



VIEW*S*&VISIONS

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A Vital Asset for Our Military Families

Major General Allen E. & Sallie Pat Belcher Tackett
Former Adjutant General
West Virginia National Guard

Major General Allen E. Tackett served as Adjutant General of the West Virginia National Guard from 1995 until his retirement in January 2011. He began his military career as a Private with the 16th Special Forces Group in 1963, going on to attend Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. General Tackett served with the 16th Special Forces Group and the 2nd Battalion 19th Special Forces Group for 25 years, culminating with a tour as the Battalion Commander, 1985-1988.

He was next assigned to the West Virginia State Area Command, where he served in several different positions of importance until his appointment as Adjutant General by Governor Gaston Caperton in 1995. He was subsequently reappointed by Governors Underwood (1997), Wise (2000) and Manchin (2004).

He met his wife, Sallie Pat, at East Bank High School in southeastern Kanawha County, West Virginia, where he graduated in 1962, and she the following year.

Sallie Pat Belcher Tackett graduated from the West Virginia Institute of Technology in 1968, and received a master's degree in secondary education in 1989 from the University of West Virginia College of Graduate Studies. In 2006, she retired after a 36-year career as a math and physical education teacher with Kanawha County Schools. During that time she also served as a volleyball coach, cheerleader and drill team sponsor and community service coordinator. Active in her community, she coached youth softball, baseball and basketball, and served as a Cub Scout den leader.

From 1995 to 2011, she served as the First Lady of the West Virginia National Guard, and helped to coordinate fundraising activities for youth summer camp programs and a holiday dinner for all military family members and retirees.

The West Virginia National Guard Foundation is a non-profit organization formed in 1992 to provide emergency relief for members of the state's National Guard and their families, and to preserve the history and heritage of the organization. In the 20 years since it was formed, the Foundation has helped hundreds of citizen-soldiers and airmen facing personal hardship. Over the years, the Foundation has assisted military families in their time of need. We needed something to help the families when a financial or some other problem occurred at home who endured hardships and sacrifices when their military loved ones were deployed or on a training mission in defense of our nation. Therefore, the WVNG Foundation became a vital asset for our military families.

The Foundation has distributed more than \$55,000 over just the past 30 months to help National Guard families in need. That money was given to cover expenses associated with house fires, emergency medical care not covered by insurance, temporary travel and lodging expenses for medical care, vehicle and home repairs when service members were deployed, and to help those who have lost jobs as a result of the ongoing economic downturn, among other things. The Foundation is where our soldiers and airmen can turn in times of need, and they know they will get help.

West Virginia's National Guard has deployed every unit in the state, and more than 100,000 soldiers and airmen since the terrorist attacks on 9/11. That places West Virginia among the states with the highest number of deployed service members per capita. America can't go to war without the National Guard, and we owe it to the families who suffer through these long and frequent deployments, who give so much, to help them when they face financial hardships.

When Sallie Pat and I retired at the end of January 2011, we decided to forego the long military tradition of giving gifts to retirees for their service and, instead, encouraged everyone to donate to the West Virginia National Guard Foundation. We wanted





to help our military family in any way we could, just to say “thank you” to the men and women in uniform, who voluntarily defend and protect our way of life.

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Care for our military families has come a long way since 1995, when the West Virginia National Guard had only a part-time Family Readiness Coordinator, who also

had another time-consuming military job on top of this one. The country was starting to realize that *family* readiness was a vital part in soldier and airmen readiness. We also had a State Family Council, made up of civilian family members of our Guard who represented the different units throughout the state. They met and discussed problems that families faced and tried to help resolve any that occurred.

Today, we have a full-time Family Readiness Coordinator and 38 full-time people across the state, providing all the services that an active duty base has for our families. There are so many services that our Family Program provides; all of our families have somewhere to turn in times of need. Help is there for everyone – even our retirees, members of the reserves and active duty people that are in West Virginia. We do not turn anyone away.

The Foundation is registered with the West Virginia Secretary of State's office and the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, which means contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible. Those interested in donating to the Foundation may contact Foundation officials at (304) 344-6111. ▽