustment."

This transition begins with discipline and a focus on education. The ChalleNGe High School, a part of the Iraan Sheffield Independent School district is located at the TCA facility. The school focuses on four core academic studies: Math, Science, Social Studies and English. ChalleNGe High School has ten full time instructors and one on-call substitute teacher. Ms. Candra Cade is the school principal.

Several Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps staff members and team leaders relocated to Sheffield after Hurricane IKE damaged the Galveston Seaborne facility on Sept. 13. These dedicated professionals have helped ensure continuity of the program during the transition.

"Moving from Galveston to Sheffield after Hurricane IKE was not an easy task," said Col Tony West, Joint Counterdrug Task Force commander. "However, it is well worth the effort for our cadets' sake." Col West has oversight of the Texas ChalleNGe Academy.

"This relocation effort has truly

been an awesome display of teamwork – community leaders, school administrators, Galveston's Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps employees, the Sheffield workforce, Texas Joint Military Forces Soldiers, Airmen and military leaders, as well as state agencies – Texans working together to continue the outstanding legacy of the Texas National Guard ChalleNGe Program," Col West continued.

The adjustment to the remote area was difficult for some cadets, several decided to return to their family after visiting the facility. The remaining cadets show great determination and desire to continue the program and graduate December 20.

"We appreciate and thank the hard work and dedication of the staff, the facility and the communities of Iraan and Sheffield," Mr. Weir commented. "The community has come forward and graciously provided several homemade hot meals, purchased pizza and cooked hamburgers for the cadets. The cadets really appreciated the show of community interest and involvement."

The cadets attending the Texas ChalleNGe Academy have many mountains to climb, not just the ones visible from Sheffield. Whether it is academic, overcoming bad choices, hasty decisions or even just running around with the wrong crowd, each individual cadet is determined to overcome their personal challenges and "climb their mountain" toward a successful and rewarding future.

The ChalleNGe High School point of contact is the campus secretary, Ms. Shelly Hartman. The Texas ChalleNGe Academy and ChalleNGe High School can be reached at (432) 836-4690.



Joint Service Honor Guard Renders Final Tributes

By Gary Owens

Employer Support of Guard and Reserves

A little known unit located at the Naval Air Station / Joint Reserve Base (NAS/JRB), Fort Worth pays honor to those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Comprised of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine personnel, the Joint Service Honor Guard is responsible for presenting the flag or full military honors, up to and including a firing party symbolizing a 21 gun salute, to the family of our fallen hero's at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery located in Grand Prairie, TX.

The unit members are Active Duty, Guard and Reserve from Fort Hood, Dyess AFB in Abilene, and the NAS/JRB in Fort Worth. The two full time personnel assigned to the unit, Master Sgt. Thomas Price, the Superintendent and Tech Sgt. Michael Bradberry, the NCOIC, both from Dyess AFB, rotate from Fort Worth to Abilene every two weeks to supervise, train and schedule the squads to conduct the ceremonies.

"We've been in existence for 8 years, located here at the NAS/JRB," according to Master Sgt. Price. "It's not an easy job to face grieving families every day. But being part of the detail is an honor, a privilege and an experience that will not soon be forgotten by the members of the detail or the family. Family members are always extremely grateful for the

service the Joint Service Honor Guard and the Office of Veteran Affairs provide."

The Joint Service Honor Guard performs well over 2,200 military honors yearly at the DFW National Cemetery. In addition, team members also conduct military funeral honors for veterans in and around the DFW and Waco areas at private cemeteries, churches and chapels.

The Honor Guard provides services for Active Duty, Guard, Reserve,

Retirees and Veterans. Most recently, the team honored two Texas Army National Guard soldiers killed while serving in Iraq with the 2-149th Aviation Battalion of Grand Prairie, TX.

Practice makes perfect. Although the members of the Joint Service Honor Guard perform their task several times a week (up to 18 funerals per day), they continue to practice and rehearse to ensure the honors presented are to standard.



Members of the Joint Service Honor Guard prepare to fire a final salute at the funeral of Staff Sgt. Anthony Mason, a Texas National Guard Soldier killed in action in Iraq. Members of the Honor Guard parcit (Photo by Capt. James Campbell, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs Office)

Deck Your Halls and Buildings for the Holiday Season



The 7th Annual Holiday Building Decoration Contest is coming up. All decorations must be in place no later than 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2008. Judging will take place on Dec. 16 or 17, and winners will be announced at the Adjutant General's

Holiday Luncheon on Friday, Dec. 19.

No buildings will be illuminated prior to the Tree Lighting on Wednesday, Dec. 3. First, 2nd and 3rd place winners will be selected.

Decorations are limited to building exteriors and must adhere to established safety rules, i.e., no decorations on roofs/awnings and no nails/screws/tape will be used on historic buildings (point of contact for safety is Rick Owens at ext. 6867). Military equipment/static displays should NOT be decorated.

Notify Barbara Matwiczak, ext. 5022, if you want to participate in the contest.

There will also be a door decorating contest. Decorations should be in place by 12:00 p.m. on Dec. 16, and judging will be on Dec. 16 or 17. Winners will be announced that the Adjutant General's Holiday Luncheon.

Offices with multiple doors should choose a coordinating theme. Please do not decorate adjoining halls as only office doors will be judged. Avoid using nails/screws or other items that may damage door surfaces.

Up to \$150 per building, \$50 per door, to purchase decorations will be authorized and available from the JFHQ-TX Fund. Requesting funds must be completed prior to purchasing supplies and prior to Dec. 16. All purchases must be documented with a tax-exempt receipt. Point of contact for funds is Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Lawton at ext. 5222.

Point of contact for the door decoration contest is SFC Cheylynn Currie at ext. 5031.

36th Inf. Division Special Troops Battalion Answers Call

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker
Joint Counterdrug Task Force Public Affairs

CAMP MABRY -- Eighty-one Soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division's Special Troops Battalion answered the call to combat duty supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom with a resounding HOOAH!! Saturday afternoon.

Flanked by gigantic American and Texas flags, the men and women of the Texas Army National Guard stood proudly in formation with hundreds of friends, family and neighbors close by. The 36th Infantry Division Band played to the delight of all those in attendance.

Young children smiled and called out family names as they saw their brother or sister in combat uniform standing at attention, eyes looking forward. Emotional parents and spouses quietly wiped away tears as the seriousness of the event settled in.

"You are about to join a long list of Soldiers to serve without hesitation," said Maj. Gen. Jose Mayorga, 36th Infantry Division Commander in his address to the Soldiers. "You are part of the 36th Infantry Division's, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT); selfless servants and professional Soldiers. I am confident you are ready to deploy!"

"The 56th IBCT will gain immeasurably from the addition of you," Mayorga continued. "Trust in your leadership and have trust in yourself. This deployment will provide opportunity for you to grow individually and as Soldiers."

Veterans of previous deployments in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq or Afghanistan, knew there would be some tough and rigorous training ahead. Prior to entering a combat theater, deploying Soldiers go through specific combat training to ensure they are qualified before departing the mobilization station at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Donna M. Balderston thanked the families for their support acknowledging the Soldiers about to deploy would not be there if it were not for the families. She encouraged family members to contact the family readiness representative for support and assistance.

"I have some items I would like for you to pack in your ruck sack, Sgt. Maj. Balderston told the deploying Soldiers. "Support your command and stay very flexible. Stay alert and always be aware of your surroundings, rely on your 'Battle Buddy' and work together as a team, and most importantly; never, never become complacent of your surroundings."

Sgt. Constance Hendrix is going out on her second deployment. Her first tour in 2005, was in Kosovo. Hendrix works full time for the Texas Joint Military Force's Counterdrug Task Force in the personnel section. She is uncertain what specific job she will perform in Iraq.

"The battalion needed more Soldiers than earlier expected," Sgt. Hendrix said. "We are here to fill those vacancies where needed."

"In addition to our military specialty, our job is to stay safe and all of us come back home," Hendrix commented.

Hendrix's father, Willie Hendrix, attended the deployment ceremony wanting to spend as much time with his daughter as possible.

"I'm not worried at all," Mr. Hendrix commented. "I've met some of her sergeants and know they will work as a team. Constance is a great Soldier. The year will pass quickly, I'll see her soon."

The Pierce family attended the ceremony with three generations present. Sergeant David Pierce is leaving his grandmother, parents, and wife in Pflugerville to serve his country.

Grandmother Velma Pierce was so proud of Sgt Pierce she welled up tears explaining how she will miss him so much because of his willingness to always come by and help her out repairing anything that broke.

"He took such good care of me," Ms. Pierce said. "He would help with anything I needed repaired."

Taking care of Soldiers is one part of leadership all Texas military personnel, whether enlisted or officers, are trained to do. The 81 loyal Soldiers joining the 56th IBCT at Fort Stewart, Ga. are about to experience a life changing adventure, one that Texas has proudly offered to protect our nation, the Army, and Texas.



Above- Surrounded by Texas and American flags, Soldiers of the 36th Infantry Division Special Troops Battalion stand at parade rest during the deployment ceremony in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom held at Camp Mabry, on October 19, 2008.

Right- Sgt Constance Hendrix, 56th IBCT, gives her Dad, Willie Hendrix, a hug .



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Transition Assistance Program For National Guard & Reservists

November 1-2, 2008
Saturday 9:00-3:30pm
Sunday 9:00-12 noon
Dallas- Grand Prairie

* IDT Credit with Commander's Approval

Topics Include:

- ◆ Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA)
- ◆ Veterans Preference in Federal Hiring
- ◆ Job Search
- ◆ Writing an Effective Resume
- ◆ Answering Difficult Interview Questions
- ◆ Evaluating Job Offers
- ◆ Texas State Benefits for Veterans
- ◆ Federal Benefits for Veterans

Pre- Registration Preferred
Due to Limited Seating

Julie Ramirez
512-782-1235
Julie.ramirez1@ng.army.mil

Future Dates Open For Registration

December 6-7 in San Antonio- Martindale
January 10-11 in Weslaco- Armory
February 7-8 in Houston- Ellington Field

36th ID Soldiers Receive Military Emergency Management Specialist Badge

Capt. David Burger and Sgt. Sportlon Jones, both assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters J7 Directorate, are the first members of the Texas Army National to be awarded the Military Emergency Management Specialist Badge. The badge signifies that certain FEMA training, a certain number of exercises, and a narrative have all been completed. The MEMS Academy is housed within the State Guard and allows TXMF personnel to be recognized for their training in one of TXMF primary missions, Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA). The MEMS Badge is being presented by MAJ Kristopher Krueger, TXSG, the MEMS State Director.

The Military Emergency Management Specialist Academy (MEMS Academy) of the State Guard Association of the United States, Inc. offers military personnel and other authorized individuals the unique opportunity to earn the nation's only professional qualification as a Military Emergency Management Specialist and earn the coveted Basic, Senior, and Master MEMS Skill Badges.

To be eligible for this skills badge a member must have met the criteria for the SGAUS Military Emergency Management Specialist (MEMS) Academy Basic Qualification. SGAUS members who have received the Basic MEMS Badge credentials are authorized to wear the badge or patch on their uniforms if permitted by their respective state military authority. The Military Emergency Management Specialist Skills Badge depicts the his-

toric United States "Civil Defense" eagle of World War II rampant on a bound laurel wreath, signifying the ancient symbol for "victory." This award is administered and presented by the SGAUS MEMS Academy



Sgt. Sportlon Jones and Capt. David Burger, J7, are awarded the badge of Military Emergency Management Specialist. (Photo Texas Military Forces)

New TRICARE Prime Fee Payment Process; online payment only

By Tiffany Anderson
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

TRICARE rules are expected to change regarding how your TRICARE Prime enrollment fees are paid.

As early as 2010, Prime beneficiaries will need to begin making their enrollment fee payments via electronic means. However, not everyone pays enrollment fees, so please note whether this applies to you:

You DO pay fees if you are enrolled in TRICARE Prime as a retired service member, the family of a retired service member, a survivor or an eligible former spouse.

You DO NOT pay fees if you are enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Prime Remote as an active duty service member, the family of an active duty service member or a transitional survivor of an active duty service member. There are also no fees associated with standard coverage.

These changes to payment of enrollment fees mean that those TRICARE enrollees who pay enrollment fees will be required to pay them by one of the following methods:

- Allotment from the sponsor's retired military pay; or
- Electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your

financial institution established directly to TriWest; or Recurring credit card (Visa® or MasterCard®).

When these changes become effective, the only time a check payment will be accepted is for the first payment to cover the next quarterly period while an allotment or other electronic means of payment is being processed.

If you are currently making your TRICARE Prime enrollment fee payments electronically, no action is needed, unless you are signed up for an online bill pay with your bank.

Luckily, it's easy to register and get started. To begin, simply log on to www.triwest.com/epay. Paying online has several positive features. For example: **Security.** TriWest uses a secure Web site, certified through the Defense Information Security Accreditation Program, leaving you the peace of mind that comes with secured access while managing your family's health care.

Convenience. At a glance, view payment history, claims status or receive instant updates through QuickAlert e-mails notifying you when an authorization or specialty referral has been processed. **Timely payments.** Save yourself the worry of writing and mailing checks, therefore helping to eliminate risk of missing payments, which could result in disenrollment from Prime.

Less relocation worries. When your payments are electronic, you'll have one less stop to make on your move so you can concentrate on what matters most.

Automatic payments. Automated payments take one more worry off your plate each month.

To start your electronic payments:

Online- Registered users can log on to www.triwest.com. Non-registered users can create an account at www.triwest.com and receive a password within minutes. Click "Online Payment" and provide the information required for your payment option (allotment, EFT, or credit card).

By mail- Go to www.triwest.com and select "Find A Form" from the Quick Links section to download and print an allotment or EFT/Recurring Credit Card form. Complete the applicable form, sign and mail it with your initial fee payment to: TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp. P.O. Box 43590, Phoenix, AZ 85080-3590.

Learn more about making your electronic payments by logging on to www.triwest.com/epay or calling 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378) between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. A representative will answer any questions and better inform you about online Web registration or help you establish an electronic fee payment.

Operation Crackdown: Eden Benefits from Texas National Guard

**Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker,
Texas Joint Counterdrug Task Force Public Affairs**

Small town America faces many of the same problems and challenges as larger cities. However, they often have a much smaller budget to work with.

Eden, TX, a community covering just 2.4 square miles, has a little over 500 households and a population of 2,561 according to the 2000 census. By many standards, Eden is a small Texas town, 180 miles northwest of Austin.

Eden resident Linda Markham noticed an increase in vacant housing that was unfit to be lived in and decided to see what could be done about it.

“Everyone wanted the town cleaned up, but the challenge was how it could be accomplished in a small community with a limited budget,” Markham observed.

Reports of juveniles using illegal substances and an increase in petty vandalism prompted the community to take a proactive stance against drug abuse. Eden needed help.

What started as an observation became a two year journey of perseverance. Markham met with friends and then city officials. She, along with her friends, organized volunteers and supporters to help and give guidance.

“Many gave up along the way, Markham said. “We established a phone bank and continued to ask citizens to support our cause.”

On a hunch Markham called Staff Sgt. Jim Levine, with the Texas Joint Counterdrug Task Force. Levine is the non-commissioned officer-in-charge of Task Force Crackdown, a Texas Military Forces Joint Counterdrug Task Force approved mission. Task Force Crackdown has been in operation for 12 years. That single call changed Eden.

This Texas Military Forces program is designed to assist



Above- Staff Sgt. Jim Levine, Counterdrug Task Force, talks to Eden schoolchildren during the Crackdown operation.

Above right- An excavator moves the remnants of an abandoned house in Eden, Texas.



Texas communities in the removal of houses and structures that are being or have been used by drug users and or dealers.

Thirty-seven homes and structures were removed in the two weeks Levine and his team spent in Eden. In total, four Texas communities benefitted from Task Force Crackdown in 2008, demolishing 124 structures, a record year for the program. Since 1993, more than 900 structures in 19 communities have been removed.

Manuel Anzaldura, owner of The RV Park and Casa Grande Art Gallery and Collectables store was grateful to see an abandoned house across from his businesses removed.

“It’s better for the neighborhood and better for business,” Anzaldura commented. “Occasionally RV Park customers would ask about the neighborhood and the people they saw at night going into the house. It looked bad and was not good for business.”

The actual demolition takes less than ten minutes. A large excavator is used to fold the walls of the structure in on itself and then a front loader scoops up the debris and moves it to a waiting dump truck. Debris removal can take a couple hours depending on how far the dump trucks must travel to a land fill.

Ronnie Sanders, Chief, Eden Police Department, said “It is very obvious they (Counterdrug Crackdown crew) are proud of the job they do, and believe their work accomplishes a lot, which it does.” Sanders continued, “The school children in Eden have new heroes. The number one choice at school when the children are asked what they want to be when they grow up is the Texas National Guard.”

“Our community is much better off because of these men and Task Force Crackdown. Not only for the work they have done for us, but the leadership, desire, dedication, and friendly atmosphere the Soldiers and Airmen provided.”



RecruitMilitary Career Fair

A free hiring event for veterans with a wide variety of work experience, men and women who are transitioning from active duty, members of the National Guard and reserves, and military spouses. Produced by RecruitMilitary in cooperation with HireVetsFirst - a unit of the U.S. Dept. of Labor - and The American Legion.

Thursday, November 13, 2008 ♦ 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Frank Erwin Center

BASKETBALL HOME OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS LONGHORNS

1701 Red River Street ♦ Austin, Texas

To prepare for the Fair:

1. Register as a job seeker at www.recruitmilitary.com.
2. Show up at the door with at least a dozen copies of your resume.

See you there!



News Briefs

Special Forces Assessment Drill

Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) is seeking qualified applicants to join Special Forces. We are a new asset to the Texas National Guard and we offer specialized training opportunities, unique foreign duty assignments, and an opportunity to join the Special Operations Community. Applicants should be competent, mature, self-motivated, and physically fit.

WHO: Texas Army National Guard male enlisted soldiers E3-E7. Must be US citizen, have a GT of 110 or higher, and eligible to obtain a SECRET security clearance. TXARNG male officers O2-O3 who have completed Officer Basic Course

WHAT: Special Forces Assessment Drill (SFAD)

WHEN: 14 Nov - 16 Nov 2008

Report at 1900 on the first day of SFAD

WHERE: Building 888, Camp Bullis, San Antonio TX 78247

If interested contact the accessions committee: ngtx-sf@ng.army.mil or Staff Sgt. Day at (210) 698-2938 ext 38



Office of Personnel Management Announces Beginning of Open Season

Washington, D.C. -- The U.S. Office of Personnel Management today announced premiums and benefits in the FEHB Program, which covers approximately 8 million federal employees, retirees and their dependents.

Federal employees and retirees can choose from among 269 health-plan options to be offered in the 2009 Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, including 10 nationwide fee-for-service options that are available to all enrollees and 27 High Deductible Health Plans.

Enrollees with self-only coverage will pay, on average, \$4.83 more each pay period (about \$125 per year) next year. Family coverage will cost an average \$11.12 more per pay period. FEHB enrollees pay - on average - 30 percent of the total cost of a plan's premium, while the government pays 70 percent.

In 2009, 10 fee-for-service plans and a number of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO) will expand coverage of hearing benefits for adults. This enhancement follows OPM's challenge last year to health carriers - which a number accepted - to improve the coverage of diagnostic tests and hearing aids for children in 2008.

Often cited as a model health-care system, the FEHB Program is not immune to external factors that influence the cost of medi-

cal care. In fact, two private studies predict medical costs next year will rise between 9.6 percent and 10.6 percent, with the aging population, the rise of prescription drug costs and patient demand for services fueling much of the increase.

"I appreciate the tough environment in which the FEHB Program currently operates," said Nancy Kichak, OPM's Associate Director for Strategic Human Resources Policy. "While we worked very hard to contain premium costs -- and we were more successful with some health plans than with others -- federal employees and retirees can take comfort in knowing they are enrolled in a solid program that provides outstanding benefits and customer service."

"One hallmark of the FEHB Program is 'choice', meaning employees and retirees can use the Open Season to shop among plans and, perhaps, move to one that better meets their medical and financial needs," said Kay Ely, OPM's Associate Director for Human Resources Products and Services.

OPM conducts an annual Open Season to give federal employees and retirees the opportunity to select a new health plan; during the Open Season, current federal employees who are not enrolled may elect FEHB coverage. The Open Season also gives employee and retirees the chance

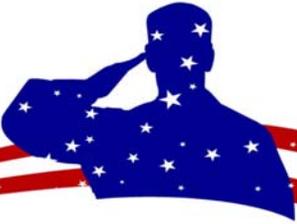
to select supplemental dental and/or vision coverage.

The Open Season also gives employees the opportunity to elect coverage under a tax-deferred Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for health care and/or dependent care, or to adjust an existing FSA. Current FSA enrollees must re-enroll for coverage in 2009 during the Open Season. In 2007, nearly 246,000 individuals had a Flexible Spending Account. By law, retirees are not eligible for FSA benefits.

The Open Season also can be used by employees and retirees to enroll in supplemental dental and/or vision insurance coverage. In 2008 - in only its second year of availability - the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) had more than 1 million enrollments.

Each Open Season, OPM publishes the popular Guide to Federal Benefits. This year, it identifies 42 FEHB carriers for their best-practices on health-care cost and quality transparency. OPM also will unveil a new Federal Benefits website (www.opm.gov/insure), which will let enrollees look at their overall health-related coverages and give them a better understanding of the coordination of benefits between, for instance, the FEHB Program and the supplemental dental/vision coverage.

Houston Freedom Fest Holds 2nd Annual Event & Fundraiser



Houston Freedom Fest
Honoring the Heroes who give us Freedom

Saturday, November 8, 2008
11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.


DISCOVERY GREEN

Admission is FREE

Fun Family Activities All Day!
The Houston Zoo Mobile "Tour of Texas"
James Coney Island, Moonwalks, Obstacle Course with a 16' finish slide!
Entertainers, Arts & Crafts, and much more!

Honor our Veterans 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
120 person Choir with Orchestra

Concert 3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Concert brought to you by URLabel.net

Keynote Speaker
Lt. Col. Oliver North

Emcee **Bill Balleza**
KPRC Channel 2 Anchorman and Vietnam Veteran

Dallas Christian College
10 Million Dollars in Scholarships for Qualified Veterans

Booths
Information from local organizations that benefit and help Veterans
Book Signings by Oliver North and Nate Self
Area Churches with local programs

**Bring your family for a day of fun
and honor the brave men and women who have
laid down their lives to preserve our way of life,
freedom and liberty.**

www.HoustonFreedomFest.org

Houston Freedom Fest anticipates over 25,000 people to participate in a two day event, November 7 and 8, 2008 to honor and remember our military soldiers. A fundraiser will be held November 7 at Hilton Post Oak for over 700 party goers with such speakers as Nate Self, military hero and author of *Two Wars: One Hero's Fight on Two Fronts - Abroad and Within*), General Bob Dees, United States Army Retired, and legendary Lt. Col. Oliver North as the keynote speaker. On November 8 the awareness campaign continues with a celebration at downtown's new Discovery Green that will entertain, inform, inspire, and connect the veterans, churches, and citizens of Houston; resulting in an affirmation of Houston's military community and relationship building to meet the unique needs of military troops and their families.

A fair will be set up representing churches, hospitals, sponsors, and other supporters of this important cause. Since many of the veterans in Houston are made up of young families, there will also be things to entertain the children such as a replica of the Liberty Bell, moon walks, face painting, balloon animals, cotton candy, popcorn and James Coney Island will be serving hot dogs. Bill Balleza from Houston's own Channel 2 will serve as emcee for both events.

The festival event will feature a two hour concert hosted by Unveiling Records (UR Label) featuring finalists from their internet contest, "The Unveiling." UR Label will announce the contest winner at the Houston Freedom Fest. Dallas Christian College will present \$5,000 scholarship offers to prospective students in attendance and award \$10,000 scholarship offers to the finalists of the UR Label contest. The winner of the contest will receive a \$25,000 scholarship offer. All scholarships are contingent upon enrollment at the College. Dallas Christian's President Dusty Rubeck will present the offers following the evening's concert. All proceeds from the two days will go to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Foundation of America.

The primary purpose of the Houston Freedom Fest is to honor our veterans past, present, and future with a two day special event on November 7th and 8, while educating the public, area churches, and other care giving centers to the tremendous problem our veterans are returning with, most notably PTSD. Through this effort, the Houston Freedom Fest hopes to connect armed forces and families to the community and these expanded resources. To help in meeting these needs requires an intentional, concerted effort by developing a "Corps of Compassion" (comprised of churches and other caring organizations, armed with expanded resources and training), which reaches out to meet the needs at a personal relationship level.

In many ways, Houston is a "military town": serving thousands of citizen soldiers, active duty families with parents, sons, and daughters serving around the world; various Reserve component headquarters, a major Veterans Affairs hospital, Bush Intercontinental Airport as a major thoroughfare of military personnel, and an absolute multitude of military veterans. It is the

hope that Houston can be a model for other cities in recognizing the urgent needs of military families and responding with a heart of compassion. This call also provides an opportunity for national healing, through properly honoring our military service men and women and their families for their service, rather than allowing them to sink into lives of isolation, poverty, and public alienation. Regardless of one's outlook on war and conflict in general, these families need compassion and assistance.



The caisson entering the cemetery during the funeral of Sgt. Maj. Julio Ordonez, a Texas National Guard Soldier killed in action in Iraq. (Photo by Capt. James Campbell, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs.)