



The Signal

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April 2010 Volume 38, Issue 4

Read

Nathan Cooley's

Story



President Viv's Message

Many thanks to EANGUS for distributing *The Signal* via the web...I've had some contacts from folks who had never gotten *The Signal* before. The EANGUS Auxiliary surely appreciates the additional exposure!!

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Membership—annual membership was up by 7.6% and there were also a number of new lifetime members and that's good news! In fact, we had 38 lifetime members in the class of 2009. Some states reported this year that didn't last year but, unfortunately, we did not get a report from a couple of states that did report last year. Associate membership was down just a tad. We still have huge potential for growth...we have only about 4% of the number of members in EANGUS. **EANGUS members, we need your help**; please promote your Auxiliary every time you have the opportunity. Please be sure your spouse is a member. We invite you to be an associate member, too.

Encourage folks from your state to apply for the **EANGUS Auxiliary scholarships**. If, after reading the applications, you still have questions please contact EANGUS Auxiliary Scholarship Committee Chairman, Marie Brabham, at sas-syat52@aol.com.

Remember **this is an election year** and we need nominees for president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Please send nominations forms to Marie Traxler; you can contact her at sidmarie@sbcglobal.net. I'd like to put photos and bios of nominees in *The Signal* so send those in as soon as possible. **I hope you saw the photo and brief bio of Jenny Lainhart in the March issue of *The Signal*. Jenny has announced her candidacy for EANGUS Auxiliary President.**

There are also Area Director positions in each Area to be filled. Consider service in your Area.

Committee Chairmen, please keep in mind that you need to have your report to me for inclusion in the Conference Book not later than June 15. Thanks for your help!

States—now is the time to think of nominating individuals for the EANGUS Auxiliary Awards: Distinguished Service Award, Meritorious Service Award, and Spouse of the Year Award. **Deadline for awards nominations is June 1**. That means that I have to receive the awards nominations not later than June 1, so e-mail or mail them to me to arrive by that time.

President Viv's Message Continued

E-mail is really best so that I can save the nominations and then e-mail them all to our EANGUS Auxiliary Executive Board members who will vote on the recipients. The deadline is not an arbitrary one for after the vote by the Executive Board we have only about 5 weeks to order and receive the awards to transport to Conference in St. Louis.

The chart of awards was included on page 6 in the February issue of *The Signal*. The points system for EANGUS Auxiliary Outstanding State Award and for the Outstanding Area Director's Award was printed on page 11 of the January issue of *The Signal*.

I sent to my distribution list on March 31 the EANGUS Auxiliary history pages for 2009. Please make these corrections under Burden Bears...Linda (not Line) House and Theta (not Dana) Olsen. Sorry I didn't catch them when I proofread! If there are other corrections please let me know.

Remember our members who are struggling with flooding, tornados, and other weather issues. April began beautifully in our region of the country with spring weather and lovely blooms. Easter services at our church included an Easter Sunrise Service at 6:30 a.m. The music during the service was our Easter Cantata, *I Know My Redeemer Lives*, and that was followed by the sermon from our pastor based on Matthew 28:1-10 and entitled "The Resurrection in 3-D". After services we had breakfast at church and then Sunday School. We had lunch with family and enjoyed visiting. That evening we attended the Easter drama/musical at Salem Heights Baptist Church out from Laurel, MS; we have friends who were in the soul-stirring presentation.

I attended a work-related Ministry Assistants Conference on April 12 & 13. Even after 30 years on the job, I always learn something and, of course, it's like a family reunion every year with Ministry Assistants from all across Mississippi. The theme was "All Aboard for a Spring Cruise on the 'Master's' Cruise Line."

April also brings numerous Enlisted State Conferences—thanks for the invitations. Jerry and I attended the Mississippi Conference April 23-25 and I have a Family Readiness Regional Training Workshop to attend this weekend, April 30-May 2 while Jerry will be on a motorcycle trip to Bowling Green, Kentucky same weekend (right now looking iffy with weather!). I'll also "work in" the WMU Annual Meeting on April 30. I rotate off the Mississippi WMU Executive Board after the Annual Meeting.

Please continue to remember Lucretia Barbee, her mom, and their entire family in your prayers. Her mom fell April 1 and broke. She is at home, continuing to improve. Many of us have experienced the angst that comes with trying to take care of aging, ill parents and other family members in the best way possible. Lu expressed the assurance that she knew all was in the Lord's hands. Please pray for their family.

Remember you can reach me at the toll-free number (1-800-230-8221); phone me at work (601-735-9413); or e-mail me at vividean@aol.com. Thanks to every single person who takes the time to call, write, and e-mail. Your communication is vital.

Help make our EANGUS Auxiliary bouquet big, beautiful, and showy!!!

God bless you as you bless others,
Vivian

Prayer and Praise



- **OK**-Debra Campbell's Nephew Corey Kirkpatrick
- **OK**-Prayer for Marge Walsh, Lucretia's friend in Chicago cancer has returned.
- **MS**-Nathan Cooley is doing really great but still has a lot facing him, so we need to continue to pray for him and his parents.
- **SD**-Rita Stewart, South Dakota, having hip surgery on Monday 29th March. Please remember Rita and Don in your prayers. You can send an e-mail to: marylisastoy@sio.midco.net
- **MS**-Sarah Lollar regarding Oakley. Sarah said he is doing about the same. He is having trouble with his arm. Please remember Oakley, Sarah and family in your prayers. You can send him a card at 802 North 10th Street, Columbus, MS 39701
- **OK**-Lucretia Barbee's mom fell and broke her hip April 1st is doing very well but please keep her and the family in prayer, and thanks so much for the cards and emails!
- **LA**-Richard Blanchard, and his wife, Phyllis, Auxiliary Member, from Louisiana...He was Area 4 Director for several years.
For my friends who don't know, my sister passed away yesterday, she was 61 years old. I want to thank everyone for the support that my family is receiving on the death of my Sister, Linda.
- Pray for our Troops
- Pray for our Country and it's leaders

Summer and Heat will be here soon.

This is good information to keep on hand.

Severe dehydration can be recognized by dry skin and eyes, no sweating or urination, sunken eyes, fever, rapid heart-beat and low blood pressure. The secret is tiny amounts of fluid frequently.

In an emergency, and assuming a patient can drink, you can make your own oral rehydration solution by mixing 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, 3 tablespoons sugar and 1 liter (about 1 quart) of safe drinking water.

Thanks Jodie Ward for sharing!

Photos, Information and Tidbits from Across the States

Air Forces Announces Island Lake

Summer Camp

Looking for a summer camp opportunity for youth 8-13 years old during the weeks of 3-16 Aug 10? Consider having your child apply for one of five chances for Air Force youth to attend Island Lake Camp, located in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Camp tuition is being provided at **no-cost** through a generous offer from the Island Lake Camp owners who wish to support military families by providing each of the Armed Forces Service Branches free spaces at the camp.

Parents are responsible for transportation either to/from the camp or one of the bus pickup points – Queens or Yonkers, NY; Paramus or Livingston, NJ; and Philadelphia, PA. Island Lake Camp offers youth a chance to participate and develop their interest in a variety of camp offerings, to include: mountain biking, circus techniques, dance, skate boarding, pioneering, gymnastics, science, theatre, horseback riding, technology, music, water sports and a myriad of other activities.

Under the supervision of qualified, conscientious and nurturing staff, youth will experience the excitement of unique challenges and the satisfaction of success. Youth receive interest-based instruction to help develop poise and mastery of skills in a variety of areas. Interested youth must submit an essay addressing the question, “What it would mean to me to get to go to Island Lake Camp this summer”. Camp selection priority will go to youth affected by current or recent parental deployment and should indicate such in their essay. All Air Force entries must be submitted electronically no later than 1 MAY 10 to:

David.Brittain@pentagon.af.mil or fax to 703-604-0323. Military campers who have previously attended an Island Lake Camp session are eligible to return for a minimal fee of \$200 as are their siblings. For camp information, families can visit the Island Lake Camp website at www.islandlake.com and direct all Air Force camp selection questions to David Brittain at 703-604-6427.

HELP!

You know we talk about our Guard family and that includes our soldiers and airmen and families. EANGUS Auxiliary is a spouse organization so we know that our spouses are Guard members but how many others in our families are Guard members? Drop us a note and let us know if you have multiple Guard members (or other service members) in your family. We want to put this in the May issue of *The Signal*.

Viv & Lucretia

vividean@aol.com lbarbee@cableone.net



"Each One Reach One" raise your hand and find a new Auxiliary Member for 2010! Together we CAN!

A Refresher Course in Email

E-Mail Tracker Programs -- very interesting and a must read! This is great information. YOU may already know this. Ifso, chances are you have some e-mail friends who need this information. **The information below doesn't deal with the problem of all the ACCUMULATED "forwards" addresses that often come attached to forwarded e-mails.** The same applies. Spammers get addresses that way. It is SO easy to erase all previous addresses on anything you forward. Simply "highlight" and hit the delete key. They will "go away" and your forwarded copy will be cleaner and not add to people's spam problems.

By now, I suspect everyone is familiar with **snopes.com** and/or **truthorfiction.com** for determining whether information received via email is just that: true/false or fact/fiction. Both are excellent sites.

Advice from **snopes.com** VERY IMPORTANT!!

1) Any time you see an email that says "forward this on to '10' (or however many) of your friends", "sign this petition", or "you'll get bad luck" or "you'll get good luck" or "you'll see something funny on your screen after you send it" or whatever --- it almost always has an email tracker program attached that tracks the cookies and emails of those folks you forward to. The host sender is getting a copy each time it gets forwarded and then is able to get lists of 'active' email addresses to use in SPAM emails or sell to other spammers. Even when you get emails that demand you send the email on if you're not ashamed of God/Jesus --- that is email tracking, and they are playing on our conscience. These people don't care how they get your email addresses - just as long as they get them. Also, emails that talk about a missing child or a child with an incurable disease "how would you feel if that was your child" --- email tracking. Ignore them and don't participate!

2) Almost all emails that ask you to add your name and forward on to others are similar to that mass letter years ago that asked people to send business cards to the little kid in Florida who wanted to break the Guinness Book of Records for the most cards. All it was, and all any of this type of email is, is a way to get names and 'cookie' tracking information for telemarketers and spammers -- to validate active email accounts for their own **profitable** purposes. You can do your Friends and Family members a GREAT favor by sending this information to them. You will be providing a service to your friends. And you will be rewarded by not getting thousands of spam emails in the future! Do yourself a favor and **STOP** adding your name(s) to those types of listing regardless how inviting they might sound! Or make you feel guilty if you don't! It's all about getting email addresses and nothing more. You may think you are supporting a GREAT cause, but you are NOT! Instead, you will be getting tons of junk mail later and very possibly a virus attached! Plus, we are helping the spammers get rich! Let's not make it easy for them!

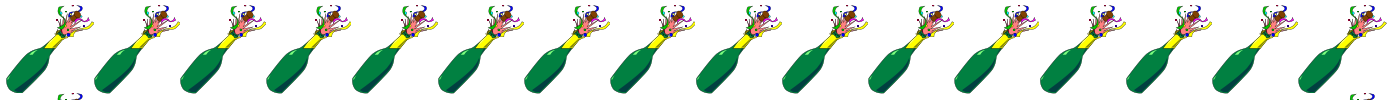
AND don't forget to get rid of ALL these forwarded addresses [anytime you forward ANY emails]!!!

ALSO: Email petitions are NOT acceptable to Congress or any other organization -i.e. social security, etc. To be acceptable, petitions must have a "signed signature" and full address of the person signing the petition, so this is a waste of time and you are just helping the email trackers.

THANK YOU Area V great article!

March 2010 *California Poppy*

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has launched the "Operation Welcome Home" Outreach Campaign. The initiative sets aside \$20 million in a one-time special fund to hire 325 combat veterans who will help guide newly discharged service members in need of job assistance. Governor Schwarzenegger also envisions recruiting 1000 volunteers as part of a new, ongoing Cal Vet Corps to expand outreach for housing, health care, and other services for veterans.

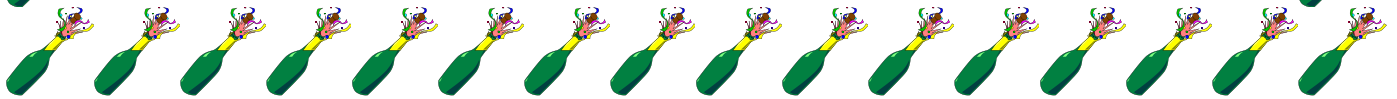


Sent: Thursday, April 01, 2010 9:27 AM
To: NGMS Distribution A-MS; NGMS ALL
Subject: MSANG Change of Authority-Command Chief

It is with great pleasure we announce CMSgt Ricky L. Myers has been selected as the next Command Chief Master Sergeant of the Mississippi Air National Guard effective 6 May 2010. Chief Myers brings extensive experience and a long, distinguished record of achievement to the position. Chief Myers and his wife Connie have been recognized locally and nationally for their outstanding leadership and many contributions to the Air National Guard. We are indeed fortunate to have such an outstanding team to lead our enlisted force and their families.

William L. Freeman, Jr.
Major General (MS), MSNG
The Adjutant General of Mississippi

WE in the Auxiliary agree both Ricky and Connie are great members and we feel very lucky to have them!!! Congratulations!!!



The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of **Tennessee** (EANGTN) and its Auxiliary had a fun and productive 2010 joint State Conference February 26-28 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Murfreesboro, TN.

This was election year for the positions of EANGTN Auxiliary President and Treasurer. Having served 10 years as President, Ann Story retired from the position. She will continue to be active in her position as Immediate Past President. Teresa Foss was elected and accepted the office of President. Alice Tubbs was re-elected as Treasurer.

(from *The Southern Drawl*, Area III newsletter)

Get a Military GI Bill Guide

Your GI Bill Rate for 2010 is **\$47,556**. There are 2 main steps you need to take to start using your benefits.

1. [Find Military Friendly Schools](#) that offer college credit for military service and flexible schedules.
2. [Get the GI Bill Guide](#) to learn how to use your benefits.

Start on your path to a better future.

[Find Military Friendly Schools Now](#)

The ThanksUSA Scholarship Program is accepting online applications as of April 1, 2010. The on-line application period will end on May 15, 2010, at 11:59 p.m. Central Time.

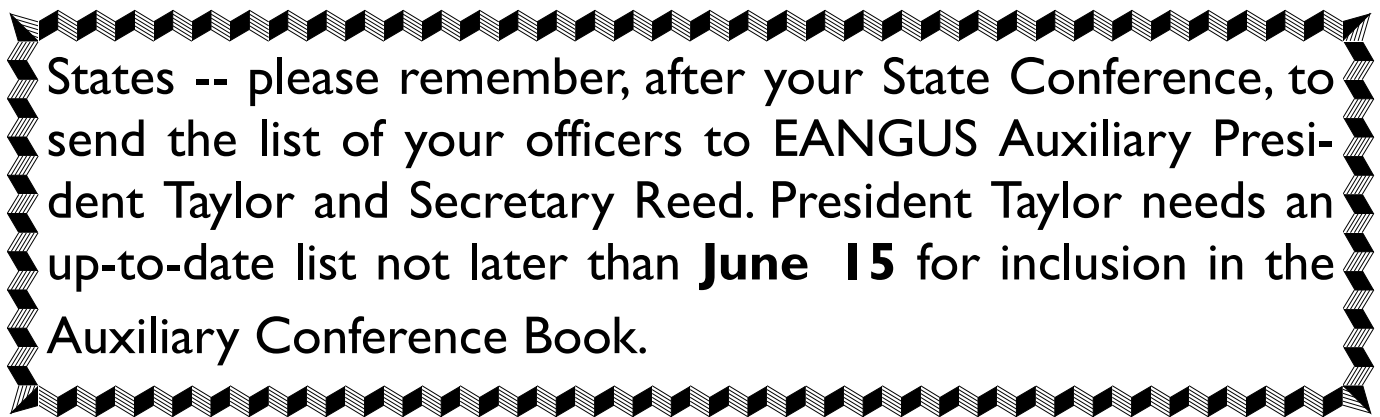
For complete information about ThanksUSA's Scholarship Program and to review the scholarship criteria, go to <http://www.thanksusa.org/main/scholarships.html>.

Please read the guidelines **CAREFULLY** prior to filling out your application. The following items are worth noting here at the outset:

1. The ThanksUSA application link -- <http://www.thanksusa.org/main/scholarships.html> -- can only be found at the ThanksUSA website.
2. New this year, **only** on-line applications will be accepted and evaluated. All supporting documents will need to be scanned and uploaded this year. Sorry, but applicants cannot mail, fax, or email paper applications. Once the final submission is made, no changes can be made to the application content and no documents can be uploaded. After submission, you will receive an electronic acknowledgement that your application has been received.
3. Also new this year, spouses may now use the award for non-degree licensure/certification programs, and this is the case regardless of whether an undergraduate degree has already been completed.
4. Evidence of "active military duty" may consist of a Statement of Service; a letter or written statement from the Personnel Department or the Commanding Officer; a copy of Duty Orders; a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty or DD214. Because it does not provide any dates, a military ID WILL **NOT** be accepted as evidence of active-duty.

This scholarship program is just one small way ThanksUSA and its supporters show their appreciation for the sacrifices you and your military service members make each and every day.

Sincerely,
The ThanksUSA Team
Week of March 29, 2010



States -- please remember, after your State Conference, to send the list of your officers to EANGUS Auxiliary President Taylor and Secretary Reed. President Taylor needs an up-to-date list not later than **June 15** for inclusion in the Auxiliary Conference Book.

President Taylor

The Signal just got sent to over 50,000 members that we have emails for to include the Auxiliary members with emails.

Bryan Birch

EANGUS Chief of Staff/Member Services Director

THANK You Bryan for this tremendous service you are providing to get the "Signal" out to the states and territories!

FOR answers to last months word search email Lucretia Ibarbee@cableone.net

ACROSS

- 1 Auxiliary Newsletter
- 3 Who was the Auxiliary member that gave us our motto, "Side By Side, We Stand With Pride"
- 6 What EANGUS Auxiliary President had the same initials as EANGUS President Nate Monastra (they served at the same time)
- 7 What does MMU mean?
- 9 Immediate EANGUS Auxiliary Past President
- 13 5th Annual Auxiliary Conference State
- 14 41st EANGUS Conference State
- 15 Purpose of EANGUS Auxiliary
- 17 What St Louis landmark was built in 1965 as a monument to the first pioneer who settled west of Mississippi River
- 22 What EANGUS Auxiliary President has the same initials as a popular, sporty foreign car?
- 25 EANGUS Auxiliary Secretary
- 26 Executive Director
- 27 EANGUS Quarterly Magazine
- 28 40th EANGUS Conference State
- 29 What state has had the largest number of our National Auxiliary Presidents
- 30 EANGUS Vice President

DOWN

- 2 Month and Year decision made to form National EANGUS Auxiliary
- 3 Auxiliary Vice President
- 4 Recipient of the Pen is Mightier than the Musket Award in Rochester
- 5 Month EANGUS National Conference is usually held
- 8 What is "Side By Side We Stand With Pride"
- 10 EANGUS Auxiliary Treasurer
- 11 EANGUS President
- 12 EANGUS Auxiliary President
- 15 Name the Auxiliary President that named the Auxiliary Newsletter "The Signal"
- 16 Name of our new EANGUS Legislative Director
- 18 39th EANGUS Conference State
- 19 What city was the 1980 National Conference
- 20 Host Hotel for 39th EANGUS Conference
- 21 EANGUS members identify and communicate with legislators on important issues here
- 23 EANGUS Chief of Staff
- 24 Legislative Alert

EANGUS Auxiliary Crossword Trivia

The crossword puzzle grid consists of 30 numbered starting points for clues:

- 1: 10-letter horizontal word at the top right.
- 2: 2-letter vertical word on the far right.
- 3: 8-letter horizontal word in the upper middle.
- 4: 5-letter vertical word in the upper middle.
- 5: 6-letter vertical word on the left side.
- 6: 12-letter horizontal word in the upper middle.
- 7: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 8: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 9: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 10: 6-letter vertical word in the middle.
- 11: 2-letter vertical word on the left side.
- 12: 2-letter vertical word in the middle.
- 13: 5-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 14: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 15: 8-letter horizontal word on the right side.
- 16: 5-letter vertical word on the left side.
- 17: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 18: 6-letter vertical word on the right side.
- 19: 6-letter vertical word on the right side.
- 20: 3-letter vertical word in the middle.
- 21: 3-letter vertical word in the middle.
- 22: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 23: 3-letter vertical word in the middle.
- 24: 3-letter vertical word in the middle.
- 25: 5-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 26: 8-letter horizontal word on the right side.
- 27: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 28: 10-letter horizontal word in the middle.
- 29: 10-letter horizontal word at the bottom right.
- 30: 10-letter horizontal word at the bottom center.

Senior Corner: Brooks Marr Senior Contributor



This is for you, and for you to share :

1. Tip from *Tae Kwon Do* :

The elbow is the strongest point on your body. If you are close enough to use it, do!

2. Learned this from a tourist guide.

If a robber asks for your wallet and/or purse, **DO NOT HAND IT TO HIM.**

Toss it away from you.... Chances are that he is more interested in your wallet and/or purse than you, and he will go for the wallet/purse. **RUN LIKE MAD IN THE OTHER DIRECTION!**

3. If you are ever thrown into the trunk of a car, kick out the back tail lights and stick your arm out the hole and start waving like crazy..The driver won't see you, but everybody else will.

4. Women have a tendency to get into their cars after shopping, eating, working, etc., and just Sit (doing their checkbook, or making a list, etc. **DON'T DO THIS!**)

The predator will be watching you, and this is the perfect opportunity for him to get in on the passenger side, put a gun to your head, and tell you where to go.

AS SOON AS YOU GET INTO YOUR CAR , LOCK THE DOORS AND LEAVE..

If someone is in the car with a gun to your head **DO NOT DRIVE OFF,** Instead gun the engine and speed into anything, wrecking the car.

Your **Air Bag** will save you. If the person is in the back seat they will get the worst of it . As soon as the car crashes bail out and run.

It is better than having them find your body in a remote location.

5. A few notes about getting into your car in a parking lot, or parking garage:

A.) Be aware: look around you, look into your car, at the passenger side floor , and in the back seat B.) If you are parked next to a big van, enter your car from the passenger door. Most serial killers attack their victims

by pulling them into their vans while the women are attempting to get into their cars.

C.) Look at the car parked on the driver's side of your vehicle, and the passenger side... If a male is sitting alone in the seat nearest your car, you may want to walk back

into the mall, or work, and get a guard/policeman to walk you back out.

IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY. (And better paranoid than dead.)

6. **ALWAYS** take the elevator instead of the stairs. Stairwells are horrible places to be alone and the perfect crime spot. This is especially true at **NIGHT!**)

7. If the predator has a gun and you are not under his control, **ALWAYS RUN!**

The predator will only hit you (a running target) 4 in 100 times; and even then, it most likely **WILL NOT** be a vital organ. **RUN,** Preferably in a zig -zag pattern!

8. As women, we are always trying to be sympathetic: **STOP**

It may get you raped, or killed. Ted Bundy, the serial killer, was a good-looking, well educated man, who **ALWAYS** played on the sympathies of unsuspecting women.

He walked with a cane, or a limp, and often asked 'for help' into his vehicle or with his vehicle, which is when he abducted his next victim.

9. Another Safety Point: Someone just told me that her friend heard a crying baby on her porch the night before last, and she called the police because it was late and she thought it was weird.. The police told her 'Whatever you do, **DO NOT** open the door..' The lady then said that it sounded like the baby had crawled near a window, and she was worried that it would crawl to the street and get run over.

The policeman said, 'We already have a unit on the way, whatever you do, **DO NOT open the door.**' He told her that they think a serial killer has a baby's cry recorded and uses it to coax women out of their homes thinking that someone dropped off a baby.

Alcon:

Many thanks to the National Guard Regional Volunteer Team who spent many hours processing and selecting the 2010 NG Volunteer Award winners. Also, thanks to all of you who encouraged others and/or took the time to complete nomination packets for your outstanding volunteers.

The following were selected as the 2010 winners and will be recognized at our conference in New Orleans.

Air Guard Family of the Year, SMSgt Duane and Lisa Moore and Family (Dara, Kyle, & Eden) 189th Airlift Wing, Little Rock, Arkansas

Army Guard Family of the Year, SFC Richard and Tess Haugen, 816th Engineer Company, Dickenson, North Dakota

Air Guard Family Member of the Year, Suzanne Moles, 144th Fighter Wing, Fresno, California

Army Guard Family Member of the Year, Janell Kellet, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Prairie, Wisconsin

Air Guard Extra Mile Award, Col (Ret.) Larry Harrington, 185th Refueling Wing, Sioux City, Iowa

Army Guard Extra Mile Award, Gary Conley, JFHQ/W8BSSAA, St. Albans, West Virginia

FP Community PURPLE Award, Red Hat Ladies Militia, South Dakota

The Gold Award, Deborah Eyre, 140th Fighter Wing, Buckley AFB, Colorado

Congratulations to all of our winners and their proud states!

Paula Sumrall

Branch Chief, Volunteer and Child/Youth Program

NGB-JI-FP

VETERANS Websites

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38CFR/BOOKC/PART4/S4_130.DOC

Mental Health Program Guidelines

http://www.l.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1094

Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers

<http://www.mirecc.med.va.gov/>

MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Centers of Excellence <http://www.va.gov/ms/about.asp>

My Health e Vet <http://www.myhealth.va.gov/>

NASDVA.COM National Association of State Directors <http://www.nasdva.com/>

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

<http://www.nchpdp.med.va.gov/postdeploymentlinks.asp>

Neurological Conditions and Convulsive Disorders, Schedule of Ratings

<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38cfr/bookc/part4/s4%5F124a.doc>

<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38cfr/bookc/part4/s4_124a.doc

OMI (Office of Medical Inspector) <http://www.omi.cio.med.va.gov/>

Online VA Form 10-10EZ <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/>

Parkinson's Disease and Related Neurodegenerative Disorders

<http://www.l.va.gov/resdev/funding/solicitations/docs/parkinsons.pdf>

<http://www.l.va.gov/resdev/funding%0d%0a/solicitations/docs/parkinsons.pdf>

and, <http://www.l.va.gov/padrecc/>



NATHAN'S Story

My husband and I were married October 27, 2008, had been married only a few months and in May of the following year, we found out we were expecting our first child. We were OVERJOYED, to say the least. I had a wonderful pregnancy. We found out at 14 weeks that we were having a son! Nathaniel Luke would be his name and we would call him Nathan. We had so much fun preparing for Nathan's arrival.

On Saturday, December 27, 2008 at 8:30, Nathaniel Luke arrived! He was PERFECT...6lbs 11 ounces and 20 1/2 inches long. We thought we had a perfectly healthy baby... wow, things would certainly change the next day. The next morning Dr. Blubaugh, the neonatal doctor at JARMC in Meridian came by to tell us he heard a heart murmur while examining Nathan. Well even then Donnie and I are thinking no big deal...lots of babies have those, right? Well he goes on to tell us he would like to do an echocardiogram because the murmur is very loud. When the doctor came back to our room, that is when our world came crashing in on us.

He tells us that he is almost certain Nathan has Tetralogy of Fallot with Pulmonary Atresias. WOW, how do you go from having a perfectly healthy baby to one with a heart defect? Now we are told the heartbreaking news...our baby that's under 24 hours old will need to be taken to another hospital for better care...either Jackson or Birmingham. We chose UAB in Birmingham. Nathan was airlifted there and we had to drive. That was honestly the worst drive of our life. I tried to rest considering I was less than 24 hours out of labor but that was about impossible. After getting to Birmingham it was confirmed that he did have TOF with PA. We stayed there for two weeks.

At ten days old Nathan had a BT shunt put in and we were able to bring our precious baby home. Thank goodness Nathan didn't and still hasn't shown any symptoms of having any problems. At 8 months old Nathan had his first heart catheterizations and it was decided it was time for his first open heart surgery, so on September 11, 2009 he had his first repair which took 5 hours. Talking about a long day..whew! Nathan had trouble losing too much blood but was given blood and platelets and he was fine.

It is with God's grace that we are so blessed to have our son still here with us. We cherish him daily and couldn't ask for more. Nathan will continue to see his cardiologist, Dr. Pearce, at UAB, several times a year and may require more surgeries down the road. For now, he is a typical little baby.

Story by Nathan's mom, Amy Cooley- MISSISSIPPI

REMEMBER to support the Ronald McDonald House sell your pop tabs and bring proceeds to conference for Ronald McDonald House.

REMEMBER we voted at Conference last year not to bring actual tabs anymore but bring proceeds instead.