



SERVING VISIBLE PATRIOTS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS AND FAMILIES

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GENERATIONS OF SERVICE



Nolan Merryman enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard, 1st Battalion Strike Force, 194th Field Artillery on January 27 of last year. He had both the honor and privilege of having his grandfather, retired LT. Col. David Merryman swear him in. His grandfather enlisted in this same unit 56 years ago and

continued to serve with it in many capacities up until his retirement. His father, Jeffrey Merryman serves with the United States Department of Defense/IOWA/ESGR. Following graduation from Okoboji High School Private Merryman is at Fort Lee, Virginia, currently attending AIT at Ft. Lee Virginia and should be finished in mid February. He will return home then to join his local unit, Battery A of the 194th Field Artillery in Estherville, IA.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR IOWA ESGR IS COMING!

Mark now your calendars, palm pilots, date books, etc. for April 13 (Friday) and April 14 (Saturday) for the Holiday Inn downtown Des Moines. A time for learning and review. There are 50 rooms that have been blocked for ESGR. You are strongly encouraged to make reservations early, the hotel is very busy that weekend. Make sure when you call that you say you are with ESGR so you get the \$73 room rate. Once the 50 are filled, overflow rooms will be available at a nearby hotel. The number to call is 1-515-283-0151!

OPTIMISM

"The highest result of education is tolerance."
—Helen Keller

State Chairman:

Barry Spear
(515) 241-6709

Vice Chairman:

Tom Tully
(563) 590-6565

Executive Director:

Al Enright
1-800-294-6609 ext 4192

Office Manager:

Becky Coady
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ESGR Inc. Executive Director:

Dave Rogers
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Tom Smock
(319) 822-7887

Awards Chair:

Gary Kinsinger
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Employer Outreach Chair:

Brian Chung
(515) 326-9471

CEO Chair:

Eric Idehen
(515) 237-5133

Public Affairs Chair:

Carol Bodensteiner
(515) 244-4582

Military Liaison Chair:

Pete Vanderhoef
(319) 337-4188

Training Coordinator:

Rex McClafflin
(515) 556-1053

Area Chairs for Iowa ESGR

- 1—Pat Denzer
(712) 279-3230
- 2—Kip Harris
(712) 243-6777
- 3—Dr. Richard Jacobsen
(515) 573-1145
- 4—Dave Campell
(515) 554-5772
- 5—Tom Smock
(319) 822-7887
- 6—Pete Vanderhoef
(319) 337-4188
- 7—Marty Graber
(319) 372-1896
- 8—Tom Flynn
(563) 583-6494, ext 20
- 9—Harry Cockrell
(563) 324-1028
- 10—Myron Linn
(641) 621-6045
- 11—Rick Burchett
(712) 755-5153
- 12—Mark Stanton
(641) 421-9563

EXPECTATIONS

By State Chair Barry Spear

If I were limited to pass along only two guidelines for our success in the Iowa Committee of ESGR, there is no question in my mind that they would be:

1. Know what is expected of you.
2. Exceed those expectations.

I've been really lucky throughout my career to meet some very successful people, and none of them got that way by just doing what was expected or required. How about you? Can you make that same observation of the successful folks you have met? These people separate themselves from the rest of the "pack" by doing more, and by doing better, than what they were "supposed to do." I plan to do that, and I ask you to do the same.

You can start by making absolutely sure you have a handle on how your chairman, or area chairman expects you to perform. It's not "safe" to assume that you can do what you have always done if you are a mature and experienced committee member. We have introduced change to the organization to be sure. The track record of performance by Iowa ESGR is impressive. That track record will not guarantee our continued success. We are moving away from "treatment" of problems to "prevention" of problems, as I have explained before.

With the increased dependence on National Guard and Reserves and with the proposed increase in the number of soldiers to address the war on terror, our jobs have just become even more important. Employers need to be encouraged UP FRONT to go above and beyond the law. If we can be successful in having them join "our team" we won't have to worry about violations of the law because of misunderstanding or ignorance. So.....

Area chairmen are to recruit and have full committees allowing no "double hating".

State Functional chairs are to serve as resources to the area functional chairs. Take responsibility for regular and consistent communication with area folks

All committee members are encouraged to identify BEST PRACTICE and share it across the area committee.

Area chairs are to recruit an ESGR member for each of the 99 counties in Iowa.

Media relations with newspapers, radio and TV stations are best established locally. Ask your media partners to attend your awards presentations and consider delivering the award at the local meeting.

We have worked hard to recruit new committee members that hold positions of visibility in their communities. Use that visibility to your advantage and promote the work of Iowa ESGR.

Once you have accepted the challenge of serving ESGR with your role understood, raise the bar on yourself. If you are supposed to make one public presentation per quarter, make two. If you are to identify and deliver six statements of support each quarter, identify and deliver eight.

REMEMBERING WHEN OR HOW MANY FACES DO YOU KNOW



This picture is from the 1983 Iowa ESGR Boss Lift to Jacksonville, Florida.

AWARDS UPDATE

from Gary Kinsinger, State Awards Chair

It appears that we had about 115 Patriot awards processed last calendar year. We use the calendar year as a cut off date to determine which awards will be recommended for higher level awards so that we can meet the deadlines for National and also to coordinate presentations for our meeting in April. This number seems to be quite small with comparison to the number of troops that we are supporting. We should be getting that number from just a couple of units. Al Enright told me we had some

submitted from Iraq via computer. I would encourage each Area Chair to appoint an area awards chair for their area and get me the individual's contact information so that I can work with them this coming year to get our employer's recognized. Last year was a learning/transition/change year for me in the ESGR and I am looking forward to an exciting 2007 in supporting our troops. If I can assist in any way please do not hesitate to contact me.

VOICES OF THE PEOPLE

"With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed."

—Abraham Lincoln

"God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to guard and defend it."

—Daniel Webster

"It were not best that we should all think alike; it is difference of opinion that makes horse races."

—Mark Twain

LEARNING THE ROPES

Tom Smock, Iowa Ombudsman Coordinator

On December 8th we conducted a refresher training session for 16 of our trained ombudsmen. Rex McClafflin, Tom Tully and Tony Smithhart assisted with the training. The object was to determine which of the 35 NESGR trained ombudsmen in the state are willing and feel comfortable in handling cases sent to us either from the national call center, from the military units, or directly from the service member. Currently, all cases from the call center are sent to me and I forward them to the appropriate ombudsman. Not all of our areas have good ombudsman representation, so there may be some overlap in that regard, or I will handle the case from here. Our state chair, Barry Spear, would like to have at minimum (1) ombudsman per area. Our national office has set timelines for service member or employer calls to be either resolved or sent on to VETS. In Iowa we have established our own timelines that are a little more demanding. We ask that all calls be responded to within 24 hours, and that every possible attempt be made to resolve the situation within 3 days. Obviously there are exceptions to this as a weekend may be involved, or contact with the service member or employer may not happen immediately. If you are assigned a case, and for whatever reason cannot meet this criteria, just let me know and we can take it from there.

These calls are very important to a service member or his family and we want everyone to take them very seriously. Only designated ombudsmen should handle a case. If you as a unit liaison for example get a call, please forward it to your area ombudsman or me. If the call requires only a simple answer that you are sure you can answer correctly, go for it. If you are not positive of the answer, give me, your ombudsman, or VETS 515-281-9061 (Tony or Dennis) a call for clarification. If a call appears to have back pay or other benefit compensation, it probably needs to be forwarded to VETS. The quicker Tony gets these the better for everyone. We will be offering a 2nd refresher training program sometime early this year for those of you who could not make the initial one. If you as a trained ombudsman do not want to receive cases, please let me know. We want you to feel comfortable and maybe another role in the committee would suit you better. NESGR has a pretty good opinion of our Iowa committee and we want that to continue. With your help we can do that.

If you are like me and have to rely on your telephone landline for long distance calls, a calling card is available. Just give Becky (800-294-6607 ext 2757) a call and she can direct you.

PROVIDING FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE

“In short . . . we must be constantly prepared for the worst, and constantly acting for the best . . . strong enough to win a war and . . . wise enough to prevent one.”

—Lyndon B. Johnson

Q & A FROM TONY SMITHHART

QUESTION #1: “My employer says because I was deployed to Iraq for the entire 2005 year, I am not eligible for a bonus or profit sharing. I think one of my co-workers was injured and missed a lot of work and he still received his”.

ANSWER #1: Sections 1002.149 and 1002.150 implement section 4316(b) of the Act, which establishes the employee’s general non-seniority based rights and benefits while he or she is absent from the employment position due to military service. 38 U.S.C. 4316(b). The employer is required to treat the employee as if he or she is on furlough or leave of absence. 38 U.S.C. 4316(b)(1)(A). The employee is entitled to non-seniority employment rights and benefits that are available to any other employee “having similar seniority, status, and pay who [is] on furlough or leave of absence. These non-seniority rights and benefits may be provided “under a contract, agreement, policy, practice, or plan in effect at the commencement of such service or established while such person performs such service.”. For example, if the employer offers continued life insurance coverage, holiday pay, bonuses, or other non-seniority benefits to its employees on furlough or leave of absence, the employer must also offer the service member similar benefits during the time he or she is absent from work due to military service. If the employer has more than one kind of non-military leave and varies the level and type of benefits provided according to the type of leave used, the comparison should be made with the employer’s most generous form of comparable leave. The employee is entitled not only to the non-seniority rights and benefits

of workplace agreements, policies, and practices in effect at the time he or she began the period of military service, but also to those that came into effect during the period of service.

QUESTION #2: “I was injured during basic training and have to complete the training as soon as the injury heals. My employer is threatening to fire me because I have not returned to work. He sees me occasionally and says if I can be out and about, I can return to work”.

ANSWER #2: Once the military member has completed convalescing from the injury or illness incurred while performing military duty the member needs to make application for employment if there is a break in service, or notify their employer with advanced written or verbal notification if there is no break between their convalescing and their performing additional military service despite the fact that the military member isn’t actually returning to work, the notification is still necessary. 1002.259, Final Rules: (b) If the employee is hospitalized for, or convalescing from, an illness or injury incurred in, or aggravated during, service, he or she is entitled to report to or submit an application for reemployment at the end of the time period necessary for him or her to recover from the illness or injury. This period, which may not exceed two years from the date the employee completed service, except in circumstances beyond his or her control, must be treated as continuous service with the employer for purposes of determining the participation, vesting and accrual of pension benefits under the plan.

BLACKHAWK ORIENTATIONS



SHRM members and ESGR members took part in an orientation flight at Boone on December 13. (from left to right are Bob Mitchell, Jan Burch, Michelle Schmitt, John Noll, Paula Hender, Marv Van Wyk, and ESGR representatives, Richard Rue and Richard Rowe.)



This photo is of Dana Chapman (State President of SHRM) and Eric Branson getting a safety briefing prior to the orientation flight in a Blackhawk helicopter in Waterloo.

SOMETHING COOL

If you go to this web site, www.letsaythanks.com, you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and send to a person that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to some member of the armed services. How AMAZING it would be if we could get everyone we know to send one! Please send a card. It is FREE and it only takes a second. Whether you are for or against the war, our people in uniform over there need to know we are behind them.