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DECEMBER 20, 2012

DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS



JERSEY SHOWS ITS BEST SIDE DURING WORST TIME

By 1st Sgt. David Moore, New Jersey National Guard

During Hurricane Sandy, I spent 10 days on duty as a public affairs Soldier, helping to tell the National Guard story as it worked to rebuild New Jersey's storm-ravaged coastal communities.

To the people who live in the towns dotting that 100 miles of coastline, it's simply called the Shore. It was once my home too. It's where I swam and fished as a kid. It was there that I delivered my first newspaper and covered my first news story as a civilian reporter. My parents still live there.

For those 10 days on the Shore, I saw people who had been through the absolute worst, at their absolute best.

These were people who lost everything. Yet they wanted to tell their story to the person in uniform and the Guard was there to listen. As they ended their stories of loss and being displaced, they seemed to stand a little taller and appear not so weary when they could talk to a Citizen Soldier or Airman of the New Jersey National Guard. No matter how their story of devastation would go they ended each one by saying "I am so glad the National Guard is here. Thank you."

The people who lost everything had the same effect on the National Guard troops they encountered.

Staff Sgt. Eugeneia Aikens, who began the hurricane with a prayer, and spent the following days evacuating people from her hometown, Atlantic City, said she felt herself drawing positive energy from the people she helped.

"It's incredible what these folks are facing and yet they still come up to us and show their appreciation," Aikens said.

In places best known for Bruce Springsteen, the amusement rides, the cooked aroma and taste of boardwalk pizza, in areas called Casino Pier, Seaside Heights, Point Pleasant Beach and Long Beach Island, the Guard personnel were on hand.

In addition to making rescues, delivering food and water, many National Guard Soldiers and Airmen worked on their off time, helping residents find displaced loved ones.

The presence of the Soldiers and Airmen helped calm residents in places like Bay Head, where residents felt particularly vulnerable because they couldn't immediately retrieve valuables from devastated properties.

"People worrying about looters see us and feel safer that their properties and are being looked after," Capt. Allan Lew, of Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry.

As Hurricane Sandy rescue missions transformed into recovery and support missions, the residents went out of their way to show their appreciation for the troops, often travelling great distances to deliver hot meals and blankets.

Someone even managed to get some of the famous boardwalk pizza to the Soldiers.

And I know that in time, the smell of that pizza will replace the smell of rotting wood and mold in places like Bay Head.

I have faith that some warm summer day soon, my granddaughter will ride the merry-go-round I rode as a boy.

The Shore and its people will recover. It was an honor to be there for the first steps of the journey.

-- Moore, of the 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, attended Point Pleasant Borough High School in 1975.



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Santa checks on the presents delivered by his helpers at the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home Dec. 19, 2012. Shoppers at the Boscov's department store in the Cumberland Mall were able to pick from 300 ornaments on the veterans Christmas tree and purchase that gift as part of the Second Wind Dreams program.

The Vineland Veterans Home was granted a lifetime scholarship to Second Wind Dreams through the generosity of the Harrah's Foundation. A student choir from the Hopewell Crest Elementary School in Bridgeton provided the sounds of the holidays for the event. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn P. Westhoven/Released)

Retirement seminar at JT2DC

Marie Durling, Retirement Services Officer and Retirement Points Accounting Manager, will conduct a career/retirement seminar Jan. 12, at the Joint Training and Traning Development Center at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.

The following issues will be discussed: How to read an RPAM statement, what you need for retirement, Tricare - what to know for retirement, and how you can correct your points.

Individuals interested in attending should e-mail marie.s.durling.civ@mail.mil.

E-mail your Photo of the Week or
Highlights submissions to:
wayne.woolley@njdmava.state.nj.us OR
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HIGHLIGHTS



Civil Air Patrol Cadet Christian Alvarez of the Middlesex County based Jimmy Stewart Composite Squadron places a wreath on one of the more than 100 gravesites decorated. The Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery was the site for one of the Wreaths Across America ceremonies held nationwide on December 15. More than two dozen Civil Air Patrol cadets provided a color guard and participated in placing wreaths at the state veterans' cemetery in Burlington County. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn P. Westhoven/Released)



Employees from New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland showed concern for their neighbors affected by Hurricane Sandy's devastation by donating non perishable food items, clothing, towels, bedding and much more. Pictured here are Stephanie Campbell, left, Gwen Thomas, center, and Lynn McCarty, right. (Courtesy photo by Stepanie Campbell)



Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, second from left, Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, coins Army Staff Sgt. Timothy Jardinico, left, Senior Master Sgt. Bobbie Panger, center, and Army Capt. D.W. Janszky at the New Jersey National Guard's Joint Directorate of Military Support in Lawrenceville, N.J. Dec. 20, 2012. Lengyel visited the JDOMS facility for a briefing on the NJNG's operations during Hurricane Sandy. (Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez/Released)



New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' employees sing their annual holiday song "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas" at the annual holiday party Dec. 19, 2012. (Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nick Young/Released)

DMAVA Highlights is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, the National Guard, Veterans Affairs or the state of New Jersey. Letters may be sent to: NJDMAVA, DMAVA Highlights, Public Affairs Office, PO Box 340, Trenton NJ 08625-0340. e-mail at pao@njdmava.state.nj.us.

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