

The

RAILSPLITTER



Illinois National Guard

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BEST A9 Soldiers return home



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michael Camacho, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Sgt. Timothy Sanders of Mount Zion, meets his daughter, Grace, for the first time after returning home from Afghanistan with the Bilateral Embedded Staff Team (BEST A9) at Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Nov. 1. Approximately 20 Soldiers with the BEST A9 deployed alongside their Polish counterparts and were part of Task Force White Eagle XI.

Candidates visit Civil War battlefield

Story by Adriana Schroeder
Illinois National Guard Historian

SPRINGFIELD – Weapons, uniforms, maps, flags and words written by Illinois Soldiers of another place in time were touched, held, carried and spoken by officer candidates of class 57-12. The



future officers traveled to the Chickamauga Civil War battlefield in Georgia for a two-day staff ride Nov. 1 to 4.

“Battlefield staff rides are an essential part of leader development,” said Col. Thomas Weiss of Sherman, 129th Regional Training Institute (RTI) commander, who

traveled with the students. “It reinforces the pride in our heritage and provides a great opportunity to apply leadership principles and teaching points to key events of the past.”

Prior to the trip, each candidate researched an assigned Civil War commander who fought in the battle. They found out what decisions were made, how orders were carried out and the results of the orders.

During the staff ride, candidates separated into two groups on the battlefield: union and confederate. Each represented their assigned commander and relived the battle on the very ground where Illinoisans fought and died nearly 150 years ago.

Girard students host Illinois Guardsmen

Story by Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD – Nine members of the Illinois Army National Guard attended the North Macoupin County School District Veterans Day celebration in Girard Nov. 12.

“It was an awesome experience to see the student’s eyes light up and ask a bunch of questions,” said Pvt. David Nellis of Willisville. “It is definitely worth making an impression like this.”

Nellis, along with Master Sgt. Jeramie Mayes of Springfield and Sgt. Matthew Ellis of Pickneyville, all with the 233rd Military Police Company in Springfield, drove a military police armored security vehicle (ASV) to educate school children about military vehicles and equipment.

Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Dennison of Rochester and Pfc. Jason Barrow of Pawnee, both communications



specialist with the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in Springfield, discussed their military occupational specialty with the students.

“The kids were definitely more interested in the ASV, but there were a lot of questions about our equipment as well,” said Dennison. “These events are definitely great for the National Guard since our organization is community based.”

Staff Sgt. Robert Gasen with Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield, and Sgt. April Gasen with the 232nd, both of Girard, have children who attend the school and assisted moving kids through the lines outside. They also fielded other questions about the equipment.

“One child wanted to know what kind of tank the military police vehicle was,” said Gasen.

Paul takes command of 183rd FW

Story by Tech. Sgt. Andria Sapp
183rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD

183rd Fighter Wing (FW) Commander Col. Michael A. Meyer of Chicago, relinquished command to Col. Ronald E. Paul of Cudahy, Wisc., during a ceremony Nov. 3 in Springfield. Meyer will retire after nearly 35 years of service.

"I am honored and humbled to accept command of the 183rd Fighter Wing," Paul said. "My family and I are very excited to return home to Springfield."

Family and friends of both men gathered to show support. More than 400 past and present members of the 183rd also attended the ceremony.

In a sentiment directed to Meyer, Paul stated, "I would like to thank Colonel Meyer for his years of steadfast leadership. He has definitely postured us for future success."

Paul said he is busy planning for the short and long terms goals of the wing.

"The members of the 183rd have a rich tradition and a bright future," Paul said. "In the short term, we will focus on preparation for our mega inspection. I fully anticipate our team to wow the inspectors. Further down the road, we will demonstrate our abilities and show we are the best in the business. We will seek out and attempt to secure expanded roles which match our skills."

Governor announces additional funding for first-time home buyers

Story by the Office of Governor Pat Quinn

WESTCHESTER – In honor of Veterans Day, Gov. Pat Quinn announced the investment of an additional \$5 million to the Welcome Home Heroes homebuyer financing package to make homeownership more affordable for more military families. This new Illinois Jobs Now! capital funding will allow an additional 500 military families to access a \$10,000 forgivable grant toward the purchase of a new home, as well as a mortgage tax credit worth up to \$20,000 over the life of the loan.

Welcome Home Heroes is open to all qualified Illinois veterans. Active military personnel, reservists and Illinois Guardsmen may also participate, but must be first-time buyers. The package includes a forgivable \$10,000 grant for down payment and closing cost assistance, and an affordable interest rate for a secure 30-year fixed rate mortgage.

Hanging up their boots after 20+ years of service

■ Capt. Michelle Morgan

HHC, 634th Brigade Support Battalion

■ Master Sgt. Shawn Ward

HHC, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team

■ Staff Sgt. David Carroll

Detachment 1, 1644th Transportation Co.

■ Staff Sgt. Wilbur Hollins

HHC, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Reg.

■ Staff Sgt. James Urquiza

Company B, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment

Meyer retires after nearly 35 years of service

Story by Tech. Sgt. Andria Sapp
183rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD – 183rd Fighter Wing (FW) Commander Col. Michael A. Meyer of Springfield retired Nov. 7 after nearly 35 years of military service.

"Being in the Air National Guard has been a great opportunity. I have had great opportunities to serve my community, my state, and my country," said Meyer during his retirement ceremony Nov. 3. "I have been able to work with some of the greatest, most patriotic, and selfless people in the

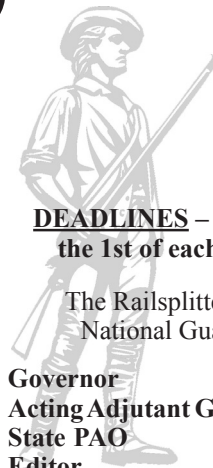
world. We have laughed out loud together and we have cried together. Today is a day of laughter. That is an order."

Meyer commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1977, joined the Air National Guard in 1978 and then earned his pilot wings in 1979. Other military positions Meyer has held include a short tour at National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., F-16 flight instructor, 183rd Operations Group Vice Commander and 183rd Fighter Wing Air Operations Officer.

"His leadership was critical to our wing moving forward into our new missions."

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

- Jackson takes command of 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team
- Little takes command of 65th Troop Command Brigade
- Fifth graders visit military museum
- St. Louis Rams host veteran's appreciation event at stadium
- Neely named Joint Chief of Staff



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DEADLINES – Story and photo submissions are due the 1st of each month to ngilstaffpao@ng.army.mil

The Railsplitter is the official newsletter of the Illinois National Guard authorized by the Adjutant General.

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