

Veterans honored at events across the state

Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen joined Veterans Day observations across the state to honor all the men and women who served our country in uniform in the past and are currently serving at home and abroad. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 15,000 Virginia Guard Soldiers and Airmen have mobilized on federal active duty for combat operations, peacekeeping and homeland security missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo and other locations around the world.

“There are many examples of selfless service demonstrated by the men and women who answered the call during our nation’s wars from World War I through the Global War on Terror,” Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, wrote in his Veterans Day message. “Their service provides such tremendous inspiration to those of us who continue to serve today. We owe them all a special debt of gratitude for the shining example they set.”

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/15/8247/>



Col. Lapthe C. Flora, commander of 91st Troop Command, visits with D-Day veteran John Kessler before Virginia's Veterans Parade Nov. 7, 2015, in Roanoke, Va.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

116th Infantry veterans and Soldiers gather for annual muster

Veterans of the 116th Infantry Regiment and Soldiers of the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team gathered at the annual Regimental Muster for camaraderie and fellowship Nov. 14, 2015, in Staunton, Va. Senior leaders also provided updates on the recent activities of the 116th and the Virginia National Guard.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/17/8236/>

Fall Family Day combines education, fun

Virginia National Guard families learned about litter control and enjoyed activities like mini-golf, laser tag and go-carts during the Fall Family Day held in recognition of Military Family Appreciation Month and hosted by the Virginia National Guard Youth Program Nov. 14, 2015, in Chester, Va.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/16/8238/>

VDF conducts multi-state, multi-agency commo exercise

More than 150 members of the Virginia Defense Force deployed to locations across the state Nov. 6-7, 2015, to conduct Forward Guardian 2016, a multi-state, multi-agency communication exercise that incorporated multiple state defense force units and established radio contact across four time zones.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/10/8233/>

192nd Intelligence Squadron to receive Meritorious Unit Award

The Virginia Air National Guard's 192nd Intelligence Squadron, 192nd Fighter Wing stationed at Langley Air Force Base will be honored with the Meritorious Unit Award for outstanding service in direct support of combat operations between June 2014 and May 2015.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/05/8231/>

Mark Your Calendars!

Dec. 4-6: Mission: Health Families Retreat

A fun, family-oriented skills building course for military veterans and families coping with the impact of deployment, military service, post traumatic stress, operational stress or traumatic brain injury.

The retreat will be held Dec. 4-6, 2015, at the Airfield 4H Conference Center in Wakefield, Va. Check in is from 4-6 p.m. and check out is 12 noon. Cost is \$25.

For more information contact Kerri Gerke, family resource specialist, at (804)862-8002 ext 3035 or by email at Gerkek@RBHA.org.

Fort Pickett training site named for 183rd RTI instructor

Just past Fort Pickett's 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute, a crowd of Soldiers, family members and friends gathered under blue skies to celebrate the life of Master Sgt. Patrick R. McFarland, who was the 88M Motor Transport Operator course manager when he passed away unexpectedly in September. The ceremony, held Nov. 13, 2015, was organized in order to dedicate and name a key 88M training location as "Mac's Hill" in McFarland's honor. The event also allowed several members of McFarland's family to visit his office, still untouched by his fellow Soldiers since his death, as well as to see some of the sites where he assisted in training hundreds of Soldiers.

Lt. Col. Travis Mabrey, commander of 2nd Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute, opened the ceremony.

"Many of the Soldiers you see driving today are driving because of Master Sgt. McFarland," Mabrey said. "I can't tell you how proud we all are and you can see by the crowd gathered here today how much he meant to all of us."

Following his remarks, Mabrey introduced Sgt. 1st Class Michelle Homer, a fellow 88M cadre member who counted McFarland as a close friend. She spoke first about the military accomplishments achieved by McFarland during his more than 24 years of service in the Virginia Army National Guard before explaining why the dedication site was chosen.

"Some of the things that Master Sgt. McFarland did right up here on this pad, was instruct Soldiers," Homer said. She explained that a significant portion of the 88M course was formerly conducted about 15-20 minutes away from the RTI, at one of Fort Pickett's maneuver areas, which necessitated multiple daily trips back and forth from the RTI to the training site. Homer explained that McFarland suggested using the concrete pad, formerly a barracks site, right next to the RTI's motor pool for the training which he realized would save valuable training time. Thanks to McFarland's suggestion, the 88M students now use the site to train on loading and unloading racks and trailers, as well as the basics of big truck driving, including how to turn and back up the massive vehicles to a loading dock.

"For me, it's very personal that we dedicate something like this site because he was a big part of making this part of our training," Homer said. "On any given day, Mac spent 10 or 11 hours out here."

Homer talked briefly about what McFarland meant to her, as a fellow noncommissioned officer.

"Everybody took his lead," she said. "You wanted to make him proud. He gave you the skills and everything else you needed to do the job and you just did it because you wanted to see that big smile on his face at the end of the day."

Following Homer's remarks, Staff Sgt. Travis Zeoli addressed the crowd, reminding them first of a few of McFarland's favorite sayings.

"Mac trained me. I can do anything on these trucks that I want to do," Zeoli said. "And I've followed Mac everywhere and if it wasn't for Mac, I wouldn't be what I am today."



Family members of Master Sgt. Patrick R. McFarland join together with Virginia National Guard Soldiers Nov. 13, 2015, at Fort Pickett, Va., for a site dedication ceremony in honor of McFarland, who passed away unexpectedly in September.

Zeoli told the crowd that McFarland had always been there for him during difficult times in his life, that being friends with McFarland was an exceptional and important thing.

"Mac was a brother to me," Zeoli said.

Following the remarks from Soldiers who served with McFarland, several members of his family came forward to hang the sign that designated the training site as "Mac's Hill," dedicated in honor of McFarland, with a short biography highlighting his military accomplishments and hung on supports decked in the transportation colors, yellow and red.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/17/8225/>

MORE ON THE WEB

192nd MSG recognizes new commander

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/05/8241/>

Photos: Fallen public safety officers honored

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157660997926165>

Photos: War Memorial ceremony honors veterans

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/albums/72157661125962011>

Photos: Veterans honored with parade in Roanoke

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157660994858561>

Virginia War Memorial

<http://www.vawarmemorial.org/>

116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/116thIBCT/>



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