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IN THE
AIR GUARD
THE AWARD WINNING

★ ★ ★ B I G SKY FLYER



Vol. XXXII, No. 3 - May 2009

{ INSIDE }



Maintaining the Eagle's dual engines keeps the shop members plenty busy



Family Support continues to provide valuable information for you and your family.



Two Eagles Spring in the Air,

marking the season & our continued conversion

EXCELLENCE ★ INTEGRITY ★ SERVICE



By Col. Michael J. McDonald
120th Fighter Wing Commander

Strength in Numbers

Your position is critical to the MTANG capabilities

I'm writing this to you on a very significant day, April 15, 2009. And it's significant not because it's the deadline for filing your taxes – although that is something we all seem to remember. No, it's because for the first time that anyone can remember, the Montana Air National Guard is manned at 100 percent. There are a lot of reasons why we're there: outstanding retention of our people, unit supported recruiting events, Guard Recruiting and Assistance Program (GRAP), and a reduction of the wing's manning document due to the conversion. But the bottom line is that we have achieved the highly sought after "green status" on the ANG slides for end strength.

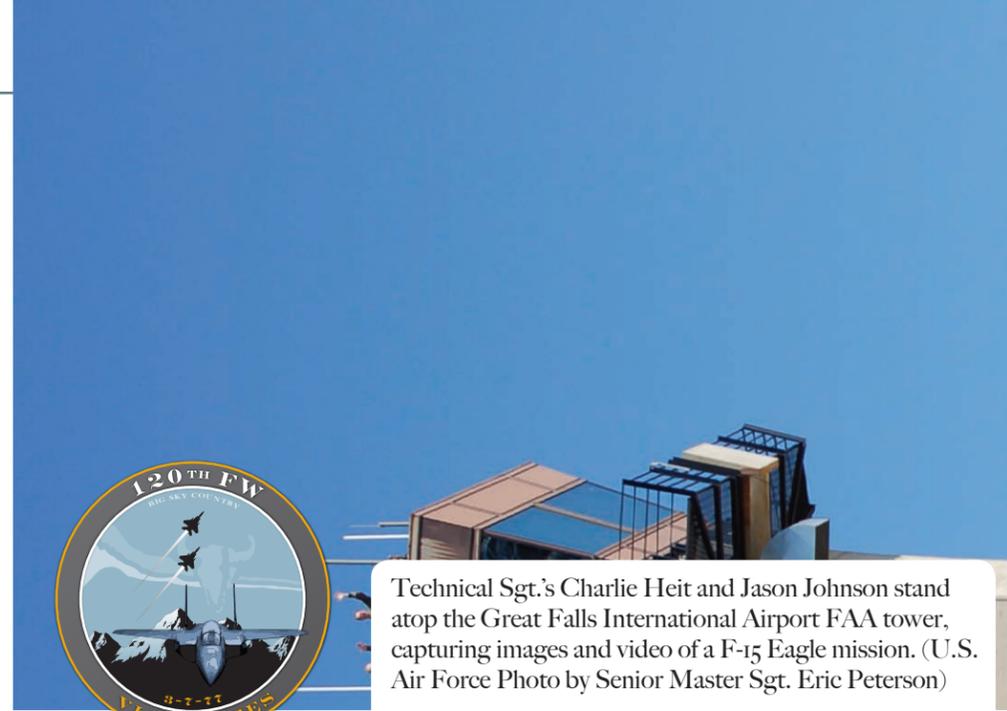
Does that mean our strength fight is over? No, it doesn't. We've achieved 100 percent end strength, but we're far from 100 percent "smart strength". We have some areas that are overmanned – the most notable one being the entire Mission Support Group which averages out at 116 percent. That's great and a testimony to the efforts that some areas have put forward to make the potential recruits WANT to join their team. That obviously means that there are shortfalls in other areas in the MTANG, but even within the Mission Support Group are some holes that need to be filled.

The wing's Unit Manning Document (UMD) is not a historical document we inherited from the past, it is a current, and requirements-based template, to ensure our ability to deliver and support combat operations in our federal role as a 15 PAA F-15 General Purpose Wing. Will we ever deploy our entire wing to one location and operate as an independent entity? Not in today's highly integrated and joint-war environment. Instead, we'll be tasked to deploy selected Unit Type Codes (UTCs) which can be as small as one person or larger than the personnel and equipment packages we deployed to Balad.

We're obviously in the conversion process from the F-16 to the F-15 and therefore we don't have the capability to deliver F-15 combat operations. However, we continue to support the Global War on Terror by delivering Expeditionary Combat Support UTCs from within this wing. The two largest are from the Security Forces, but we also have UTCs out from the HORSE and from across the wing – all manned by volunteers who are most often working without the support of fellow Montanans in a composite wing setting for up to 179 days.

My point? Actually, I have two. First, to reiterate my point above, the strength fight isn't over until we have 100 percent smart strength in every organization of the MTANG and all of our UTCs are manned by trained members. Second, it really doesn't matter what your rank is or where you are on the UMD – your position is critical to our state's overall federal capability. Trust me, in today's budget conscious military if your position wasn't validated as a requirement, the manpower authorization would be moved to somewhere where there was one. Take pride in what you do and know that you are making real contributions to something much larger than yourself. Finally, thank those around you for doing the great work they do and helping you to get your job done. This is a complex and delicate machine, and it takes all of us working together in concert to be successful.

“Trust me, in today’s budget conscious military if your position wasn’t validated as a requirement, the manpower authorization would be moved to somewhere where there was one. Take pride in what you do and know that you are making real contributions to something much larger than yourself.”



Technical Sgt.s Charlie Heit and Jason Johnson stand atop the Great Falls International Airport FAA tower, capturing images and video of a F-15 Eagle mission. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)



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Chaplains act as a reminder of just how human all who wear the uniform are.

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A Chaplain's Role

Here to help address all needs, home or abroad

Montana's Air Guard chaplains can often go unnoticed in a crowd of military warriors in uniform, but they are the antithesis of the uniform they wear, acting as a reminder of just how human all who wear the uniform are.

As Guard members return from lengthy deployments, often not their first, their morale and spiritual needs often need to be addressed, as well as the needs of the troops at home.

"We provide for the needs of the returning troops and the troops at home," said Capt. Arthur McCaffrey, a chaplain with

The increase in troop deployments since Sept. 11, 2001, has created a greater need for the work of chaplains, and Montana's Air Guard chaplains have embraced their evolving role as force multipliers.

"The more that operations tempo changes, the more war-time scenarios we are involved in, the more chaplains are involved in supporting troops," said Lt. Col. John Allen, a 120th Fighter Wing chaplain.

Col. Allen said this has created an increased need for chaplains beyond Guard drills once a month.

"I have seen an increase in need since 9/11," said Col. Allen. "Before 9/11 we had no full-time chaplains. Now we have three full-time, joint-force chaplains."



Allen said full-time chaplains are better able to address the needs of troops, as well as having more time to work on programs for issues such as PTSD and suicide.

Allen said one of the key roles the chaplains in the military perform is to protect the First Amendment rights of Airmen and Soldiers to practice their faith.

Capt. McCaffrey said the chaplains try to provide a ministry of presence giving the troops a friend for every area of their life.

"Sometimes people just need someone to be there and to listen," said Capt. McCaffrey.

The National Guard offers a diverse network of services for all military members and their families. These services range from full-time chaplains and family readiness offices to Military One Source, a network of benefits and sources provided by the Department of Defense at no cost to active duty, Guard and Reserve and their families.

Tech. Sgt. Scott Farley
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



Lt. Col. John Allen performs Protestant Services during the April UTA. Chaplains have taken on an increased roll that parallels the larger number of deployments. (U. S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Jason Johnson.)

the Montana Air National Guard's 120th Fighter Wing. "We help them work through the different trials they have faced."

"I believe that every chaplain likes to help all people, not just people who are religious," said Capt. McCaffrey, who said he will also counsel people without reference to scripture if that is their preference.

While their primary responsibilities are making religious service available to troops, monitoring morale and advising commanders on those issues, chaplains also provide 100 percent confidential counseling.

"It is a great tool for people who need someone to talk to," said Robert Padmos, a member of the 120th Fighter Wing student flight. "I think it could give people a sense of security to know they can talk about any issue they are having."

But counseling is only a small portion of what the chaplains provide.

Three Cheers for Volunteers

Seminar facilitates teambuilding and shows recognition for hard work

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give," once said Winston Churchill when he was speaking about the importance of volunteers and all that they provide to our world.

Family readiness volunteers from the Army and Air National Guard were treated to a series of teambuilding events, motivational speakers, and recognition from the Montana National Guard Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. John Walsh and other senior leadership.

"It was heartwarming to see the remarkable dedication of the volunteers willing to learn more in order to help our guard families," said the Montana Air National Guard Family Program Coordinator, Holly Wick. "Thanks to our volunteer's help, all of the family events have been extremely fun and successful this year."

This year's family readiness and volunteer workshop was held here at the Hilton Inn, and the slogan set the overall tone of the seminar – Three Cheers for Volunteers.

Col. Jeff Ireland, the Montana National Guard director of manpower and personnel, kicked off the event by welcoming everyone and clearly showing his passion for how volunteers bring the National Guard to a higher level of readiness.

"We are here to recognize the untiring contributions and continue to provide an opportunity to stimulate and enhance the tools to help you maximize your family volunteer time," said Col. Ireland.

Larry Westfall, a dynamic teambuilding coach who teaches organizations how to improve, was one of the keynote sessions for the volunteer workshop. The session included a fun, problem-solving game to incorporate effective communication while making tough decisions as a group.



Leah Mart was honored as the Montana Air National Guard Volunteer of the Year. She is receiving a pewter minuteman family statue from 120th Fighter Wing Commander, Col. Mike McDonald. (Photo taken by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)

Additionally, Jeri Rowley, a popular speaker and trainer, spoke about practical ideas for business leadership, change management, project management, and overall customer service. She was also featured as a keynote speaker who has received national recognition for her work as a leader and educator.

Two volunteers received heart-felt applause and a standing ovation as they were honored with the Volunteer of the Year Award. Leah Mart, representing the Air National Guard, and Jennifer Swanson, who was not able to attend this year's workshop represented the Army National Guard, were presented a certificate of appreciation and a pewter-cast statue of an early minuteman family. The Family Readiness Group is a command-sponsored organization of family members, volunteers, soldiers, airmen, and civilian employees associated with a particular unit or wing.

FRGs are established to provide activities and support to enhance the flow of information, increase the resiliency of unit members and their families, provide practical tools for adjusting to military deployments and separations, and enhance the well-being and morale within the unit.

Historically, FRGs developed out of military family support groups as well as less formal officer and enlisted wives clubs, telephone and social rosters, volunteer groups, and clubs. Modern FRGs are a fully defined and officially supported function within the Army and Air Force, and include men, women, and children from throughout the military community.

Maj. Ricky Anderson
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The 120th FW website goes consistent with AF standards



RIGHT: The new 120th FW website home page.

BELOW: Master Sgt. Tina Spertl checks the information on the new site. The new Air Force standards provide consistency throughout the Air Force Active, Reserve and Guard forces. (U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)



Computer savvy web surfers that are used to finding information about the Montana Air National Guard at the old and somewhat cumbersome web address of www.mtgrea.ang.af.mil can now find their information online at a new and improved website. The MTANG information available to the public has been migrated to the new location of www.120fw.ang.af.mil.

This new public website takes on the professional and consistent look of the Air Force Public Web and contains unit mission statements, leadership biographies with images suitable for downloading, career information for potential recruits, answers to frequently asked questions and current news stories and photographs of unit aircraft and personnel. An online version of the award winning news magazine, the Big Sky Flyer, will be available to be viewed or printed. Compressed television broadcast stories will also be posted online allowing visitors to the website the ability to view recent video news releases of Montana Air National Guard activities.

The webpage changeover was mandated by the Air Force to standardize the hundreds of public web pages that existed of Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units to reflect the look and feel of the official Air Force website, Air Force Link: (www.af.mil). The new MTANG public webpage will contain the major design elements of Air Force Link, such as an introductory section, leadership biographies, separate columns containing stories that feature unit activities and a list of frequently used links to other websites.

The web page will be maintained locally by site managers who are assigned to the 120th Public Affairs Office.

If you are interested in submitting material to be reviewed for use on the public web site, please contact Maj. Ricky Anderson at (406) 791-0159 or Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson at (406) 791-0226.

Senior Master Sergeant Eric Peterson
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Economy, Iraq driving recruiting numbers up



Military enlistments are up, specifically at the Montana Air National Guard, and many think the increase is because of the faltering U.S. economy.

"We've really started to see a large increase of applicants coming through the office and calling statewide," said the MTANG Superintendent of Recruiting and Retention, Senior Master Sgt. Duane Deshner. "Recruiting is ahead of last year's pace and March has been the best month of the year."

Government studies in recent decades have indicated that for every 10 percent increase in unemployment there is usually a 5 percent boost in military recruiting.

A decisive factor driving more people to consider military careers appears to be the steady rise in the unemployment rate across the country and slowly trickling into Montana. Since September, the unemployment rate nationwide has increased from roughly 6.2 percent to 7.6 percent, a rise of more than 20 percent, according to government figures. With a 7.6 percent national unemployment rate, the highest rate in decades, more and more people are turning to the military for job security and financial assistance. According to the Department of Defense, all United States military services and reserve components met or exceeded their recruitment needs for January 2009.

The MTANG is no exception. It's currently meeting its mission with a fill rate of about 99 percent capacity. "In April, we should be able to meet all of our recruiting goals and be manned at 100 percent end strength," said Staff Sgt. Josh Brown, a production recruiter for MTANG.

Authorized rates, assigned strength, end strength can all be somewhat baffling to a new recruit who is simply looking for employment or to serve. "We may be close to being 100 percent filled: however, we still have numerous openings in carpentry, heavy equipment operators, mechanics, and the electronics field," said Sergeant Deshner. Aside from the economy, another factor that may be driving the recent gains, Pentagon officials cite, is the improved situation in Iraq and the expectation that US military involvement in the war will be slowly coming to an end, and decreasing the likelihood of being deployed to a hostile area.



Recently, President Obama announced his plan to start withdrawing troops out of Iraq by August 2010.

A 2008 study done by researchers at Clemson University found that Operation Iraqi Freedom was a major factor in the steep drop in enlistments, especially among the most highly-qualified potential recruits.

But while a bad economy is usually a windfall for military recruiting, recruiters still are closely monitoring who it is bringing into the service.

People who are joining the military for mere economic reasons may not make the best airmen when the economy eventually turns around and they discover that they still must complete their service.

The military has to be very careful about the motivation of the people it is bringing into the force. Military service is hard work, and it is not easy to serve well and honorably. Motivation has to be very good. If your motivation is you can't get a job anywhere else then that is not necessarily the motivation they are looking for.

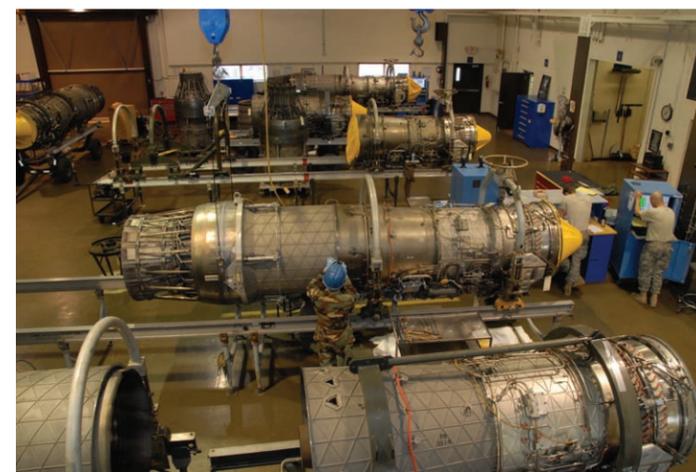
"The war in Iraq has not been a factor locally," said Sergeant Brown. "Nearly all applicants say they are looking for training, benefits, or simply want to serve."

Maj. Ricky Anderson
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



Fine Tuned

Members of the Engine Shop keep the motors running. (U.S. Air Force Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)



Ops New Home

New Ops Building to Support F-15 Mission

There will be a structure inaugurated on base soon that is intended for use by the Operations Group personnel that are supporting the new F-15 mission. Studies following the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) report, determined that the present Operations Building 26 was of insufficient size and lacked the necessary security systems to adequately fulfill requirements of the new 120th Fighter Wing aircraft mission.

The new Operations Building, designated number 79, adds an additional 7,300 square feet of space and is designed to accommodate the entire Operations Group personnel. The construction project was one of the largest seen on base in recent years. According to Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Capt. Todd Mortag, the new building will provide additional space for the occupants to meet the mission and will add quality of life issues as well, all while keeping up a high level of quality construction. "A project that size that was designed by local professionals, it's been constructed by a local company. They take a little bit more ownership in it, I think. They are people from this community and you can see that they put a lot of effort and quality into their work."

The building was positioned in its location on the southwest portion of the base in order to meet anti-terrorism protection and security requirements. The location is also ideal due to its proximity to the apron and its view of the flightline and airfield. The building joins only the Main Hangar and the Fire Station as having two stories on the base, which made it economical to add additional space to meet needed requirements.

No great challenges have cropped up during the design phase, which took 9 months, and the construction phase, which will take approximately 18

months. "Between the operations folks and the professionals from downtown, in a project, especially this size, you can have a lot of things go bad and cause you a lot of grief, but everybody has worked together really well to get a good end-product. It just makes it enjoyable to work with a team like that," said Capt. Mortag.

The new Operations Building is slated to be open for business sometime between the middle to the end of May once final inspections and other contract requirements are met. Building 26 will see short-term use at the wing as transient space for other construction projects, but will ultimately be demolished.

Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The main entrance to the new Ops Building. RIGHT: Senior Master Sgt. Mike Settera and Master Sgt. Chris Wilson go over the networking plans for the new building. MIDDLE, the new Life Support shop nears completion. LEFT, a clear view of an F-15 making its way past the new building.

"Between the operations folks, the contracting personnel and the professionals from downtown, in a project, especially this size, you can have a lot of things go bad and cause you a lot of grief, but everybody has worked together really well to get a good end-product. It just makes it enjoyable to work with a team like that."

- Capt. Todd Mortag

New Horizons - Peru 2008

219th RED HORSE Squadron provides humanitarian aid to South American country



Soccer is the universal language in Peru as citizens young and old enjoy a good match. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Kerry Jackson).

During the summer of 2008, five airmen from the 219th RED HORSE Squadron (RHS), Montana Air National Guard, deployed to Ayacucho, Peru in support of Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise "New Horizons - Peru 2008". This was an opportunity for the U.S. military and Peru to complete construction and medical projects in a joint effort to provide assistance and aid to underprivileged civilians of Peru. New Horizons projects are part of U.S. Southern Command's commitment to enhancing cooperation with partner nations in Latin America and the Caribbean. As part of this joint mission, the 219 RHS members linked up with a Joint Task Force comprised of Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine personnel. Once in country, the RED HORSE airmen settled into their tents, and began tackling the enormous projects ahead of them.

Ayacucho, Peru is home to some of the worse poverty in South America. Located high in a desert mountain, most of the locals in the surrounding areas scratch out a living by farming and raising livestock. Isolated and virtually forgotten about by the government, these people live without electricity, plumbing, and often do not even have clean water. Inside the city limits, the local schools are overcrowded and underfunded, allowing disease to easily spread throughout the population. At least one in ten people in the area will become sick from Yellow Fever every month. In other areas of Peru, the ratio is as high as one out of every two being sick, resulting in local hospitals quickly being overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate medical care. The average domestic country spends at least 7 percent of its domestic product on health care, while Peru is only able to spend about 3 percent. As a result, even simple medical technology is very scarce and expensive with far more people dying from dehydration brought on by diarrhea and vomiting than for any other reason.

In response to these problems, two of the 219 RHS Structural Journeymen, Staff Sgt. Richard Halverson, and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Henry, along with Apprentice Electrician Senior Airman Kyle

Thompson demonstrated their skills while building three new schools and four medical clinics. These clinics and schools consisted of cinderblock masonry, topped by treated lumber trusses and steel roofing. Also included were metal doors, glass windows, electrical and plumbing. Air Force and Navy medical teams provided brand new medical equipment from the United States to furnish these new clinics, and the government of Peru has funded for new teachers and doctors in these areas. In addition, Navy Seabees dug multiple water wells in the remote villages to help provide clean water for local populations who otherwise had to walk as far as 10 miles daily for clean water.

Besides these permanent structures, 219 RHS airmen assisted in erecting more than a dozen Med-Ready sites, providing shelter and facilities for medical teams to give care for tens-of-thousands of local Peru citizens. During these outreaches, members donated their time to do whatever needed to be done. On a slow day, a staff of 10 doctors and 30 assistants could expect to see over 300 people, though the record was over 650 in one day. Needless to say, volunteers were put to good use. Back at base camp, logistics and base operations airmen were busy as well. Utilities Apprentice Senior Airman Scott Gittens ensured the Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) was constantly working to provide the base with clean water. With nearly 200 people on the base at one point, water was always in demand.

Despite all the hard work, members found time to show their personal attributes by volunteering in many outreach projects. Both Airman Gittens and Airman Holmlund spent a day taking kids from a local school to a museum and zoo. Airman Holmlund remembers making a new friend with one kid named Joe - pronounced "Yoe". "Taking Joe and all those other kids to the museum that was pretty special," said Airman Holmlund. Sergeant Henry personally found a good place to spend his volunteer time filling prescriptions in the pharmacy with the Med-Ready teams, and getting his tail handed to him by a group of 80-year-olds in some soccer along with Sergeant Halverson at a local school. "Playing soccer was the best part," remarks Sergeant Halverson. "Especially with the kids!"

By far though, soccer was everyone's favorite thing. A group of airmen formed an "American" soccer team; even having special jerseys made to play against a local team in a grand finale match at a small stadium near the end of the deployment. Building clinics, schools, and other humanitarian projects was an excellent way to make inroads with the locals. Yet, soccer seemed to be the winning ticket that made the difference. "Soccer has got to be the universal language," said Airman Gittens. "Didn't matter how well you could talk, so long as you could play soccer."

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Henry
120th RED HORSE Squadron

Keeping Teens on the Right Track

Cascade County Teen Day participants help foster a drug free community

Communities across the nation are stepping up their efforts to discourage the use of illegal drugs, tobacco and alcohol and involve their teenaged youth in positive activities. In Cascade County, the non-profit Alliance for Youth hosts an annual Teen Day to celebrate area teens.

The 2009 Cascade County Teen Day celebration was considered a great success this year. Large numbers of local area youth gathered at the Paris Gibson Alternative Education Center in Great Falls to take part in activities designed to recognize the contributions teenaged citizens make to the local community.

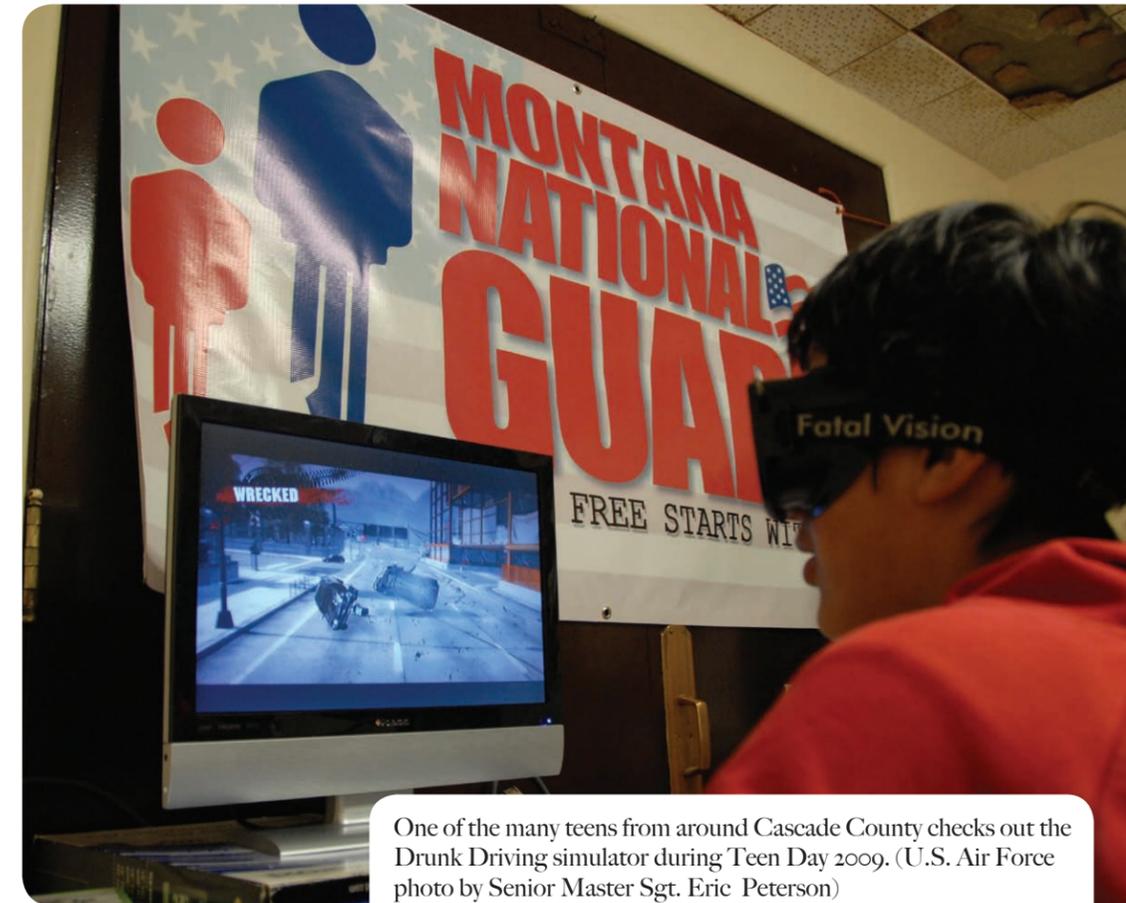
According to Master Sgt. Robert Brewer, of the Montana National Guard Drug Demand Reduction program, Teen Day allows the event organizers to highlight the positive aspects of life in the local community. "The goals are to get as many kids involved in this as possible, to help foster a drug free community, and to teach our kids that there are important things in life to do other than to be involved in drugs and alcohol," said Sergeant Brewer.

The six-hour event was divided into two separate time periods directed at middle school and high school aged teenagers, and featured a large variety of activities, such as human bowling, a basketball hoops challenge shoot out and a dodge ball tournament.

The 13th annual event was sponsored in part by the Montana National Guard Drug Demand Reduction program, which provided an impaired driving simulator to demonstrate the serious and harmful effects that alcohol has on the operator of a motor vehicle. "We're running an impaired driving simulation," said Tech. Sgt. Caressa Hewitt. "The kids will drive without the DUI-impaired goggles and then they'll drive with them on to see a big difference."

To reach out and attract area teens to the event, the Alliance for Youth placed posters at all of the county's middle and high schools, handed out brochures and advertised the Teen Day in the local newspaper. The organizers offered free pizza and soda to the teens during the popular community youth event.

The organizers of this year's event look forward to continuing to reach out to teens to help educate them on the dangers of drug and alcohol use. "Our mission with the counter drug program is to keep kids drug free and to show them that they can do things in life without doing drugs and alcohol and getting into those dangers. And it's very important for us, from the top down, from the adjutant general down to the lowest enlisted person-that drugs are not the way to go," said Sergeant Brewer.



One of the many teens from around Cascade County checks out the Drunk Driving simulator during Teen Day 2009. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)

The members of the Montana National Guard Drug Demand Reduction program hope that their contributions result in a better quality of life for the area teenagers. "I think it's just so important because we want to be those role models to the kids and to show them we're doing this drug free. This is just providing a drug-free and safe environment as part of the 40 developmental assets that kids need, and it's one way to show that we care about them as teens, and the Montana National Guard cares also," said Sergeant Hewitt.

Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

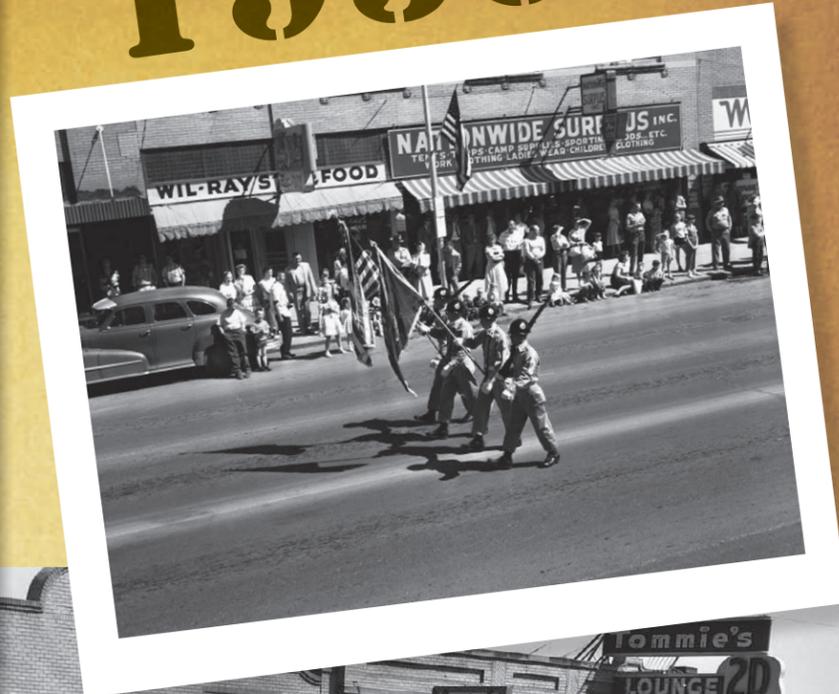
HISTORY Of THE MTANG

1959

Members of the 120th Fighter Group of the Montana Air National Guard participate in the Armed Forces Day Parade held in Great Falls on May 17, 1959. The unit's entry included a color guard, a convertible carrying "Miss Montana Air Guard", a 43 member marching unit, several vehicles assigned to the flying group and a convertible carrying the group's commander, Lt. Col. Roger D. Young.

It's interesting to note that many of the shops pictured in the photo on Central Avenue between 5th and 6th Streets in downtown Great Falls are no longer in business 50 years later.

Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



The News You Can Use

VA welcomes veterans home with new Web site, blog

The Veterans Affairs Department has launched a new "Returning Veterans" Web site to welcome home veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with a social, veteran-centric site, VA officials announced today.

"VA is entering the world of Web 2.0, because that's where this generation of veterans is already communicating," said Dr. Gerald M. Cross, VA's principal deputy undersecretary for health. "We're opening our doors to them virtually to let them know what they can expect when they step through our doors in reality."

The Web site at <http://www.oefoif.va.gov> focuses on the needs and questions of returning veterans, and will feature videos, veterans' stories and a blog where veterans are encouraged to post feedback. The site also will restructure the traditional index-of-benefits format found on other VA pages into question-based, categorized, and easily navigated links by topic. This will allow veterans to find benefits of interest easily and discover related benefits as they explore, officials said.

"We hope our returning veterans find this site easy and helpful, but also engaging," Cross said. "As the site grows, we will be linking to veterans' blogs and highlighting more of their own stories from their own views. We are their VA, so we are eager to provide a forum for veterans to discuss their lives."

(Courtesy of American Forces Press Service from a Veterans Affairs Department news release)

Want to be in the Big Sky Flyer?

If you enjoyed this month's Big Sky Flyer center photo layout and would like to feature your shop or section in a future display, please contact Maj. Rick Anderson at 791-0159 or Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson at 791-0226. We're always looking for opportunities to photograph our personnel in their work environment doing interesting and visual activities. This is a good opportunity for you to recognize your employees or co-workers for all of their hard work.

Airman field-tests modified PT uniform in Iraq

An Airman here was selected to field-test the Air Force's modified physical training uniform while deployed here to provide feedback to Air Force leaders at the end of the testing process.

Senior Airman James Debiase, a 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron emergency manager, was asked to field-test the modified PT uniform, and after wearing the uniform for five days now is very impressed with the changes thus far.

"I can describe the new uniform with one word: comfortable," Airman Debiase said. "The uniform is made from a much lighter material. It is more flexible, and it breathes better."

Overall, Airmen here notice the modified uniform and are quick to ask questions and touch the new fabric.

"The first thing people notice is the difference in material," Airman Debiase said. "When they get up close, they notice the lighter and more comfortable material. Second, they notice the PT uniform doesn't make the swishing sound when I move. Third, they notice my shorts are longer. I have pockets for keys, wallet or an MP3 player. I have received a lot of good feedback from curious Airmen."

"Another great quality about the coat and pants is that it is still waterproof," Airman Debiase added. "Yesterday (April 12), it rained for the first time since I received the uniform, and the water just beaded off the coat and pants with ease."

"I am really excited and thankful for this opportunity," he said. "It's not every day you get the chance to participate in something that can make a difference and a change throughout the entire Air Force."

Faces of the Guard

120th PA dominates media contest



Members of the 120th FW Public Affairs award winning team

The Air National Guard held its annual media contest recently, with the Montana National Guard coming away with the lion's share of awards and recognition.

Nearly 450 entries were received from 27 states. Entries consisted of articles, photos and videos capturing what the National Guard did in 2008. This included Army Guard members sandbagging swollen rivers in Iowa and Illinois, and North Dakota Air Guard members exercising their chemical and biological warfare skills in sub-freezing conditions.

The Big Sky Flyer, a quarterly magazine produced and edited at the 120th Fighter Wing, was applauded by the judges and awarded first place as the Outstanding Magazine in the Air National Guard. The Flyer is a 16 page magazine that includes numerous photos and articles on recent happenings at the MTANG, a commander's section that includes key information from senior leadership and a history page that reminds us where we came from.

Additional awards for the MTANG included Outstanding Broadcast Journalist of the Year—first place was Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson and second place was Tech. Sgt. Charlie Heit. Staff Sgt. Christy Mason was recognized as an up-and-coming reporter and received the Outstanding New Broadcaster of the Year award, and also took second place in the category of television news report for her aircraft conversion story on the last F-16 sortie at the MTANG.

Maj. Rick Anderson received third place in the Outstanding New Print Journalist category and the entire MTANG Public Affairs team collected first place in Outstanding Local Television Newscast for its in-depth program, the 2008 MTANG Year in Review. The 2008 MTANG Year in Review program continued on in national competition to win first place in the Air Force Media Contest.



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