



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE
ILLINOIS ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1301 North MacArthur Boulevard, Springfield, Illinois 62702-2399

January 2, 2014

National Guard Bureau
1411 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, VA 22202-3231

Dear National Guard Bureau:

The Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office has been an elite team well before my time as Adjutant General in early 2013. It is one of my personal goals to be directly involved with community relations support each month and this last year I have witnessed the great work in the office. The Illinois National Guard always had a solid program, but the implementation of Mike Chrisman as a Community Relations Manager in January 2008 has propelled the program to higher levels.

Over the last few years the JFHQ-IL PAO community relations program has grown and developed new and innovative ways to motivate our Soldiers and Airmen to be actively involved in their communities. From top-notch Illinois National Guard speakers to honor guards and static displays, the Illinois National Guard is well represented in the community. This is the time when it is imperative for the Illinois National Guard to be active in the community to tell the good stories of our Soldiers and Airmen stateside and abroad. As proven in the past, JFHQ-IL PAO sets the standard.

Mike Chrisman developed a great relationship with our communities and discovered new ways to get support from our Soldiers and Airmen. His dedication to his job is second to none and his drive to find a way to get support for community events is remarkable. When I talk to our Brigades, Wings and community members about Mike and the JFHQ-IL PAO community relations program I have heard nothing but positive comments.

I would highly recommend Mike Chrisman for the Keith L. Ware community relations award for individual achievement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Daniel M. Krumrei".

DANIEL M. KRUMREI
Brigadier General
The Adjutant General



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE
ILLINOIS ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1301 North MacArthur Boulevard, Springfield, Illinois 62702-2399

2013 Keith L. Ware Competition-Individual Achievement-Table of Contents

- **Page 1**-Letter of endorsement from higher headquarters, BG Daniel Krumrei
- **Page 2**-Table of Contents
- **Page 3**- Name, position, duty description
- **Page 4/5**-Justification, Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation
- **Page 6**-Recommendation from supervisor, MAJ Brad Leighton



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE
ILLINOIS ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1301 North MacArthur Boulevard, Springfield, Illinois 62702-2399

Person Nominated: Mr. Mike Chrisman

Position: Community Relations Manager

Duty Description: Mr. Chrisman is the POC for all Community Relations/Outreach requests and critical Community Relations activities from the public and coordinates with appropriate personnel to fill requests. This includes the Speakers Bureau program, aviation support, band and honor guard requests. He coordinates on a daily and weekly basis with NGB-PA, the Army's Office of the Chief of Public Affairs - Midwest, SAF/PA and other military and veteran entities for community outreach events.



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE
ILLINOIS ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1301 North MacArthur Boulevard, Springfield, Illinois 62702-2399

The Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office (JFHQ-IL PAO) continued to build a solid community relations program. This year was filled with unique challenges from sequestration restrictions to a government shutdown. Through all of this, Mike Chrisman, the community relations manager, initiated and created a proactive outreach approach and found innovative ways to support community requests. Continuous updates to the Speakers Bureau program were also instrumental in this year's success. In 2013, the Illinois National Guard provided speakers for nearly 300 different events.

Although the program will always be reactive as the Illinois National Guard responds to requests from the community, Mike Chrisman identified several key strategic events in Illinois and reached out to those event organizers to better focus National Guard support. This approach often led to more satisfied community leaders at less cost to the military.

For these strategic events, the community relations manager required more information on the event and then many times recommended other assets to enhance the event and the National Guard presence and image in our communities.

This approach was particularly important in 2013 as we dealt with restrictions that limited vehicle support for events, which accounted for 260 of the 1,182 requests received in 2012 (22 percent). Those numbers dropped to 146 vehicle requests in 2013 (16 percent) because requesters were many times informed of the restrictions prior to sending an official request. Rather than simply telling the requester we could not support, we offered other assets such as a color guard or speaker for the event. This helped build relationships in our community during tough economic constraints.

Mike Chrisman was hired in January 2008 as the community relations manager. Since then he has strengthened the program and the bond between our community and the Illinois National Guard (ILNG). His tireless efforts took the program to new levels. He always finds new ways to support community requests and, in events of strategic importance or directly related to the Illinois National Guard's proud heritage, reached out to the community to volunteer ILNG support.

Statistics speak for themselves. During Chrisman's first year as community relations manager, the ILNG supported 232 of 546 requests (42 percent). In 2009, the ILNG supported 295 of 363 requests (81 percent). The Public Affairs Office received approximately 200 fewer requests in 2009 because communities knew a lot of their National Guard units were deployed. In 2010, the ILNG supported 512 of 622 requests (82 percent). In 2011, the ILNG supported 665 of 766 requests (87 percent). In 2012, 1,036 of 1,182 requests (88 percent) were supported. In 2013, 679 of 912 requests were supported (74 percent).

The statistics could have been much higher if some of the 146 vehicle requests could have been supported in 2013. Lack of funding for the 144th Army Band, availability of aviation assets because of deployments (all Chinooks deployed with 238th Aviation Regiment) and sequestration created several requests the Illinois National Guard was unable to support.

Of the 233 requests that could not be supported, 35 of them were for the 144th Army Band and 144 were sequestration related. That means 77 percent of the non-supported requests fell into one of those two categories. Nearly 62 percent of the unsupported requests were sequestration related.

Chrisman provides superior customer service and has a firm grasp of the military's community relations regulations. He tries to find a way to say "yes" to requests for support. If the assets are not available or the request cannot be supported by regulation, Chrisman provides the requestor with contact information for their local VFW or American Legion, which continued to show positive support in our communities through our veteran organizations. This has also helped the Illinois National Guard build positive relations with these veterans' organizations.

Having worked community relations requests for six years, Chrisman has developed a lot of relationships that have helped him get support for an event, even when the brigades and wings are unable to support. Full-time personnel at FMS shops in North Riverside, Springfield and Marseilles assisted with vehicle support for short suspense events (prior to sequestration restrictions). Recruiters and other full-time Soldiers supported speaking events or vehicle static displays when it appeared the Illinois National Guard was unable to support an event. Military Funeral Honors also stepped up over the last year to support high-visibility color guard requests, even though it is outside of its mission.

Since taking over the program in 2008, Chrisman improved the Speakers Bureau program, created a new database that allows units to view upcoming community relations events, increased the support from the Illinois Air National Guard that ultimately made a solid joint program, improved relationships between JFHQ-IL PAO and the Brigades and Wings, revised the internal community relations regulations and created a program that is one of the best in the nation.

After revitalizing the Speakers Bureau program in 2009, it was also Chrisman's personal goal to support 95 percent of all speaker-related requests and have ILNG speakers at each key event throughout the year. For every key event such as the anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the anniversary of Operation Enduring Freedom, Patriots Day, Memorial Day and Veterans Day, Chrisman engaged speakers in community events throughout the state. He also coordinated support for 96 percent of all speaker requests. This includes 59 speakers for Memorial Day events and 101 speakers for Veterans Day events.

The overall objective of the JFHQ-IL PAO community relations program is to make the ILNG more visible in the community and to highlight the ILNG to local citizens. By updating the Speakers Bureau program in 2009 and marketing well-spoken Soldiers and Airmen to the community, JFHQ-IL PAO accomplished that goal. In 2013, the ILNG supported a total of 273 speaker requests throughout the state. Speakers were engaged in activities from school events and celebrations to supporting Chicago Memorial Day and more than 180 Veterans Day activities. Not only did Chrisman market the ILNG to the community, but he also brought together the Illinois Army and Air Guard assets as one team.

During 2013, the Illinois National Guard's Public Affairs Program, with the help of Mr. Mike Chrisman, has gone above and beyond to reinforce the relations between the community and the ILNG, something that is extremely valuable during economic constraints such as sequestration. Through more effective outreach, Chrisman helped build positive relationships with the community and strengthened a 377-year relationship between the Illinois National Guard and the communities we serve.



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE
ILLINOIS ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1301 North MacArthur Boulevard, Springfield, Illinois 62702-2399

January 2, 2014

National Guard Bureau
1411 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, VA 22202-3231

Dear National Guard Bureau:

In the attached packet you will see some statistics that tell the story of the Illinois National Guard Community Relations Program and the great strides it has made by the increase of received and supported requests. In 2008 the program supported only 46 percent of the requests. In 2009, JFHQ-IL PAO supported 81 percent of the 363 requests. In 2010, it supported 512 of 622 requests (82 percent). In 2011, 87 percent of the 766 requests were supported with community support provided for 665 events. We had an amazing year in 2012 with 88 percent of the 1,182 requests supported. Even though we endured sequestration restrictions and a government shutdown in 2013, we still supported 74 percent of the 912 requests. This is outstanding considering 22 percent of the requests in 2012 were vehicle requests which were not supportable in 2013.

Mike Chrisman, Community Relations Manager for JFHQ-IL PAO, strengthened the program during 2013 and made it the best in the nation. His dedication to community outreach and support for community relations activities has been remarkable. He has also made it a personal goal to involve the Illinois Air National Guard and make the program more of a joint venture.

There may be times when requests are denied because of regulations governing the use of military assets or simply the lack of funding or assets. However, when Mike could, he found a way to "yes." In the last year, we supported 285 speaker requests with well-spoken Soldiers and Airmen in the community who talked about the great things the Illinois National Guard is doing. During Veterans Day alone, Illinois Guard members spoke at 101 events. During Memorial Day, an additional 59 speakers were engaged in community events.

In building our community relations program, we have also built strong relationships with key partners in Illinois including the USO, the Army's Office of Chief of Public Affairs – Midwest, the Pritzker Military Library, the City of Chicago, the Illinois Governor's Office and both the state and federal Veterans Affairs – to name just a few.

Mike Chrisman is responsible for these major accomplishments during 2013. His tireless efforts and desire to be successful have reinforced an already strong bond between the Illinois National Guard and its communities.

As you can tell, I am very proud of the program and our community relations manager and hope you will give him strong consideration for the Keith L. Ware community relations award-individual achievement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bradford E. Leighton", is positioned above the typed name.

BRADFORD E. LEIGHTON
Major, LG, ILARNG
Public Affairs Director