

Events honor VNG's women Soldiers and veterans

Two recent events marking Women's History Month and Virginia Women Veterans Week 2019 honored Virginia National Guard's female Soldiers and veterans, including one woman serving with the Norfolk-based 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Sgt. Taylor Cunningham, who works full-time with the 1-111th, was recognized during the Military Through The Ages event at the historic Jamestown Settlement March 16, 2019, near Williamsburg, Virginia. The annual event featured a special salute to women's wartime service, from their original support roles to their modern inclusion in combat units.

During the program, Cunningham was recognized for leading the charge of women in combat roles in the VNG.

"As of January 2016, the Secretary of Defense officially opened all military jobs to women," said the program emcee, retired Army Lt. Col. Robin Phillips. "Our very own Sgt. Cunningham is proving equal to the challenge."

"It's not just men, but women play a big part in serving our country," said Cunningham.

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/20/12814/>



Women veterans from all branches of the military including the Virginia National Guard are honored with pins recognizing their service during the Virginia Women Veterans Week kickoff event March 18, 2019, in Richmond, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

1-111th showcases firepower during Military Through the Ages event
 Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Norfolk-based 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team showed off their firepower during the annual Military Through The Ages event March 16-17, 2019, at the historic Jamestown Settlement near Williamsburg, Virginia.
 Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/19/12797/>

State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach serves as vital training facility
 The State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach serves as a vital training installation, not just for the Virginia National Guard, but for personnel from all four branches of the military, both active duty and reserve.
 Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/15/12735/>

Personalized proclamations available in honor of Month of the Military Child
 April is the Month of the Military Child, a special month to recognize and pay tribute to military families and their children for the daily sacrifices and for their commitment, courage, and unconditional support of our Armed Forces.
 Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/19/12807/>

Online, resident training now available for IPPS-A implementation
 The Army's new personnel and pay system is coming to Virginia this spring and its rollout will require Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers and leaders at all levels to complete various levels of training.
 Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/15/12581/>

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<http://nationalguard.com/va>

Va. Air National Guard
<https://www.192fw.ang.af.mil/join>

Va. Defense Force
<http://vdf.virginia.gov/joinvdf/>

1710th TC Soldiers recognized for life-saving actions

Last summer, near the end of annual training for the 1710th Transportation Company, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Johnson collapsed on the drill floor of the readiness center in Emporia, Virginia. Three Soldiers – Sgt. 1st Class Michelle Homer, Sgt. Christina So and Sgt. Gella Johnson – administered CPR for approximately six minutes before Johnson regained consciousness.

“If I’d been anywhere else, I probably would never have made it,” Johnson said.

Less than a week after his collapse, on Aug. 2, 2018, doctors cracked open his chest and repaired his heart. By October, he was back at work, back with his unit and a few months after that, on March 10, 2019, Johnson was standing in formation when Homer, So and Johnson were recognized for their life-saving efforts.

“I’m happy for them,” Johnson said. “I’m glad to see them get recognized and I’m glad to still be here.”

Johnson doesn’t remember much from that day, just that he was playing basketball with his Soldiers right before lunch. The area they were in was small, he said, they weren’t even running, but he felt like he could breathe.

A few feet away, So was watching. Johnson just didn’t look right, she said, so she kept her eye on him.

“The next thing I knew, he was collapsing,” So said. She was just a few feet away when it happened and immediately ran toward Johnson, trying to catch him before he fell to prevent further injury. “Then he was unconscious,” she said.

So tried to get Johnson to respond. She tried talking to him, she rubbed her knuckles along his sternum, but nothing worked.

“His eyes were fixed wide open, he wasn’t breathing and his whole torso started turning white and his neck, up to his ears, started turning blue,” Homer said. She and So started CPR.

“We kept going, rotation after rotation,” Homer said. “I was giving the breaths and she was doing the compressions.” Minutes in, So started to tire and Sgt. Gella Johnson jumped in to help for a few rotations, then So swapped back in.

“That fresh push, just all of a sudden, the color came back,” Homer said.

After six minutes of chest compressions and rescue breaths, Johnson started breathing again, his rescuers found a pulse and he woke up. At first, he didn’t know what was going on. He wanted to stand up, to get back to work, to know if he’d lost the basketball game he’d been playing.

Johnson was diagnosed with a bicuspid aortic valve. The aortic valve regulates the flow of blood from the heart into the aorta and a normal aortic valve has three leaflets, but Johnson’s only had two. He had deployed three times, spent years in the military and never had a single heart issue before that day.

“Every doctor I saw said I should have never got up, that based on the condition that I had and what happened, that they never should have been able to revive me with regular CPR,” Johnson said.

At the awards ceremony, So and Homer were awarded Army Commendation Medals while Sgt. Gella Johnson received a



Sgt. 1st Class Michelle Homer, Sgt. Christina So and Sgt. Gella Johnson receive recognition for saving the life of Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Johnson last summer in a ceremony held March 10, 2019, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard Commendation Medal.

“The Soldier was dead and they brought him back to life,” said Command Sgt. Maj. James Shepard, command sergeant major for the 1030th Transportation Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group. “Because of them, he was able to go back to his family.”

Both Homer and So stressed the importance of learning basic first aid and CPR.

“I feel like everyone should try to learn CPR, at least the compressions and breath part,” So said. “You can save a life.”

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/20/12818/>

MORE ON THE WEB

New assignments for Rose, Zana announced

<https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/03/15/12830/>

Photos: Fort Pickett hosts JROTC, FFA students

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157690450647603>

Photos: VDF conducts communications, security training

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157706038225441>

Photos: VDF OCS graduates

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Photos: Brother follows sister into field artillery

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