

870 public safety officers remembered

On page 2: Fallen Soldiers remembered

Va. Guard Soldiers, Airmen remembered at memorial

Thirty-two Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were remembered among 870 Virginia public safety officers who died in the line of duty at the dedication of the Commonwealth Public Safety Memorial Dec. 6, 2014, at the memorial site at Capitol Square in Richmond, Va.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe and Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran provided remarks during the ceremony. Former Secretaries of Public Safety Marla Graff Decker and Bryan Rhode and Brig. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, were among the group of public safety leaders who read the names on the memorial. Soldiers from the 29th Division Band provided ceremonial music and the Va. Guard Funeral Honors Program provided a rifle salute.

“Today we truly have a reason to celebrate,” McAuliffe said. “As someone who has been involved with this memorial for several years, this memorial holds a special significance to me.”

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/10/6487/>



Virginia National Guard Soldiers provide a rifle salute at the dedication of the Commonwealth Public Safety Memorial Dec. 6, 2014, in Richmond, Va.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Virginia Air National Guard welcomes new State Command Chief

Chief Master Sgt. Jay N. Ellis started working in his new role as the Virginia Air National Guard State Command Chief in early October 2014 in Sandston, Va. Ellis was last assigned as the command chief master sergeant for the 192nd Fighter Wing at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/05/6491/>

Program aims to improve performance, streamline processes of the Va. Guard

Members of the Virginia Army Guard completed a five-day Army Communities of Excellence program self-assessment training course using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence Dec. 5, 2014, at Fort Pickett, Va.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/12/6480/>

Va. Guard launches official LinkedIn page

The Virginia National Guard launched its official LinkedIn company page Dec. 17, 2014, as part of ongoing efforts to bring quality content and information to all members of the Virginia National Guard community.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/17/6354/>

Holiday message from Adjutant General, Senior Enlisted Advisor

Command Sgt. Maj. Ferris and I want to wish everyone in the Virginia National Guard, whether you are serving in uniform, as a civilian or as a family member, a wonderful holiday season. Regardless of your faith background, the central theme during this time of year is peace to all.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/18/6517/>

Mark Your Calendars!

Jan. 16, 2015: Commonwealth's Guardian newsletter resumes publication

This is the last issue of the 2014 Commonwealth's Guardian newsletter. Publication will resume Jan. 16, 2015.

Jan. 21, 2015: Va. National Guard Day at the General Assembly

Members of the Virginia Guard and Virginia Defense Force will display equipment outside the General Assembly Building from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to demonstrate some of the Guard's capabilities.

Brig. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, will host a reception for members of the General Assembly from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in the 4th Floor West Conference Room of the General Assembly Building.

Fredericksburg readiness center dedicated to fallen Soldiers

Nearly a decade after a 2004 Iraq suicide bomb attack took the lives of Sgt. Nicholas C. Mason and Sgt. David A. Ruhren, their families, friends and fellow Virginia National Guard Soldiers joined together Dec. 6, 2014, in Fredericksburg, Va., in a ceremony held to remember their sacrifice and dedicate the Fredericksburg readiness center in their honor.

Mason and Ruhren were killed in action Dec. 21, 2004, on Forward Operating Base Marez, in Mosul, Iraq, when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden vest in a mess tent, killing 22 people, including 14 U.S. troops, and injuring 70 more. Both Soldiers were assigned to Company A, 229th Engineer Battalion and were mobilized with the 276th Engineer Battalion.

"We have gathered here today to recognize the loss of two warriors," said Col. James Zollar, the keynote speaker for the event who served as the executive officer the 276th Engineer Battalion at the time of the attack. "In conducting this act we ensure that the sacrifices made in war will not be forgotten with the passage of time."

Following remarks by Lt. Col. Charles Martin, the 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion commander, Maj. Colin Noyes, the current commander of the 276th Engineer Battalion, Zollar and Brig. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, Maj. Beau Mason, the master of ceremony for the event, surprised the Mason and Ruhren families, along with several other attendees, by announcing that the wreath laying listed in the event program would not be happening and that instead the readiness center would be dedicated in their name, as the Mason-Ruhren Readiness Center.

"I can't even put it into words. It's amazing," said Sonja Ruhren, Sgt. Ruhren's mother, on the dedication. She said she had no idea the armory was going to be named for her son, and that he, always humble, would have been shocked as well.

"It's absolutely impressive that 10 years later Nick and David still mean this much to the community and to the Guard," said Christine Mason, Sgt. Mason's mother.

Vic Mason, Sgt. Mason's father, said, "The Guard is a family because the Soldiers are from the community and they stay in the community and do they so much for the community."

The parents of both Mason and Ruhren spoke about the love the men had for the fellow Soldiers and for the incredible support they've received from their communities, to include the Virginia National Guard community, over the past 10 years.

"If we talk about the National Guard as a whole, they were his family," Ruhren's mother said. She says when he came home on leave from Iraq before the attack, he didn't seem like he wanted to be home. She said she was frustrated with him and couldn't understand why he wasn't glad to be home, why he didn't seem interested in spending time with her or his friends. Finally, he told her, "While I'm here, something could happen to them, and I'm not there to protect them."

Ruhren's mother says that's when she realized how important his fellow Soldiers were to him. "He always, always loved them,"



Family members of Sgt. Nicholas C. Mason and Sgt. David A. Ruhren unveil the replica plaque dedicating the Fredericksburg readiness center in their names Dec. 6, 2014.

she said. "They were his brothers and sisters."

Following the unveiling of a replica of the sign dedicating the readiness center, Soldiers conducted a final roll call for Mason and Ruhren. The roll call is a final tribute paid by Soldiers to their fallen comrades. It has its origin in the accountability roll call conducted by the first sergeant following combat and is called with the conviction that all unit members will be accounted for and none will ever be forgotten, according to U.S. Army doctrine.

For young Soldiers who come to the newly-named readiness center, Mason's parents said they want them to know what good Soldiers Mason and Ruhren were, that they embodied all that it means to be a Soldier.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/06/6472/>

MORE ON THE WEB

Social media smart cards available for download

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/18/6507/>

Army Safety Gram: Tips to Help You Safely Deck Your Halls

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2014/12/17/6498/>

Photos: Kobernik takes command of 3-116th Infantry

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157649629834195/>

Photos: Senator Stosch visits Va. Guard operations center

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157649714210755/>

Photos: SPSHS, AG and SEA visit aviation battalion holiday meal

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157649247588470/>

Photos: Deputy secretary addresses troops during holiday meal

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157647324449204/>

Photos: Va. Guard recognizes State Police commo tech

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