

Going above and beyond

Fox Bros. International honored for support of Guard, Reserve employees

(Randy Cauthron,
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Fox Bros. International of Spencer was among the 22 Iowa companies recently honored with the "Above and Beyond" Award for its support of employees who serve in National Guard and Reserve military units.

The "Above and Beyond" award, presented each year by the Iowa Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (Iowa ESGR), is given to a select number of employers throughout the state, recognizing employers that have gone above and beyond the legal requirements for granting leave and providing support for military duty by their employees.

Tom Fox, owner of the operation, was presented the award by representatives from National Guard and local ESGR representative, Tom Manley, Tuesday.

Fox employs two National Guard soldiers. Sgt. Brian Mack of Spencer, assigned to C-Battery 1, 194th Field Artillery group out of Estherville, nominated Fox Bros. for the award.

"My boss has supported me through two deployments. I have been employed there for four years but only there for two," Mack wrote in his nomination. "He always sent me care packages and gave me paid vacation and did not have to. He always supported me through the deployments and will continue to do so and he really deserves all he gets."

"We tried to keep in touch with him as much as we could," said Fox of the company's relationship with Mack during his deployments. "He's a good employee and a good soldier."

"We employ quite a few people with military backgrounds. They're good workers. We have a number of military guardsmen, some here and particularly up in Minnesota."

Master Sgt. Dan Skirvin, with the Iowa Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Command, told Fox, "It's just a wonderful thing to see what you're doing. When you see things like this, it's great. That's a big concern for some soldiers. I don't know if you realize how many people it impacts."

Fox admitted, "I don't focus on that."

"Well, it does," assured Skirvin.

Manley presented the plaque and offered some words of thanks to Fox and his business operation.

Civilian military members in the Guard and Reserve have their employment protected under federal law. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) provides guidance on the rights and obligations of employees and employers with respect to military service. The ESGR "Above and Beyond" Award honors the employers who exceed USERRA requirements.

According to Iowa ESGR State Chair Barry Spear, "At this time when our National Guard and Reserve forces are asked to do so much, we are proud to recognize employers like Fox Bros. International that go the extra mile to support military employees and their families."

"Today, 1.2 million Americans serve in the Guard and Reserve, representing nearly one half of the nation's military force. The extended nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has put tremendous pressure on soldiers, their families, and employers. Employers who go above and beyond in supporting military service earn the respect of their military employees and their families and these employers deserve the recognition and respect of the country." Spear added.

The Department of Defense established Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in 1972. The mission of ESGR is to gain and maintain active support from all public and private employers of the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve. ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation, and if necessary mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve employees. Made up largely of volunteers, the ESGR has 150 volunteer members across Iowa.



Photo by Randy M. Cauthron
Master Sgt. Dan Skirvin, Capt. Doug Houston - both with the Iowa Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Command joined Tom Manley, representing the Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve and Command Sgt. Major Steve Waller, with the Iowa Army National Guard to present Tom Fox (center) of Fox Bros. International with the Guard's "Above and Beyond" Award.