Soldiers, Airmen and families hold annual Joint Conference

By Michele Henry, executive director, National Guard Association of Kansas

The 56th Annual State Joint Conference held at the Ramada Inn in Topeka April 17-19, was a tremendous success this year. It was attended by vendors, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve representatives, Family Support representatives, Kansas National Guard officers and enlisted personnel and their families.

Friday activities kicked off the conference with a successful clay pigeon shoot competition and an annual golf tournament. That evening, the opening ceremony featured Kansas Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting speaking and sharing his view of the importance of a joint conference. The evening's entertainment included more than 75 exhibit tables and entertainment from the band BaliRoot.

The weekend was filled with many great speakers, including author Dr. Vance Hardisty; Mayor of Greensburg, Bob Dixson; and informative reports from all Kansas major commands and wings. Saturday evening was filled with many well-deserved award presentations and the entertainment was complete with the 35th Army Rock Band's standard excellence in performance.

Sunday morning featured a prayer gathering and a Family Support Breakfast where awards were presented to honor those family members that had donated much of their time and efforts in support of the Kansas Family Support activities.

The opening night barbecue of the 56th Annual State Joint Conference was a good time to renew old acquaintances and make new ones. Col. Larry Hannan chats with Tim Ray of TriWest. (Photo by Pfc. Jessica Zullig, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Competition, camaraderie the hallmarks of 2009 Sporting Clays shoot

By Maj. Mike Wallace
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The team members wait for the target, silent and motionless, guns at the ready. Suddenly someone yells a warning. "Eleven o'clock high, two o'clock high!" The team of four shooters move in unison to adjust their weapons to the various zones, each having been assigned their sector of fire before the event then, the rapid shooting began. Deadly blasts of gunfire erupt, destroying the two targets. Everyone sighs a breath of relief and the members begin discussing how to shoot better the next time as they ready their weapons for another mission.

Is this in Iraq or Afghanistan? No, it was the 2009 Spring Clays shoot out, held April 17, 2009, at the Ravenwood Lodge in Topeka, Kan. The event was sponsored by the National Guard Association of Kansas, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and the Family Readiness Group. The event was hosted by the Kansas Joint Force Headquarters, Kansas National Guard.

The shoot-out is an annual event that helps kick off the annual National Guard Association convention and Kansas's Professional Development Program on the weekend.

"This shoot-out helps with team building and promotes esprit de corps," said event manager, Lt. Col. Les Gellhaus. "Plus, it's a lot of fun to compete with your comrades and buddies and it really, really hones your shooting skills. It gives you something fun to do before all the meetings and seminars coming up on the weekend."

Teams were made up of Army and Air Guard members, civilians, men and women and some youth. Each shooter had 50 shotgun shells to shoot at 50 regular sized clay pigeons, and if they were good enough to down two clay pigeons with a single shot, then they got to take any left-over shells to the team competition.

The individual shooting was scored simply. Each target hit was a point. But, on team shooting, there were a couple of twists. First, the pigeons were competition-sized, meaning that they were much smaller than a regular sized clay pigeon. Each target hit was scored as five points and on each launching, there was a red clay pigeon, which was considered the "poison target." If someone on the team hit that, it was a deduction of 25 points. There was also a deduction of a point per clay pigeon missed.

The teams learned that shooting the sports clay pigeons takes more skill than regular clay pigeon shooting.

"Those things really fly fast," said Luke Hannan, the youngest shooter, who is the son of Col. Larry and Laura Hannan.

"They're harder to get a good bead on," said Staff Sgt. Justin Lawson, "but if you can hit those, then you've matured into a really good shot."

"The team shooting is about strategy," explained Gellhaus. "Let's say that my team arrived at the team shoot with six shells left over from the individual shoot, we make sure that the best shooter has the most shells to shoot, but still, get everyone to cover down with at least a shell or two, depending on his skill level. Of course, the more shells you arrive with, the better your odds."

There were 37 competitors this year. In the individual events, trophies went to the winners and the winners were: Top Youth Shooter (12-years-old was the minimum age, have a hunters safety card and their sponsor had to be present during shoot) was Luke Hannan with a score of 22, Top Female Shooter was Capt. Molly Gillock with 14. Both of these shooters beat the national average of 13 hits out of 50 targets.

Match Winner was Staff Sgt. Justin Lawson with 42 and 11 doubles. Second Place Individual was Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jack Hancock with 39 and seven doubles. Third Place Individual was Staff Sgt. Stan

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Taking their quadrants, team members ready for the team competition during the 2009 Spring Clays shoot out. (Photo by Maj. Mike Wallace, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Team Rose wins fourth tournment

Dedee Erlacher, putts a tough lay on hole #12 while (from left) Laurie Kuechler, Kathy Gretencord and Maj. Terresa Riedel watch. The team was the first all female team in the tournament history. (Photo by Maj. Mike Wallace, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

By Maj. Mike Wallace
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

For the fourth year in a row, Team Rose won the Annual National Guard Association Golf Tournament at the Shawnee Country Club in Topeka during the social events held before the Annual National Guard Association Conference on Friday, April 17, 2009.

The team was composed of Team Captain, retired Col. Joe Rose, retired Col. Henry Martin, Darrel and Randy Harris. They were the first place team in the first flight of the day, with a team score of 58 in the scramble event. Team member Martin commented how this year's win compared with previous year's wins.

"This was a very good win. There were many strong teams playing in the tournament," said Martin. "Brad Mettner's team was playing very well and that motivated us to play better. All of our team members were playing very good, the weather was perfect (last year's weather was very cold and very windy) and we had a lot of fun."

The toughest areas of the course were probably the par three holes. "We made some great putts to birdie several holes," said Rose, "but the short par four up the hill number 16 is the place we won the tournament." Team Rose birdied that hole, giving them a two stroke advantage to their closest competitor.

Team Rose's strengths were hitting long drives and having two great putters on the team. Their weakness was getting too close to the green on par fours and sometime their chipping was landing short.

"They're a hard team to beat," said Dedee Erlacher, a civilian player from Ottawa that played on the first all female-team in the tournament. Her team was sponsored by Maj. Terresa Riedel. "They didn't have to take as many mulligans as other teams. I think they're very familiar with this course."

"Each of those team members are ringers," laughs Brig. Gen. Deborah Rose, wife of Joe Rose. She had her own team in the tournament, but didn't place. "Joe won't even let me play on his team, he has to get his winning team together and win each time."

How did the Team Rose's strategies change from last year? They knew they needed to shoot 12-14 under par to win. They had been watching the identified good teams to determine how they were playing. They saw that most of the teams were playing very good and that motivated Team Rose to concentrate on each hole.

So what is Team Rose planning for next year's challenge? The team members are keeping their plans close to their vests.

Martin did have this much to say. "Our strategy is to have our first hitter to play safe on the drives and hit the center of the greens on the approach. Then the next three players can go for it with their shots."

"We will play next year as a team," said Rose. "We enjoy playing with people we served with in the military. The association's social events keep us connected to the Kansas National Guard after one re-

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Two earn Youth Volunteer of the Year Awards at NGAKS conference

By Pfc. Jessica Zullig and
Spc. Angie M. Mooneyham
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Dusty Sawyer, a student from Buhler High School, was awarded the Army Youth Volunteer of the Year Award at the National Guard Association of Kansas Joint Confernece on April 18 and 19 at the Ramada in Topeka, Kan. Dusty is the son of Sgt. 1st Class David and Suzanne Viegra of the 1161st Forward Support Company in Hutchinson, Kan.

Sawyer has volunteered with the Kansas Army National Guard youth program for seven years. He has been a positive role model for all children of the Guard, not only volunteering within his own Family Readiness Group, but also at Operation Teen Camp and Operation Kids Camp.

Along with being a Teen Camp graduate, Sawyer advanced from participant to camp counselor and at Operation Kids Camp, he progressed from camper to the only teenage squad leader mentoring junior squad leaders.

Sawyer persevered under difficult circumstances by completing tasks that were requested of him by demonstrating great motivation to learn the position of squad leader and role model for the camp participants. Also, Sawyer demonstrated supervisory ability by leading and counseling 12 boys between the ages of 11 and 12 with little time to prepare for the task at hand.

Organized, efficient and competent are additional qualities that are associated with Sawyer. People who know him say his communication skills are above and beyond that of an average 17-year-old boy, adding that he attends every meeting and event with a smile on his face and never has a negative thing to say about anyone or anything he may be up against.

Through his desire, will and initiative Sawyer has made a great impact on all the National Guard Youth he has come into contact with. He has been such an outstanding volunteer he was selected to attend the National Guard Youth Symposium in 2007 and 2008 representing the state of Kansas. Sawyer's efforts and hard work has directly contributed to the success of the Kansas National Guard Youth Program.

Dusty holds a second degree black belt in Tang Soo Do. He is also a provisional instructor at the Jade Mountain Martial Arts. He has earned the Ad Astra Per Aspera award, been involved in the Young Marines in school, has been in high school track and cross country and has been on the honor roll all through high school.

Michael Schmidt, a Marais des Cygnes Valley High School senior from Melvern, Kan., was awarded the Air National Guard Youth of the Year award. Schmidt's mother is Tech. Sgt. Dorothy Westergren, who is a member of the 190th Air Refueling Wing in Topeka, Kan.

"Michael Schmidt has been a positive role model for all children of the Guard and what they must endure during a deployment," said Col. Derek Rogers, who nominated Schmidt for the award. "He is a level-headed youth and welcomes all new challenges. He has also progressed from participant to a counselor at Operation Teen Camp."

Schmidt has been a volunteer with the youth program for five years. He also volunteers at both Operation Teen Camp and Operation Kids Camp and has spent countless hours working with the Family Program Office at the 190th Air Refueling Wing helping with anything from office work to the day care.

He is an active student in his high school, serving as his class vice president, and is active in Future Farmers of America, Future Business Leaders of America and other organizations.

"Through his desire, will and initiative, he has made a great impact on all the National Guard youth he has come in contact with," said Rogers. "His efforts have directly contributed to the success of the Kansas National Guard Youth Program."

Schmidt is a member of his school's Scholars Bowl and attended the Robert Dole Institute at Kansas University last summer. He was nominated by the Kansas ROTC and selected to go to the Air Force Academy for a diversity seminar this year and has participated in the school's athletic programs throughout his high school career.

Michael Schmidt (left) and Dusty Sawyer received Youth Volunteer of the Year Awards at the 2009 National Guard Association Joint Conference in April. (Photo by Pfc. Jessica Zullig, 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Employers honored by Kansas Guard

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employees with 10 being members of the Guard or Reserve. At one time, as many as seven Soldiers/Airmen were deployed at the same time.

Leawood Fire Department was honored based on their support of Capt. Joe Ostermann, of the Kansas Army National Guard. The department flew the Blue Star Flag for Ostermann during his deployment and supported his family in numerous ways and provided care packages and medical supplies in support of the deployed Americans.

Marysville Police Department has two of its eight officers serving in the Kansas Army National Guard. The support shown to these officers during Guard training and deployments is unwavering.

Munson Army Health Center was honored for its support because of its 380 employees, 12 employees serve as members of the Guard or Reserve. During deployment, the center continues insurance and benefits, and personnel from the medical center have shown their support for deployed Soldiers by assisting families, keeping in touch with deployed Soldiers and sending care packages.

Skaggs Hardware was honored for its support of Lt. Col. David Schmidt, of the U.S. Army Reserve. During Schmidt's almost 20 years with the family-owned business their support during training and mobilization has been above and beyond.

Wells is top Guard volunteer

By Maj. Mike Wallace
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Master Sgt. Tammy Wells of the 190th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) was named as the 2009 National Guard Association Military Volunteer of the Year at the annual banquet held Saturday, April 18 at the Ramada Inn in Topeka. The award is designed to show who in the Kansas National Guard has been the most committed to support Kansas Family Programs and the program's mission.

Master Sgt. Tammy Wells

Wells has volunteered for the 190th ARW for 11 years. This past year she has a total of 96 hours as volunteer and she is a member of the unit's Family Readiness Group.

"Master Sergeant Wells is an excellent example of dedication and dependability," said Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, the adjutant general. "She displays a high degree of integrity, responsibility, and ambition and she is definitely a leader rather than a follower."

Wells contributed directly to the success of the 190th Air Refueling Wing's 2008 Friends and Family Day celebration. She organized more than 40 community volunteers in support of the unit's Family Day, thus ensuring all unit members were able to enjoy the events of the day with their families. With more than 1,500 people in attendance, Wells' dependability and judgment, coupled with her dedication, guaranteed the success of the event and exceeded all standards previously obtained. For her efforts and achievements, she received an Air Force Achievement Medal.

Wells also demonstrated her talents and teamwork ability once again during the unit's annual holiday party, planning and organizing the event. There were more than 300 people in attendance and the holiday party was recognized as one of the best in years. She has also helped organize, pack and send care packages to deployed Airmen. During the holiday season, after collecting toys for needy families, she assisted in wrapping and distributing more than 500 toys to our those families.

Soldiers, Airmen receive honors

By Major Mike Wallace
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Kansas Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were named as the epitome among their peers during the 2009 Annual National Guard Association banquet held April 18, at the Ramada Inn in Topeka.

Army winners

Spc. Edwin Jones from Headquarters, 235th Regiment, was named as the Kansas Army National Guard's Soldier of the Year. Staff Sgt. Ryan L. Pierce, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry Regiment was the top noncommissioned officer. Both awardees were presented a bronze eagle statue and a certificate from the Enlisted National Guard Association for their efforts.

Capt. Rodney Seaba, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry, was named outstanding Army Company Grade Officer of the Year, while Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jason Garr, 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation, won the honor of being named the Warrant Officer of the Year.

Air Force winners

Tech. Sgt. Joseph Ullmer was named as the Kansas Outstanding Airman of the Year in the overall category for the Kansas Air National Guard.

Senior Airman Olivia Kennedy of the 190th Air Refueling Wing was named the Airman of the Year for the Kansas Air National Guard. The 190th ARW stayed strong with Tech. Sgt. Joseph Ullmer being named the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Master Sgt. Gary Holliday being named the Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the year.

The 184th Intelligence Wing took home honors with the First Sergeant of the Year being awarded to Master Sgt. Dennis G. Farris, while the Honor Guard of the Year went to Staff Sgt. Aaron B. Santry.

Air Force Company Grade Officer of the Year was Capt. Rich Moon of the 184th IW.

Competition, camaraderie the hallmarks of 2009 Sporting Clays shoot

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Jones with 39 and four doubles.

Money was paid to the first place winner and then second and third place money were drawn from score cards. Sgt. Michael Silsby won second place money and Dave Rapson earned third place money.

The first place team was the WANNABEE. Members included Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jack Hancock, Staff Sgt. Stan Jones, Staff Sgt. Justin Lawson and Lt. Col. Les Gellhaus. Their team shot down an impressive 229 points. Second Place went to the WILD CARDS team members, Maj. Gen. Tod M. Bunting, the adjutant general; retired Col. Don Jackson; Capt. Jeff Dickinson and Mr. John Kleinschmidt. Their score was 186.

Third Place went to the JOCSTERS team members 1st Sgt. Randy Rice, Teresa Rice, Capt. James McCosh and Spc. Andrew Mulkey. They scored a total of 173 points.

BCTC MAINTENANCE, with team members Lt. Col. Tom Barnett, Richard Peplow, David Rapson and George Matthias, received second place money and TEAM GARRISON, with Team members Kyle Garrison, Shane Garrison, Will Roberts and Luke Hannan, drew third place money.

The match ended around noon with brats, burgers and drinks being devoured by the shooters. They teased each other on shooting skills and compared notes on how they would do it differently next year.

Even Bunting, whose team placed second this year, had his eyes and ears open for pointers.

"Next year, my team will try to get the coveted first place trophies," Bunting said. "We have some work to do to catch up with the winners, but in what other sport can all the practice be as fun as the actual competition? It's going to be more exciting and better next year!"

Team Rose wins fourth tournment

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tires. The tournament allows us to visit with old and new friends."

These are the final scores for the tournament. First place in the first flight belonged to Team Guthrie with a score of 72 (Chris Jackson, Mike Cochran, Clay Winters and Will Guthrie).

The Steansen Team won second place in the second flight with a score of 65 (Dan Fox, Terry Clain, Dena Swisher and Howard Steansen).

For Hole Prizes, Ed Monteith was the closest to the pin on hole #5, the longest drive on hole #8 was Dena Swisher, the closest to the pin (and winning a new handmade professional driver) on hole #13 was Kevin Wilcox, the closest to the pin on #17 was Chris Eichem and the longest putt on hole #18 was Chuck Eacock.