

# ARNG Education News

Excellence Through Education

A Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Communiqué

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## West Virginia Army National Guard Success Stories Inspire Fellow-Soldiers

CPT Jason Webb, Education Services Officer (ESO) for the West Virginia Army National Guard (WVARNG), conducts regular Education Benefits Workshops for educators in his state, organizes college fairs and conducts family appreciation activities. He also seeks to inspire Soldiers across the state by posting education success stories at his office's Web site (see <http://www.wv.ngb.army.mil/education/success/> for additional information). Two recent stories exemplify how Soldiers can advance their careers, inside and outside of the ARNG. These stories also reveal how a Soldier's dedication to duty and service to state and country enhance his or her quality of life.

One example is that of SSG James Coffey. He completed his Active Army enlistment and joined the WVARNG in 1997, just as he began a new career with the U.S. Postal Service. Joining and seeking to stay in the military would not surprise those who know SSG Coffey's background. According to him, "the Army is in my blood." He was born into a military family in Nürnberg, Germany, and his father served two tours in Vietnam. His stepfather was a Soldier as well, moving the family between Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Fort Bliss, TX, Fort Ord, CA, and Fort Leonard Wood, MO, (or Fort "Lost in the Woods," as SSG Coffey fondly calls it).

SSG Coffey's early military career included four months at the Field Artillery Training Center at Fort Sill, OK. Then, he traveled to Fort Campbell, KY, but just two months later found himself at Camp Eagle II in Saudi Arabia as part of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). After what turned out to be the single largest Air Assault Operation in history, SSG Coffey returned battle-tested to Ft Campbell.

Since joining the Guard, SSG Coffey has served with HHB 1-201FA and is now with HHT 1-150ARS. He deployed with his current unit to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom. During 11 years in the Guard, SSG Coffey attended Southern West Virginia Community College for two semesters, as well as West Virginia State University. However, he abandoned plans to pursue a Forensic Science program, realizing that his Post Office salary and benefits package was better than that of most CSI investigators. Still, the "urge to learn" remained, so SSG Coffey continued taking classes. He eventually earned enough credits so that he was close to completing a Regents University Bachelors degree. At this point, SSG Coffey contacted the Education Services Officer (CPT Webb), to sign up for all the DSST, CLEP, and Excelsior examinations that he would need to accomplish his goal.

In just seven days, SSG Coffey completed nearly 30 hours worth of exams, attaining his degree soon after. By taking the free exams and using the WVARNG Education Services

Office's free study guides, SSG Coffey achieved a significant part of his goal and now intends to apply for a direct commission.

Another success story posted by CPT Webb is that of SGT Patricia Deaver. SGT Deaver is a native of southern West Virginia, who nurtured a dream of attending college since high school. During high school, SGT Deaver understood that she would have to pay for college herself. Because both of her parents worked full-time in her local community, the family income made SGT Deaver ineligible for state and federal financial assistance grants. Also, the meager scholarships that were available to her were not enough to offset the cost of college without leading her into extreme debt.

Her stepfather's friendship with a local military recruiter led to a meeting with the recruiter at a high school career fair. That was when, at age 17, SGT Deaver began to seriously consider the WVARNG. Later that week, the recruiter visited her and her parents at home, sealing the deal. Just 24 days after graduation, SGT Deaver shipped out to Fort Leonard Wood, MO, where she completed Basic and Advanced Individual Training. Through her service in the Guard, SGT Deaver has relentlessly pursued, and continues to realize, her education goals.

Fast-forward 10 years to the present, where SGT Deaver is currently a member of the 1257th Transportation Company, in Huntington, WV. Over the past 10 years, she has used both State and Federal Tuition Assistance to reach several educational and occupational milestones. Her journey began with an attraction to psychology that later evolved into pursuit of Social Work degrees, thanks to a course in Human Behavior in Social Environments. She had found her niche.

SGT Deaver completed a Bachelor of Health Sciences degree at the University of Phoenix (3.6 GPA), which would help her gain entrance into health care systems. Next, she attended Mountain State University and completed a second Bachelors, this time in Social Work (3.7 GPA), continuing on for her Master's of Social Work degree from Radford University with a perfect 4.0 GPA. Over this time, SGT Deaver has applied all of her educational experiences to her current position with Beckley VA Medical Center.

For SGT Deaver, her Social Work degrees connect a strong orientation toward human and community services with an attraction to the human behavior field that originally appealed to her. She also credits her college courses with keeping her "on-track" over a two-year mobilization. During this deployment, she provided support for Operation Enduring Freedom and served on three flood duties throughout the state.

Her studies helped, she said, "keep my mind active and helped the time move faster," before she was allowed to return home and into a more normal pace of activities. These

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days, in addition to helping fellow veterans at the Beckley VA Medical Center, SGT Deaver promotes education among Guardmembers and other military Servicemembers every chance she gets. Surely, her success must encourage many others. Finally, she praised CPT Jason Webb and the Education Services Office as a whole, noting that his enthusiasm, dedication, and availability to her and all Soldiers helped her retain a focus on realizing her dream. That dream may one day include a doctoral degree, she said, "but not right now," having just finished her master's last month.

SGT Deaver feels that being a member of the WVARNG has provided her with both the intellectual and life skills needed to survive in today's career world. Without the assistance of the Education Services Office of the WVARNG, the funds of both State and Federal Tuition Assistance, and support from her family and employer, none of this would have been possible.

Contact CPT Jason Webb, WVARNG ESO, via phone, at 304-561-6366, or via e-mail, at Jason.G.Webb@wv.ngb.army.mil.

### **Minnesota College's Investment in Deployed Soldier Provides Unexpected Returns**

Randy Goeke has been a diesel mechanics program instructor at Alexandria Technical College (ATC), in Alexandria, MN, for 23 years. For him to say that an experience with a single student became "one of the most rewarding of my career" is saying a lot. ATC, which is part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) System, had three students deploy among the massive Minnesota Army National Guard (MNARNG) mobilization to Iraq in September of 2005.

ATC's plan for the students was to stay in contact as much as possible during the deployment and to have them pick up where they left off upon returning a year later. When MNARNG Soldiers learned their deployment would be extended for an additional 180 days, SGT David Karow, one of ATC's deployed students, e-mailed Randy Goeke. SGT Karow hoped to complete the internship portion of his diesel mechanic program while deployed. According to Mr. Goeke, instituting and seeing the project through would provide educational experiences for everyone involved.

SGT Karow was pursuing a dual major, Associate in Applied Science degree program with emphases in Diesel Mechanics and Electric Power Generation. The program involves classroom credit hours, training hours, and internship completion. Even though completing the internship portion while serving in a transportation company would seem

simple on the surface, SGT Karow needed approval from his military leadership in Iraq before starting. According to Mr. Goeke, ATC officials would learn that safety for SGT Karow and those with whom he served in Iraq were paramount concerns for MNARNG leadership in Camp Scania, Iraq. SGT Karow's duties as a Soldier, his need to remain alert and ready, and the interdependence of Soldiers with whom he served, would restrict his availability for study and reporting. Also, as Mr. Goeke and SGT Karow would later learn, communication blackouts and frequent missile attacks would challenge the project in unexpected ways. In fact, Mr. Goeke would utilize these challenges to inform and inspire the ATC community, so that other students could measure perceived obstacles to their own success against those SGT Karow sought to overcome.

After SGT Karow secured his leadership's approval for the project, ATC developed a training plan. The plan included weekly phone calls to monitor progress, and Mr. Goeke recommended that SGT Karow keep a journal, both for documentation and to relieve stresses of deployment. This recommendation would prove fortuitous for SGT Karow and the project as a whole. When SGT Karow would communicate the need to postpone the weekly call due to blackouts or missile barrages, Mr. Goeke shared this information with SGT Karow's fellow students, to give them greater appreciation of the military sacrifice and to inspire them to work more diligently themselves.

According to *Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Magazine* (Spring 2008), which featured this story (see <http://www.mnscu.edu/media/publications/index.html> for more information), SGT Karow was grateful for the experience. He said, "When I received word that I was getting extended, the school did everything [it] could to help me." Having returned home, SGT Karow completed coursework for the Electrical Power Generation major, in addition to his Diesel Mechanic major. After graduating with a double major, SGT Karow relocated to Colorado, where he landed a job with Wagner Equipment Company (a Caterpillar dealer in the state), and where he has become a member of the Colorado Army National Guard, as a diesel mechanic.

What SGT Karow might not have known at the time of his internship was the impact his persistence and dedication would have on the ATC community. As previously mentioned, Randy Goeke considers this experience among his most inspirational after 23 years of teaching. In addition, Mr. Goeke said that he hesitated to discuss the success of the project with ATC colleagues until after SGT Karow completed his internship. Waiting for the Thanksgiving holiday season to share it, which he said seemed very fitting because the project had succeeded, he presented details to colleagues at a meeting.

The presentation informed, and deeply moved, many in the audience. While ATC has not had an opportunity to engage in a similar internship since SGT Karow's, Mr. Goeke is convinced that there will be no institutional obstacles to doing something similar in the future. He is also happy to serve as an information source for educators who might wish to pursue a similar activity with one of their own Soldier-students. Randy Goeke can be reached via phone, at 320/762-4434, or via Web-based e-mail at <http://web.alextech.edu/web/Default2.aspx?pid=846&user=744>.

### **East Carolina University Web-Based Resources Emphasize ARNG Support**

At East Carolina University's (ECU's) Division of Continuing Studies (DCS), the Web site designed to serve North Carolina Army National Guard (NCARNG) Soldiers is called "Old Hickory," in honor of the state's largest brigade, the 30th Enhanced Heavy Separate Brigade (see <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/oldhickory/index.cfm> for additional information). In anticipation of the brigade's January 2009 deployment to Iraq, ECU will heighten its own readiness to serve NCARNG. By using "Operation Old Hickory" the university can assist the ARNG statewide, as well as reach out to the nearly 4,000 men, women and families whom the mobilization could directly affect.

Operation Old Hickory features links to NCARNG's Education Services Office, VirtualArmory.com, and ARNG Education Benefits on-line, as well as ECU's National Guard Student Association, and a separate Web-based portal for "Essential Life Skills for Military Families" (see <http://www.militaryfamilylifeskills.org/> for access to this site). This extremely valuable resource receives funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and is a collaborative effort between the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, East Carolina University, NC State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Aside from the Web site's Guard-friendly and military-friendly features and information-rich quality, ECU/DCS has come up with an on-line course innovation that has educational and personal impacts for Soldiers who opt for it. The future course is one that both a deployed Soldier and spouse sign up for simultaneously at a "two-for-one" cost. In this way, the Soldier and spouse can help each other to study, solve problems, and successfully complete the course.

According to Jeff Netznik, Associate Director for Military Outreach at ECU, the course can be extremely helpful for both deployed Soldiers and spouses, giving them more to talk about via cell phone and e-mail than just the problems

at home or at the deployed duty station. In fact, focusing on the difficulties of separation or frustration over not being able to help solve problems in their respective locations can add stress to both a Soldier and spouse during deployments. This class can give them something to work at accomplishing together, and both receive credit upon completion of the class. It is a concept that is worth exploring for other colleges and universities that offer on-line instruction to deployed Soldiers. Since family concerns head the list for deployed Soldiers, such a course can help alleviate some separation anxiety while also helping to smooth their transition upon returning home.

For additional information, contact Jeff Netznik, at 252-737-2018. E-mail: [netznikj@ecu.edu](mailto:netznikj@ecu.edu).

### **Amridge University Scholarships Support Servicemembers, Veterans, and Spouses**

Amridge University offers several scholarships for Servicemembers and their spouses, beginning with an Undergraduate Program Servicemember Scholarship. This award allows military students to take their first two courses at a \$187.50 per semester hour rate, and a third course for free. The scholarship equates to a savings of \$125 per semester hour. In addition, the university will waive the application fee and General Competency Test (GCT), for an additional \$125 savings.

The Undergraduate Program Servicemember Spouse Scholarship provides spouses with a 25 percent reduction in the tuition fee and a waiver for the application fee and GCT, for an additional \$125 savings for them.

Graduate Program Servicemember Scholarship awards provide Servicemembers with a special tuition rate of \$225 per semester hour, as well as waiving application and Comprehensive Examinations fees, for a total savings of \$475. Graduate Spouse Scholarships offer 50 percent off of the tuition rate, and similar fee waivers, for \$475 in savings.

Doctoral Program Scholarships for both Servicemembers and Spouses reduce tuition rates to \$450 per semester hour and waive application and Comprehensive Examination fees, for \$475 in total savings.

Veterans and Veteran Spouse Scholarships offer reduced tuition rates, unspecified in the scholarship brochure. Interested veterans or spouses are encouraged to contact advisors for additional information.

For additional information, go to [http://www.amridgeuniversity.edu/au\\_militaryscholarships.html](http://www.amridgeuniversity.edu/au_militaryscholarships.html).