



**EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF
THE GUARD AND RESERVE**

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State ESGR Committee:

State Chairman:
Barry Spear
(515) 241-6709

Vice Chairmen:
Rob Kelly
(515) 490-9364
Dick Rue
(515) 238-3931

Executive Director:
Al Enright
(800) 294-6607 ext 4192

Deputy Director:
Becky Coady
(800) 294-6607 ext 2757

Office Manager/Webmaster:
Doug Enright
(800) 294-6607 ext 2742

State Ombudsman Director:
Tom Smock
(319) 822-7887

State Public Affairs Director:
Carol Bodensteiner
(515) 244-4582

State Employer Outreach Director:
Brian Chung
(515) 326-9471

State Awards Director:
Gary Kinsinger
(319) 356-4607

State Military Services Director:
Vacant

State Training Director:
Rex McClafin
(515) 556-1053

State Bosslift Coordinator:
Eric Idehen
(515) 237-5133

ESGR MAKES FRONT PAGE OF IOWA NEWSPAPER

(From the August 10, 2007 edition of the Spencer Daily Reporter-used by permission)

By Randy M. Cauthron, Managing Editor

Three board members at the Clay County Farm Service Agency Office were acknowledged with special "Patriotic Employer" awards by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve for the state of Iowa. Tom Manley, ombudsman for the ESGR, presented Karen Eickhoff, Wayne Salton and Steve Thorne each with a plaque at the FSA office's in Spencer.

The awards were given on the recommendation of State Command Sgt. Major of the Iowa Army National Guard, Steve Waller. Waller, an FSA employee, has served in the guard for over three decades. In his recommendations, Waller wrote: "Karen has consistently supported me and my military requirements and obligations in the Iowa National Guard." Those requirements include: Freedom salutes, sendoff ceremonies, military funeral requirements and many other special events. "For the past three years, she has more than openly supported my military involvement and is deserving of recognition." Similar comments were made about Salton, Waller's immediate supervisor, and Thorne.

Manley commented on behalf of the ESGR, "This is a reflection of your leadership, dedication, and relationship with your employees. On behalf of the National and Iowa ESGR committees, I wish to thank you for your past and continued support of your employee/service members. "Your support to Steve M. Waller is a compliment to you, the Clay County FSA office. Thank you. This could not happen without the supportive environment you have created."



(Photo by Randy M. Cauthron) Taking part in the ESGR "Patriotic Employer" presentation at Clay County FSA Thursday: (Front row) State Command Sgt. Major Steve Waller, Steve Thorne, Wayne Salton, Karen Eickhoff, ESGR Ombudsman Tom Manley, (back row) Spencer Mayor Reynold Peterson, SSG Rettig, SFC Ingledue and SSG Beougher.

Area Chairs for Iowa ESGR

Area 1: Pat Denzer (712) 279-3230

Area 3: Tom Manley (712) 262-3030

Area 5: Dr. Susan Dawson (319) 226-2014

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: Vacant

Area 8: Tom Flynn (563) 583-6494 ex 20

Area 10: Vacant

Area 12: Mark Stanton (641) 421-9563

Speaking on the Front Line

By State Chair Barry Spear

(Remarks made at a Five-Star Signing Event at the HyVee Conference center on October 25, edited for available space)

I know of your commitment to community. I know of your commitment to children. I know of your commitment to a drug free work place. I know of your commitment to the Make a Wish Foundation. I know all of this first hand. And today I add this HUGE commitment to Iowa's Army National Guard, Air Guard, and the reserve forces of the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. I also know some of you are from neighboring states and I carry with me today, the best wishes of the State Committee Chair from your state for your commitment to your own civilian soldiers, seaman and airmen. Today, with the senior command of most of these organizations in this room. I salute you HyVee. I applaud you HyVee. And I tell everyone how very honored I am to be here with you to ink the formal Statement of Support.



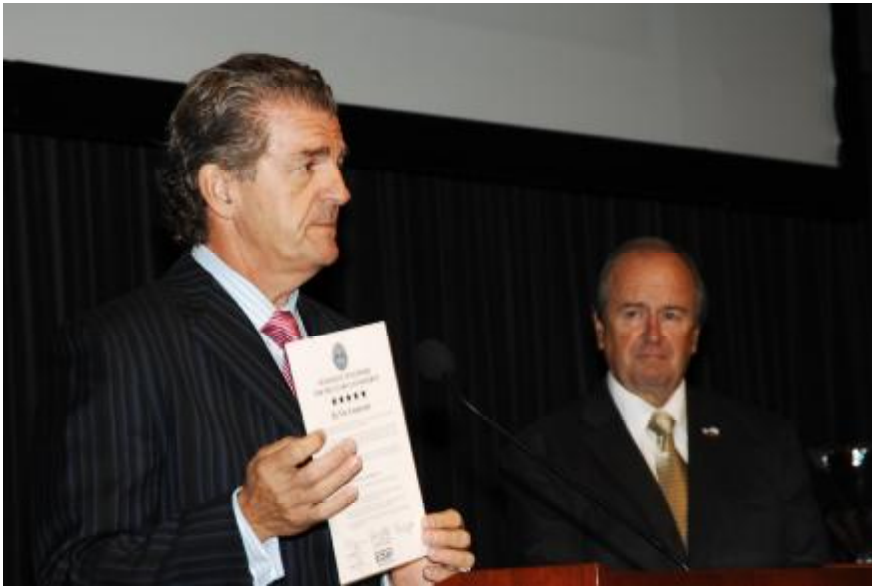
There is a law.... Its acronym is USSERA. HYVEE complies... but HYVEE ALSO GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND. And importantly sets the example for all employers to do more to support the civilian military members, their families and the other members of units deployed or deploying. HyVee excels in going beyond. You encourage store directors to include the family in company functions. You organize care packages store by store and send them to deployed units. You changed two benefit policies to ensure continued vesting for vacation and other programs. You allow continued vacation accrual while on duty. You provide a company wide free breakfast to all veterans and current military

employees on Veterans Day. You assist with scheduling to maximize time off so that duty can be accommodated. But most of all, little realized. YOU TOTALLY REMOVE the concern by the soldier and the family that the job will be waiting for them when they return. NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

So thank you. And consider joining me on November 9th in the Rotunda of the capital here in Des Moines. As Governor Culver signs a Statement of Support just like you for all state employees. And once again affirms the law that was passed last session that says as a business in Iowa, if you have signed a statement of support and are going above and beyond.... You will be given preference in the award of contracts for doing business with the state. A FIRST IN THE COUNTRY.

Hy-Vee Signs 5-Star Statement of Support at the Corporate Level

On October 24th, Ric Jurgens, during Hy-Vee's quarterly managers' meeting in West Des Moines, signed a 5-Star Statement of Support for all Hy-Vee stores in 7 states. This statement of support encompasses 367 Hy-Vee stores and entities throughout the Midwest, 205 in Iowa. Representatives from all Reserve Components were present for this event. Ken Waller, vice-president of Hy-Vee, opened the program and spoke about his past experiences in the Guard and returning to work after serving on military duty. Waller then introduced Barry Spear, our State Chair, to speak to over 500 Hy-Vee store directors and office personnel. After Spear finished speaking, Ric Jurgens came to the podium and signed for all Hy-Vee stores. Jurgens then spoke to his directors about what Hy-Vee currently does and that it should be the "ultra-minimum". He spoke that Hy-Vee has consistently set the bar high and exceeded their expectations at the store level. Jurgens also recognized one of his store directors as serving as a Captain in the Iowa National Guard.



My 2-Day Military Training Experience

By Pat Ripley, Human Resources Manager, Hydro-Klean

It was truly an exhilarating, memorable experience but I never want to do it again. Firsthand, I learned what it's like to be a civilian soldier of the Iowa National Guard. Aboard two Chinook helicopters on July 12, approximately 30 Iowa employer representatives and I flew to Camp Ripley (impressive name, I must say), Minnesota. Sponsored by the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), the intent of the "Boss Lift" was to educate employers on the vital role their employees play, what the annual two-week training consists of, and how employers can support Guard/Reserve employees.

Flying at a speed of 200 mph, the relatively smooth flight from Marshalltown to Camp Ripley only took two hours. However, when you're overcome by motion sickness, two hours seems like forever. From our vantage point of 3,500 feet above ground, the rural scenery was breathtaking from the open back door, but unfortunately, I quickly learned it was better to keep my eyes closed and chew gum.

Upon our arrival at the 53,000-acre camp, we civilians were debriefed before starting our military "training". Heavily armed with bug spray, earplugs and helmets, we rode in the back of large trucks over miles of rugged terrain, observing the Transportation Unit's convoy training. Soldiers practiced their target shooting skills at "enemies" from a moving vehicle. Although their large guns contained blanks, the noise was extremely loud and lifelike, and the bugs and deer ticks were abundant in the wooded wilderness. Next on the schedule was an overview of the assortment of artillery, followed by an ambush combat exercise in an open field where soldiers and volunteer civilians crawled through tall grass.



Those exercises included real-life mock scenarios of tending to the "injured".

The next day, after a high carbohydrate breakfast in the mess hall at 7:00 a.m., a parade of Humvees, all complete with gun turrets, transported Military Police and civilian visitors to another desolate, scenic area of the camp for a close quarters combat exercise on urban terrain. This simulation involved walking through a mock war-ridden town, always prepared for hostile fire, safely entering buildings to check for enemies, while constantly looking out for their buddies and themselves. We had the opportunity to fire an assortment of weapons including very heavy, intimidating machine guns and fake (but noisy) hand grenades (which require significant strength just to activate.)



Prior to departing on the Chinook, and returning to our civilian lives, we taste-tested the bland meals, ready to eat (MRE) and most of us probably left half hungry, wondering how military personnel survive on those surprise food packages.

Thankfully, as visitors, we were exempt from many military requirements such as the rigorous exercise, night-time training, sleeping in barracks, and the everyday attire of boots, helmets, uniforms, guns, ammunition, and protective vests (which can weigh as much as 35 pounds with the ceramic plates). Fortunately, the weather was cool during our stay, and the trip only lasted two days versus two weeks. Unfortunately, even with Dramamine tablets, the return trip on the Chinook wasn't much better for me. Again, the weather was perfect for flying and the helicopter flight was smooth, but I had to refrain from looking at the scenery and chew my gum.

This was truly an educational, once-in-a-lifetime experience that I'd recommend to any organization, especially one with employees in the National Guard or Reserve. Not only did it give me a new perspective of military life and annual training, this exercise allowed me to interact with Iowa soldiers and witness their positive attitudes, professionalism, leadership, and most importantly, their commitment to serve our country.

Even if I met the military's requirements for enlistees, I'll be the first to admit I don't have what it takes to be a civilian soldier in non-active duty, much less active duty. I wouldn't want to be subjected to enemy fire, roadside bombs, 110+ degree desert heat, sleeping in tents, etc., not to mention balancing military and civilian responsibilities, the rigorous, physical activity, the two-week annual training, or giving up one weekend a month to be combat ready in the event of active duty deployment.

Hydro-Klean is very proud to employ two Citizen Soldiers. Our Health & Safety Manager, 1st Lieutenant Nic Jones, is Commander of A Company 2/34 BSTB of the National Guard. A member of the Guard for 7 years, Nic spent a year activated in Iraq in 2005. Another employee, Drew Sobek, Service Laborer, has been a Marine reservist for 2.5 years. A member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, of Fort Des Moines, Infantryman Sobek was recently ordered to active duty in Iraq for approximately one year.

ESGR OUT AND ABOUT

Photos from the Freedom Awards in Washington D.C.



Under Secretary for Reserve Affairs Tom Hall, Dan Augustine, Mike Augustine



Freedom Award Recipients with President Bush in the Oval Office



Mike Augustine, Jessica Strasser (wife of ISGT Matthew Strasser), Dan Augustine



EMC gets awards- one to Rebecca Caldwell, nominated by co-worker Chris Hatchett. The other was Above and Beyond to the Des Moines-based company. From left to right- Jason Hughes, Rebecca Caldwell, Chris Hatchett and Bruce Kelly (President of EMC).



Corporal Shawn Nutt of the E Company, 2nd BN, 24th Division of the US Marine Corps Reserve nominated his supervisor, Mike Smith, from Van Meter Industrial in Cedar Rapids. Mr. Smith drove down to Des Moines to accept the award as the Marines were set to deploy to Iraq in just a few days. Pictured left is Dick Rue, CPL Nutt, and Mike Smith. Pictured right is CPL Nutt, Smith, Major John Sorenson, and Dick Rue.



UPDATE FROM THE STATE OMBUDSMAN

By Tom Smock

As the state Ombudsman Director, there are a few areas I would like to address in this message to all of you. First, Everyone needs to remember that I am responsible for the information given out to both the service member and the employer, and I take that responsibility very seriously. We must remember that we are here to assist both parties with no partiality to either. We need to make sure that we respond to questions or inquiries with that in mind. Having said that, my message to you is that many of you may be involved in employer or unit briefings, and you really need to be sure of the information you are giving out.

I have said this before, but it is worth repeating: past state chair Jack Felderman made the statement that "If you are not positive or cannot see it in black & white what you are about to say about USERRA, does not say it". I, or Tony and Dennis at VETS are available literally 24/7 to assist you. Second, only trained ombudsmen should be handling any calls for assistance. Questions that are general in nature - go for it. I am looking to hear from those of you who are either trained or would like to be trained as an ombudsman. There are several areas in the state that are lacking in representation, and with the next NCESGR school set for Feb 08, I would like to get these areas covered, so I would ask for your response - Do you wish to continue as an active ombudsman or would you like to become trained? Third, we are informal mediators, not trained in arbitration. Our mission is to gather the facts and advise either party of their rights and obligation under USERRA. We can make recommendations and give advise as to an action either party should take, but if we are looking at termination that may involve lost wages, or benefits, we really need to take that to VETS.

The message we need to get out about VETS is that they are NOT the bad guys. They are skilled and paid to deal with situations that are over our heads. Many times, they end up negotiating settlements with employers that both they and their employee/service member can walk away with feeling good about. The workload has not lessened. The work that Barry has in place with our Employer Outreach program, I believe, has made a real difference, however the demand for our service as ombudsmen will, in my opinion continue, so thank you for volunteering, and I will try to keep better in touch with all of you.

ESGR Attends State SHRM Conference in Des Moines

The ESGR State Office attended the Iowa Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) Conference in Des Moines on September 26-28. ESGR manned an informational booth and interacted with over 150 HR employees during the day on September 27th. On the 28th, Al Enright and Tony Smithhart from Department of Labor held two sessions about the USERRA law and answered questions about rights and responsibilities that the service member and the employer have when the employee goes and returns from military duty. ESGR recognized Jan Burch, Paul Kopack, Eric Branson, and Pat Ripley (pictured below) for their continued assistance with the relationship between IA SHRM and ESGR. Dick Rue spoke about each of the individuals and how they have helped promote the ESGR program.

