

# ALABAMA GUARDSMAN

**ALABAMA  
GUARDSMAN  
AWARDED  
SOLDIER'S  
MEDAL**

**Warrant  
Officer  
Candidate  
School**

What's Inside

- 3 **Making a new year's resolution to give more**  
*Message from the Adjutant General*
- 3 **Enlisted Promotion System is critical to future success**  
*Message from the State Command Sergeant Major*
- 4 **Snapshots**  
*Alabama National Guard Highlights*
- 5 **School prepares Guardsmen to become Warrant Officers**  
*Warrant Officer Candidate School*
- 6 **Alabama Guardsman awarded Soldier's Medal**  
*1st Sgt. Thompson commits an act of heroism*
- 7 **2017 Military Saves Week**  
*Information on financial assistance*

On The Cover

After a winter storm on January 28 caused hazardous conditions across the state, the Alabama National Guard was ready and provided assistance when it was needed. The Alabama National Guard received the following Email from a Alabama citizen on January 30, 2013: "My daughter and her two toddler sons were stranded far from home Tuesday. One of my grandsons is medically fragile and needed his medicines, he was transported to a nearby hospital so he could receive his meds. The hospital did not have all the meds he needs so he was getting the bare minimum. They needed to get home asap. No family members were able to get to them. Enter the Alabama National Guard!!! As you can see in the pictures they drove the babies, my daughter and their nurse home this morning. I can't thank you all enough. Words cannot begin to tell you how much you have done for this family.  
Thank You  
Margaret V a Happy Nana this morning!" (Contributed Photo)

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Adjutant General

Making a new year's resolution to give more



Maj. Gen. Perry Smith

Many people make resolutions at the beginning of a new year. We probably all know that weight loss and physical fitness are always at the top of the list of those resolutions. To be sure, staying fit and at a healthy weight are worthy goals and important to military success. However, I am setting a different goal this year and I hope you'll join me.

This year, I am setting the goal to give more. I don't mean money – though I'm

sure it wouldn't hurt any of us to give more to worthy charities. I plan to give more time. Not only do I hope to volunteer more, but I intend to take better advantage of the time I spend with everyone with whom I come in contact. I want to listen more to my family, friends, acquaintances and coworkers.

It is easy in today's digital world to focus on phones, computers, the television and other distractors more than we focus on actual people. My goal for this year is to better realize the value of face-to-face time with people.

In an age when it is easier to send a text message or email to someone, I encourage you to set up an in-office meeting at least a couple of times a week. I encourage you to

use technology to bring you closer to people, not to give you an excuse to distance yourself. For example, try using video chat software to converse with people far away instead of just placing a telephone call. This may sound like a small change in a world filled with big problems. I have learned, though, that personal relationships are the foundation for the solution to most problems, so I think we should work on making stronger relationships. I hope this helps you as you strive to foster good relationships in your personal life, in your civilian career, and in the military with your supervisors and commanders, your subordinates, and your fellow unit-members. Lead from the front!

State Command Sergeant Major

Enlisted Promotion System is critical to future success



Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie Pike

This month begins a new year and it also puts us in the middle of another Enlisted Promotion System (EPS) cycle, as packets for E-6 through E-8 were recently due. Before you know it, it will be June, and time to turn in the EPS packets for E-5 and E-6.

I know sometimes the EPS cycle may seem to be just another one of the many tasks that come and go every year, yet another requirement to complete. I sympathize with this, but I cannot stress to you

enough the importance of correctly following EPS procedures. In some ways EPS is the lifeblood of the Alabama National Guard. It is the tool that we use to promote our Soldiers and advance their career; therefore, it deserves our attention. I implore all leaders to make EPS a priority. Make sure that your Soldiers understand the EPS process and how it works. Help your Soldiers ensure that all of their information in their packet is correct. Make sure they are completing their required schools. Counsel your Soldiers throughout the year so that they can be working towards maximizing their points. The importance of points for promotion to E-5 and E-6 in EPS only magnifies the significance of the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and individual weapons quali-

fication (IWQ). Because of the limited number of points each Soldier can get, the 75 points maximum that can be earned from APFT and IWQ carry tremendous weight. I encourage leaders to train, advise and encourage junior Soldiers in these two key areas. Success on the firing range or on the APFT can be the difference between being promoted and not being promoted. The future of the Alabama National Guard rests in its ability to retain good Soldiers. To ensure that we keep good Soldiers, we have to give them good, meaningful training and reward their successes with the opportunity to advance in rank. The Enlisted Promotion System gives us the ability to do that. I encourage all Soldiers to become familiar with this system and use it correctly. Your career depends on it.

# Snapshots

A look at some of the recent highlights from the Alabama National Guard



Sydney Burnettphoto

**MOBILE, Ala.** - A vehicle from the 226th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) Rear Det A moves on an icy patch of I-165 January 29, 2014 during patrols. This was one example of many of the Alabama National Guard providing assistance after a winter storm caused hazardous conditions across the state.



Contributed/photo

**MONTEVALLO, Ala.** - Wreaths lay at the graves of servicemembers during the fifth annual wreath laying ceremony for Wreaths Across America at the Alabama National Cemetery on Dec. 14, 2013. Wreaths Across America is committed to remembering the fallen, to honoring those who are serving in uniform today and teaching younger generations about the value of their freedoms and the importance of honoring those who sacrificed so much to protect those freedoms. 2400 wreaths were laid this year as part of the ceremony.



Contributed/photo

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala.** - The Alabama National Guard opened a new Armed Forces Readiness Center on December 18, 2013 at the Alabama National Guard base in Birmingham, Ala. The new AFRC has been awarded the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification. This new AFRC is approximately 52,000 square feet and includes two major components: a Special Forces Equipment Pool Facility and a Readiness Center which will house two Special Forces Units - Support Company of the 20th Special Forces Group and The Chemical Detachment of the 20th Special Forces Group. The Special Forces Equipment Pool Facility includes areas designated for maintaining Special Forces Airborne and Waterborne Operations equipment and supplies, including a parachute drying/storage tower, as well as private and military parking areas.

# School prepares Guardsmen to become Warrant Officers

by Bethany McMeans  
131st MPAD

The leaders of the Alabama Army National Guard go through extensive training in order to be prepared to lead others as well as know how to properly perform their jobs. Warrant Officers are part of that leadership structure are expected - by both officers and enlisted - to know how to perform their jobs.

"Warrant officers are subject matter experts in their areas," said CW3 Chuck Decker, the Operations Officer at the Warrant Officer School in Ft. McClellan, Alabama. "Candidates are not to come directly to the program. They have to have at least five years of experience in their areas of training before coming to warrant officer school."

Warrant Officer candidates are led by TAC officers. TAC stands for teach, assess, and counsel. While at school, the candidates have their mental strength, physical fitness and military knowledge challenged. Other challenges the candidates face is learning time management and paying attention to detail, said Decker. "Training is constant and we are going non-stop," said Warrant Officer Candidate Adam Motes, of the 117th Field Artillery unit of the Alabama National Guard. Upon reporting to WOC School, the Soldiers are given an Army Physical Fitness Test. A Soldier should work on their physical fitness and be sure they are able to pass an APFT and are able to do ruck marches since they will



William Frye/photo

Warrant officer candidates conduct physical training at the warrant officer candidate school at Fort McClellan, Anniston, Al on Nov. 3, 2013.

be doing multiple marches where there are time constraints and of course, wearing a weight ruck sack, said Decker.

"I've always wanted to be one and I have so much respect for Warrant Officers," said Motes. "I'd encourage more people to do it that are qualified."

In addition to being known as an expert in the area of training, an enlisted member who goes through WOC school would see a boost in his/her retirement, said Decker. WOC School includes a phase one distance learning course and then the candidates attend the school for five IDTs and then a two-week phase three session.



William Frye/photo

A Warrant officer candidate holds the company guidon during physical training at the warrant officer candidate school at Fort McClellan, Anniston, Al on Nov. 3, 2013.

# Alabama Guardsman awarded Soldier's Medal

by Sgt. Brenda Thomas  
Public Affairs Office

It was the early morning hours of 10 December 2012, with heavy rains and cold weather bearing down in Anniston, Ala. First Sergeant Wendell Thompson was on his way to work when he noticed a set of car tires rising up from the ditch off Highway 21. He stopped his vehicle and rushed down to the overturned car. Inside was Anniston resident Jaban Lancaster.



Brenda Thomas/photo

*Maj. Gen. Perry G. Smith participated in the ceremony with 1st Sgt. Wendell Thompson and Mr. William Learner-Lange. Thompson and Learner-Lange distinguished themselves by a selfless act of heroism by risking their lives to save a trapped motorist from an overturned, unstable vehicle on the inclined bank of a flooded creek.*

The vehicle he was driving went off the highway and landed upside down, in an unstable position,



Brenda Thomas/photo

*Anniston resident Jaban Lancaster survived to see the birth of his daughter, Cadence.*

on an inclined bank of a stream full of rising water. Thompson was joined by William Learner-Lange, another passerby, and they quickly realized Lancaster was trapped and unconscious. As Learner-Lange's son called 911, both men took turns holding Lancaster's head and torso up and out of the water until emergency personnel arrived to extract him from the vehicle.

"We stayed with him and rotated keeping his head above water," Thompson said. "Each breath felt like it was going to be his last one." Emergency personnel were able to extract Lancaster and transport him to a medical facility, where he remained in a comatose state.

A month and a half later, he awoke from the coma. Lancaster's wife, April, found out she was pregnant shortly after the accident. Due to the actions of two strangers, he was able to witness the birth of his daughter Cadence in September. "I'm so grateful they stopped," said Lancaster. "They could have just kept driving. It amazes me."

Thompson was awarded the Soldier's Medal for his act of heroism, risking his own life to save the life of another. "It's just instinct," said Thompson. "What I did is normal; it's what anybody should do."

**2014 MILITARY SAVES WEEK**

by the  
**Adjutant General – Alabama National Guard**

**A PROCLAMATION**

**WHEREAS**, personal and household savings is fundamental to America's stability and vitality; and

**WHEREAS**, adequate emergency savings, retirement funds, and safe debt-income ratios are critical components of personal financial security; and

**WHEREAS**, personal financial security of servicemembers is a crucial aspect of military readiness; and

**WHEREAS**, Military Saves is a national social marketing campaign to persuade, encourage, and motivate servicemembers and their families to take financial action in building wealth through saving money and reducing debt;

**WHEREAS**, The Alabama National Guard is a partner in the Military Saves campaign and is committed to helping its Army/Air Guard Family, including Officers, Airman, Soldiers, family members, retirees, and civilian employees take immediate financial action to build wealth, not debt;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, **Major General Perry G. Smith, The Adjutant General, Alabama National Guard**, do hereby proclaim the week of 24 February through 1 March 2014 as:

**MILITARY SAVES WEEK**

I **HEREBY** call upon all members of our Alabama National Guard Family to set a personal savings or debt reduction goal, make a simple savings plan, and take action on that plan, or take another positive wealth-building action during MILITARY SAVES WEEK, and **pledge** to sustain that action during the following year.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand this 10 day of January, 2014.

**Major General Perry G. Smith**  
The Adjutant General – The Alabama National Guard

## Military Saves Week: February 27 through March 1, 2014

Military Saves Week is just around the corner and what a great time to confirm those New Year's resolutions to save more and get out of debt! With the holidays behind us and a new year already underway, 2014 is the year to get out of debt. Experts are reporting the days of low interest rates are numbered, according to CNN Money1. Lisa Gamble, Military Financial Counselor for Alabama, is available to meet with you for a private, con-

fidential, no cost financial coaching session.

For Information on How To:

- Manage Debt, Instead of Your Debt Managing You/Get Out of Debt Quicker and Save Money in Interest Payments
- How To Set Up An Emergency Fund/Where Do I Get the Money?
- Should I Pay Off Debt or Save? Both!!! Let me show you how.
- Thrift Savings Plan – How do I

start a retirement plan?  
- Free Credit Score – Available during Military Saves Week.

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Serving Military Families in Alabama