



**Weekday Warriors**

By **Melissa Regenitter-Muscatine Journal** (used with permission)



**Spc. Josh Perkins of the Iowa National Guard 2133rd Transportation Company of Muscatine and Centerville watches the tree line during an exercise at Camp Ripley Thursday afternoon in Little Falls, Minn. Participants in Bosslift rode along with members of the transportation company, observing their training procedures.**  
(Photo: Beth Van Zandt/Muscatine Journal)

CAMP RIPLEY, Minn. — As they hid in the trees and tall grass, M16 machine guns propped and ready to fire, Eric Smith and Mike Allbee got the order to charge the incoming insurgents who were throwing hand grenades and shooting in their direction.

“Attack, attack, attack!” the platoon leader yelled. The men crept forward, ducking in the grass and then popping up to fire at the enemy.

The mock drill, with mock ammunition, was one of the many hands-on events that Muscatine business leaders participated in on July 12 and 13 as part of the Bosslift event held by the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The ESGR is a U.S. Department of Defense organization aimed at building relationships between employers and members of the Army National Guard and Reserves.

Five Muscatine business professionals took part in the event: Along with them were ESGR volunteers Greg Monroe, an employee of Grain Processing Corp and an Iowa National Guard aviation unit veteran who served from 1986-96, and Roger Roskens, retired Louisa-Muscatine School principal, who assisted in recruiting employers to join the program.

“They are learning and getting involved, and they’re enjoying it. That’s what it’s all about,” Monroe said of the employers. Monroe added the program is vital in educating employers and building relationships and better understanding of the vital role Iowa National Guard soldiers play.

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- Area 7:** Marty Graber (319) 372-1896
- Area 9:** Harry Cockrell (563) 324-1028
- Area 11:** Rich Burchett (712) 755-5153

- Area 2:** Kipp Harris (712) 243-6777
- Area 4:** Dave Campbell (515) 554-5772
- Area 6:** Pete Vanderhoef (319) 337-4188
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## WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

### **State Chair Barry Spear**

(Remarks made to Dubuque Rotary Club in May of this year, edited for space available)

I am a businessperson just like you. I work for the fifth largest employer in the state of Iowa (Iowa Health System) and my wife and I own a commercial printing company in Des Moines. I experience the large employer perspective as well as the small employer. I have been a Rotary President and I've assisted in the startup of a new Rotary while living and working in Cedar Rapids.

In January of 2006 I was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Defense to be chairman of Iowa ESGR. I was brought to that decision by an experience I had in 2002 as one of three Iowans to be asked to attend the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania at a national security briefing. I have never read a newspaper or listened to a news report the same way I did before that experience.

We are in a war, right or wrong, it bears no importance on this presentation. This presentation will not be a defense nor a criticism of the current war. It's a complex issue, lots of opinion and emotion. The extended nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has placed tremendous pressure on soldiers/sailors/airmen and their families and employers. Today we have a military based not upon the draft as when we were growing up and in college, but depending entirely upon volunteerism.

This presentation centers on the impact on employers, the issues that surround them, the law called the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act-providing job protection and rights and obligations of reinstatement to employees who participate in the National Guard, reserve, and active duty training and service. Currently over one-half of the entire fighting force of the United States is civilian volunteer. These folks have jobs, just like you and me and probably work for you and me. It turns out each and every employer has a role in maintaining a strong national defense. In many ways, we are a very important component of our national defense.

As an employer you are vital to enabling your employees who are members of the National Guard and Reserve to serve their country. Moreover, your active support and encouragement is key to their success. ESGR, the Committee for Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve, is Business Leadership working with Business Leadership. I want you to join me and not for just doing what the law requires, but join the ranks of Iowa employers that go above and beyond.

### **Red Light on This Scheme**

Though most ESGR members may be aware of this scam, it is worth repeating because of the flow of National Guard and Reserve members to and from active duty and with all the information coming at them and their families. A few months ago a young sounding caller with an American accent called the wife of an American serviceman overseas. The caller identified herself as being from the American Red Cross and stated the spouse's husband was hurt while on duty in Iraq and had been med-evac'd to Germany. The caller stated they could not start treatment until paperwork was accomplished and for that she needed the spouse to verify the husband's social security number and date of birth. The spouse was not caught unawares, especially since she knew her husband was in the United Kingdom and did not give out any information. Though this is a situation that most likely would involve units and their people, remind service members and their families that the American Red Cross always goes through official channels and the families should never give out any personal information over the phone (good advice for any of us), including whether the spouse is deployed.



(Chairman Spear (middle) talking with Dan Nicholson, Area Eight Vice-Chair (on the left) and Tom Tully of the ESGR Foundation (on the right) following the Rotary presentation)

## Central Iowa residents experience life in the National Guard

By Greg Pierquet, Marshalltown Times-Republican (used with permission)

As the end of 2007 approaches, Marshalltown's 2133rd Transportation Company is approaching the point where it could be deployed again. The 2133rd and the rest of the 554th Quartermaster Battalion is currently training at Camp Ripley, Minn. at their annual training exercises, or Extended Battle Assembly. Joining Marshalltown-area soldiers and members of the 2133rd TC from Centerville and Muscatine were members of the 186th Military Police Company out of Camp Dodge and the 554th Quartermaster Battalion from Newton.

In all, 87 citizen-soldiers from the 2133rd joined more than 200 from the 186th and 554th at the annual training. Accompanying the 554th's soldiers Thursday and Friday during the two-week training were 35 employers and supporters of the Guard, who were able to see first-hand that when their employees are gone for two weeks in the summer, it is not for vacation.



Known as a “boss lift,” the experience was made possible both by the Guard and the Iowa Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a group that works to foster healthy relationships between Guard members and their employers, who lose their employees for 11 weekends and a two-week stretch during the year. During the course of the two days, the group of employers and special guests was able to crawl around in the tall grasses, fire machine guns, use assault rifles, throw hand grenades — all blanks, of course — in simplified versions of combat drills.

## Creston Police Chief Named Patriot Employer

Chief Jamie Christensen of the Creston Police Department is recognized as a “Patriotic Employer” by Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve. The award is presented to employers for contributing to national security and protecting liberty and freedom by supporting employee participation in America's National Guard and Reserve. SGT Jeremy J. Schaffer nominated Chief Christensen, an officer of the Creston Police Department. SGT Schaffer is a member of Company E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 24<sup>th</sup> Marines, headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa. SGT Schaffer noted that Chief Christensen always supported him 100%, allowing him time off at very short notice to help perform military funeral duties for fallen service members. “Chief Christensen ensures that I receive enough time off to be properly prepared for drill. If any one is deserving of this award it is Chief Christensen,” stated Schaffer.

**“The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression.”-W.E.B. DuBois in “The Legacy of John Brown”**

## **“BEST PRACTICE” INITIATIVE**

**By Vice-Chairman Robert Kelly**

The Iowa ESGR is comprised of a vast array of volunteers including prominent and influential business and community leaders. Additionally our organization is quickly becoming well-rounded combining tenured and new team members possessing military and/or business backgrounds. This diversity represents a valuable resource of knowledge and expertise that can greatly impact our effectiveness in delivering the mission of ESGR. A key strategic initiative we are focused on is developing an open and continual communication channel that enables us to share best practices among our volunteers. "Best practice" can be defined as the most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of people.

The Area Chairs have been encouraged to identify successful ideas, effective processes and innovative concepts that are currently being utilized by their Area Teams. The objective is to then freely exchange these best practices with all Iowa ESGR volunteers. We are also evaluating recent events (e.g. Boss Lift) in search of additional best practices that can be shared with our Team. Any ideas identified at these events are immediately communicated to the Area and Functional Chairs. Furthermore we are creating an electronic “tool box” that will provide an online repository where these best practices will be posted. The goal is to build a database of innovative and effective procedures readily available to all Iowa ESGR volunteers.

This initiative is not limited to Areas within Iowa ESGR. We are also beginning a proactive campaign to establish open lines of communications with our ESGR counterparts in other states. “Why reinvent the wheel” seems to be an appropriate saying for the best practices initiative. By tapping into and then sharing the knowledge and expertise of our fellow volunteers we will continue to succeed at effectively delivering the message of ESGR.

**Together Everyone Achieves More!**

## **H.R. People Updated on USERRA Law**



A number of Dubuque-area human resources personnel attended an afternoon briefing in June at NICC campus in downtown Dubuque. State and Area Eight ESGR officials were joined by Tony Smithhart of the U.S. Department of Labor.

**“Happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.”-George Washington in a letter to the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island.**

## Marshall County Employer Recognized for Support of Military Employees

Lennox Industries of Marshalltown received the Area Chair Award in May for its support of employees who serve in National Guard and Reserve military units. The Area Chair Award is presented by the local Area Chair, who sits on the Iowa Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (Iowa ESGR). The ESGR Area Chair Award honors the employers who go above the USERRA requirements to aid their employees.

According to Iowa ESGR Area Chair Dave Campbell, "At this time when our National Guard and Reserve forces are asked to do so much, we are proud to recognize employers like Lennox that go the extra mile to support military employees and their families.



Dave Campbell, Area Four Chair, Parke Adamson (plant mgr) and Airman Tina Bizios



## Area 3 Presents A Trifecta of Patriot Awards

The Photo is from the presentation to Wayne Salton, Karen Eickhoff and Steve Thorne; Directors of Clay County FSA Office who received My Boss is a Patriot Award nominated by Sergeant Major Steve Waller.

## Area 2 Hosts An Employer Symposium in Red Oak

A number of Montgomery county human resources personnel attended an afternoon briefing in August in Red Oak. Kipp Harris and Jerry Hansen from Area 2 hosted the event with the assistance of Becky Coady, Deputy Director. They were joined by Dennis Larson of the U.S. Department of Labor to brief the employers about the ESGR program, USERRA, and how they can assist military members on their readjustment back from deployment.



## **Group helps soldiers, employers make it through tours of duty**

**By Jennifer DeWitt, Quad-City Times June 28, 2007(used by permission)**

It was April 2004 when Eric Rant was preparing to transfer to his employer's Atlanta, Ga., headquarters. He put up his Bettendorf house for sale on a Friday and sold it in one hour. On Monday, he was due to fly to Atlanta to discuss the new job.

But over the weekend, his life got turned even more upside-down when the Iowa National Guard member was called up for deployment to Iraq. Suddenly without a home, a tour of duty on the horizon and unable to transfer to his new job, Rant faced a dilemma. But his employer, Rock-Tenn Co. in Clinton, Iowa, said "Do what you've got to do; we'll support you 100 percent," he recalled. "Rock-Tenn, my boss, could have said 'Buddy, you're on your own.'" Instead, the paper packaging manufacturer agreed to halt the transfer to Atlanta and move his family to Missouri, where other family members lived. Rock-Tenn also allowed Rant to miss seven weeks of work prior to his deployment for training. Upon his return from the military, the company gave him his exact job back, said Rant, who now is the plant/general manager of the Clinton plant.

Rock-Tenn was held up Wednesday as an example of an employer that went the extra mile in response to an employee's deployment. "The company was always trying to make the best decision," Rant told about 85 Quad-City representatives from about 50 companies at a seminar hosted by ESGR, and Iowa Workforce Development. Held at the Best Western Steeplegate, Davenport, the seminar is part of a statewide effort to make employers — particularly human resources directors — aware of issues that may arise when employees are deployed or when they return to the work force. "The employers' responsibility is to treat the returning military employees as if they never left," said Harry Cockrell, chairman of ESGR's Area 9.

Rant, dressed in his National Guard uniform, offered advice as he presented a list of suggestions and issues "that are big to soldiers." On his list — and things his employer did right — include taking care of his family while he was deployed, and ensuring he would not take a cut in pay during his tour. "Most important is to have constant communication." Soldiers also have their share of frustrations after they return, he added. After a year or more away, the soldier no longer has the same role in the family and both the soldier and family have changed, Rant said. At work, the same soldier has "missed out on chapters" having lost that time at work. They also have feelings of lost opportunities. "They also have feelings of guilt for staying in the National Guard." "If you have an employee out there, think about what they have to go through," he said. "Know you have special men and women in your company ranks who literally will give everything away to serve their country," Rant said to a standing ovation.

### **Area Nine Recognizes One of Its Own**

Area Nine Chair Harry Cockrell presents the Area Chairman Award to Craig Norris for his "Above and Beyond" effort toward the success of the Lunch and Learn Seminar right.



**"We are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, not to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it."-Thomas Jefferson in letter.**

## Augustine & Sons Family Farm Wins 2007 Freedom Award from the Secretary of Defense

On July 21st, it was announced that Augustine & Sons Family Farm from Rose Hill, Iowa was one of the 2007 Freedom Award winners for the nation. A press conference was held at the Augustine Farm to announce that they had won the national honor. Iowa Committee State Chair Barry Spear and Major General Ron Dardis both spoke during the press conference and praised Augustine & Sons Family Farm for their support. The Augustine family, along with Jessica Strasser (wife of 1SGT Matthew Strasser) and sons will be flying to Washington DC to receive the Freedom Award. The ceremony will be on September 12th at the Ronald Reagan Center.



This award is the highest in a series of Department of Defense awards. Previously Augustine & Sons have received the My Boss is a Patriot Award and they also received the Iowa Committee for ESGR's top award, The Pro-Patria in April of 2007 and the nomination was forwarded to the National Committee for Employer Support of Guard and Reserve for consideration of a higher award. Only 15 companies are selected from across the United States to receive these awards. Over 1100 nominations were received by the National Selection Committee. Employers are rated by the Above and Beyond actions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Act Law. Augustine & Sons have exceeded the requirements of the law in many ways providing support to the Strasser family. 1SGT Matthew Strasser is currently serving in Afghanistan.



## State Farm Receives the “Above and Beyond” Award

State Farm was recently awarded with the ESGR's “Above and Beyond” Award for their support of Petty Officer William Meyer of the US Navy Reserve during his deployment.

Below is what Petty Officer Meyer wrote in his nomination:

“My supervisor at State Farm during my deployment was Team Manager Rory Hansen. Before, during and after my mobilization and deployment, Rory made it clear that whatever my family and I might need...it will be done.

He maintained regular contact with my wife Michelle during my absence, and made sure that all paperwork regarding my leave was properly handled. This included follow through on military leave pay—State Farm's program of making up the difference between my lower military pay and what I normally earn in my position. My supervisor arranged special gatherings for me in recognition of my military service; before departing for active duty, while home on R & R and after my return to work.

All insurance and vacation benefits continued while I was deployed. In addition, Rory recommended a very generous raise & bonus for me during this time. Upon my return to civilian life, I was allowed to take three weeks of paid vacation before returning to my original position as a Claims Representative for State Farm based in West Des Moines, Iowa. After returning to work, every effort has been made to help me re-integrate into my job and to welcome me back into the State Farm family.

Rory Hansen and State Farm are strong supporters of the sacrifices made by me—and my family—for my service in the United States Navy during Operation Iraqi Freedom.”



Pictured L to R: Dick Rue, Vice Chair—Iowa ESGR; Rory Hansen, manager of the State Farm Claim office; Petty Officer 1st Class William Meyer, USNR

# Photos from the Camp Ripley Bosslift, 12-13 July 07

