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REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE  
JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS MINNESOTA  
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
20 WEST 12TH STREET  
SAINT PAUL, MN 55155-2098

NGMN-PAZ

05 February 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR National Guard Bureau Public Affairs, 111 S. George Mason Dr.,  
Arlington, Virginia, 22204

SUBJECT: Keith L. Ware Army Community Relations Program Award Endorsement

1. I am honored to nominate the Minnesota State Fair Military Appreciation Day for entry into the Department of the Army Community Relations Award in the Special Events category.
2. Since 2011, the Minnesota State Fair has partnered with the Minnesota National Guard for Military Appreciation Day at the State Fair. This event provides us with a valuable opportunity to not only reach out to the military community in Minnesota, but also to educate Minnesotans about military-connected individuals and families throughout the state.
3. The 2013 event to welcome home Minnesota's Vietnam veterans demonstrates Minnesota's commitment to supporting veterans across the state. I truly believe that this event strengthened relationships between veterans and the community and provided a step toward healing for our veterans who never got a proper homecoming.
4. For additional information please contact SFC Blair Heusdens, Public Affairs NCOIC, [blair.l.heusdens.mil@mail.mil](mailto:blair.l.heusdens.mil@mail.mil).
5. Point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Olson", is positioned above the typed name.

KEVIN A. OLSON  
Lieutenant Colonel, MNARNG  
Director, Public Affairs



REPLY TO  
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NGMN-ZA

05 February 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR National Guard Bureau Public Affairs, 111 S. George Mason Dr.,  
Arlington, Virginia, 22204

SUBJECT: Keith L. Ware Army Community Relations Program Award Endorsement

1. I am proud to endorse the Minnesota State Fair Military Appreciation Day for entry into the Department of the Army MG Keith L. Ware Awards in the Community Relations Special Event category.
2. Our partnership with the Minnesota State Fair is an important part of our community outreach efforts to educate Minnesotans about the military in Minnesota.
3. For additional information please contact LTC Kevin Olson, Director of Public Affairs, kevin.a.olson4.mil@mail.mil.
4. Point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned.

  
RICHARD C. NASH  
Major General, MNARNG  
The Adjutant General

MG Keith L. Ware  
Public Affairs Competition  
Category 3C: Community Relations Special  
Event



Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair  
A Special Event  
to educate the public about the military community





REPLY TO  
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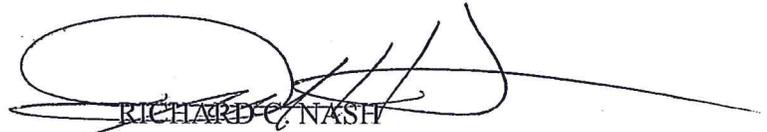
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RICHARD C. NASH  
Major General, MNARNG  
The Adjutant General



Department of Army Community Relations Awards Program of Excellence

**Special Event Category**  
**Minnesota National Guard**  
**Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair**  
**Summary**

Nominee: Minnesota National Guard

Army Service Component Command: National Guard Bureau

The Minnesota National Guard has played a key role in planning and executing Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair to honor Minnesota military members and Veterans since 2011. In 2013, the Minnesota National Guard chose to use this venue to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War by holding a parade and program for Minnesota's Vietnam-era Veterans, as well as educating fair goers about the Minnesota National Guard and our community partners who support military families.

While the troops of today are routinely thanked and welcomed home for their military service, that was not the case with Vietnam Veterans. It has taken far too long to provide the greeting they so well deserved.

With 4,000 free admission tickets donated by the State Fair for Vietnam-era veterans, the original goal was to register 1,000 Vietnam-era veterans to march in a parade, August 27, 2013, during military appreciation day. The ultimately more than 2,500 marched in a parade that culminated in a commemoration program where Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton and Minnesota Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Richard Nash, along with representatives from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and USAA, thanked the Vietnam-era Veterans for their service. The program was followed by a patriotic performance by county artist Rockie Lynne.

In addition, the Minnesota National Guard coordinated "Education Alley," a section of the fairgrounds with 70 booths dedicated to educating fair visitors about the Minnesota National Guard, the Minnesota military community and military support organizations.

The Minnesota National Guard had three objectives for the Military Appreciation Day:

1. Educate the public about the military community
2. Recognize and thank the military community
3. Develop an event that would create excitement to increase visitor participation and attract media attention for the purpose of further education of the community



Department of Army Community Relations Awards Program of Excellence

**Special Event Category**  
**Minnesota National Guard**  
**Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair**  
**Planning**

Nominee: Minnesota National Guard

Army Service Component Command: National Guard Bureau

Planning for the event began in February with discussions with state fair officials. We then brought together key people from last year's event to discuss ideas. We solicited the advice from Congressionally-chartered veteran's organizations and the military support organizations that participating in the event the previous year.

By April, the theme of honoring Vietnam Veterans was cemented. The day would also feature a parade for veterans, a program to include speakers and music and day-long education of fair goers on the Minnesota military community.

One key planning consideration was what would be the best way to honor Vietnam Veterans while being sensitive to the fact that these veterans still hold very strong feelings about the support they received when they came home. We engaged with members of several veterans groups including the VFW, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and the State Department of Veterans Affairs. We discussed the term "Welcome Home" which had a negative connotation to some veterans. We also discussed using the term "Vietnam-era" veteran to include those who served during the timeframe, but were not deployed overseas. We decided to use the term Vietnam-era to include all veterans who served at the time because we felt that including everyone was the right thing to do.

We applied for and received official recognition from the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Commemorative Partner Program, which was authorized by law to recognize official programs and activities in commemoration of the Vietnam War. This "official" recognition helped us to secure the presence of Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton at the ceremony.

There was also some concern with whether the parade route would be accessible for not only the aging veteran population having trouble walking the distance or who might be walking with canes, but also for those in wheelchairs. With help from the Minnesota Paralyzed Veterans of America, we conducted several "dry runs" of the parade route at a slow pace and with wheelchair-bound personnel to ensure route accessibility.

Communicating the opportunity to the veterans and gathering registration was a challenge. To avoid our staff having to answer hundreds of phone calls, we set up an online registration via EventBrite to collect names and information for the 1,000 registrants.

We also connected with the Survivor Outreach Services office to link fair tickets to Gold Star Families, as well as to coordinate a Veterans' Memorial Program for them.

Another challenge was determining a funding source for the event to purchase banners for branding, bandanas and to pay for the performance of Rockie Lynne, a country artist and veteran who performs patriotic-themed shows. We utilized our partnerships with Yellow Ribbon Companies in Minnesota who found a sponsor in USAA. Other Yellow Ribbon Companies also provided volunteers to help during the event.

We extensively researched military supportive organizations headquartered in Minnesota, and capitalized upon networking, to ensure all were invited to participate in "Education Alley." A final challenge was coordinating the logistics of putting 70 booths into a small space on the fair grounds. Many meetings were conducted to coordinate booth size and scope as well as to ensure placement of booths in "Education Alley" was beneficial to all parties.



Department of Army Community Relations Awards Program of Excellence

**Special Event Category  
Minnesota National Guard  
Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair  
Execution**

Nominee: Minnesota National Guard

Army Service Component Command: National Guard Bureau

Approximately 2,500 Vietnam-era Veterans, 700 volunteers and dozens of organizations worked together to communicate to 94,076 people at the Minnesota State Fair Military Appreciation Day, August 27, 2013.

USAA stepped up as a financial partner contributing approximately \$10,000 directly purchasing seven large banners, 8,000 bandanas and paid Rockie Lynne's band fees. Thomson Reuters donated 2,500 promotional postcards. The Minnesota State Fair donated 5,206 tickets – valued at \$62,472.

On August 27, 2013, a team of Minnesota National Guard Soldiers met at 5:30 a.m. to stage a convoy into the state fair with participants from the 70 educational booths that would make up "Education Alley." The vehicles were escorted onto the fairgrounds and into place so the booths could set up.

At 8:00 a.m., the educational booths opened to the public and set-up began at Carousel Park for the ceremony and concert. At 8:30, veterans began to arrive in the area where the parade would begin. Participating veterans received a branded bandana and a coupon book to be used throughout the fair. By 10:25, all veterans were formed up for the parade. The parade stepped off right after the National Anthem was performed and the American flag was raised.

As the 34<sup>th</sup> Red Bull Inf. Div. Band played, a parade of approximately 2,500 Vietnam-era veterans was led by motorcycles from the Minnesota Chapter of Tribute to the Troops. With wheelchair-bound veterans at the front of the formation, the parade made its way across the fairgrounds with crowds gathered on each side to cheer and wave bandanas.

At the end of the parade route, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton was there to welcome the veterans home and thank them for their service. The program included a T-6 Texan World War II missing man formation flyover and a concert by patriotic country artist Rockie Lynne.



Department of Army Community Relations Awards Program of Excellence

**Special Event Category**  
**Minnesota National Guard**  
**Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair**  
**Effectiveness**

Nominee: Minnesota National Guard

Army Service Component Command: National Guard Bureau

The Minnesota National Guard met and exceeded all goals for this event.

1. Educate the public about the military community
2. Recognize and thank the military community
3. Develop an event that would create excitement to increase visitor participation and attract media attention for the purpose of further education of the community

Our goal of 1,000 Vietnam-Era veterans was shattered as an estimated 2,500 veterans participated in the parade and program. The response from the veterans was overwhelmingly positive.

Through a strategic communication strategy, we secured local and metro media stories and national media coverage, including NBC Nightly News and Stars and Stripes resulting in four million media impressions through print, radio, broadcast and electronic media outlets.

Nearly 70 educational booths were set up with a fair attendance of more than 94,000 visitors that day.

8,000 fair visitors left with a souvenir of the day that connected them to Beyond the Yellow Ribbon – where all military community resources are connected.

The Minnesota State Fair provides a large audience to educate citizens about the military. Being able to put our messages in front of a crowd of more than 94,000 people is invaluable.

Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair solidified a highly visible community partnership with the Minnesota Fair Board in to the future. It also nurtured relationships with all military supportive organizations in Minnesota, enabling more opportunities to partner in support of the advancement of Minnesota National Guard priorities.

Most importantly perhaps, it provided long-overdue recognition for Minnesota's Vietnam Veterans, as you'll see in the final pages of this application.



Department of Army Community Relations Awards Program of Excellence

**Special Event Category**  
**Minnesota National Guard**  
**Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair**  
**Overall value to the Army**

Nominee: Minnesota National Guard

Army Service Component Command: National Guard Bureau

The Minnesota State Fair's Military Appreciation Day adds value the Army, to the Minnesota National Guard, to the state and the overall perception of the military by fostering community support of the military and veterans.

As the largest military organization in Minnesota, the Minnesota National Guard is one of the most visible military presences in the state. As the Commissioner of the Department of Military Affairs, Maj. Gen. Richard C. Nash represents members of all services and, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans across the state.

It is important to the Army that American citizens today are more supportive than ever of military veterans. Most understand the debt owed to the veterans of the Vietnam Era and the injustices they suffered when they returned, but aren't sure what they can do, now, to set things right. This event gave people an opportunity to extend their military support to all veterans and to heal some wounds that were created long ago.



Department of Army Community Relations Awards Program of Excellence

**Special Event Category  
Minnesota National Guard  
Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair  
Support Documents – Thank you letters**

Nominee: Minnesota National Guard

Army Service Component Command: National Guard Bureau

“Thank you and all who worked on the parade. I think we all expected a joyful "walk in the park" experience but it was far from that. I found it difficult to even look at the people applauding and waving flags. It was a tearful and tremendously moving experience for all of us. Thank you for the welcome home. - Dave Hanson”

“This was a wonderful event, a tremendous success. Thank you very much for allowing me to participate. My Uncle and one of my former high school teachers, both WWII vets also participated. They too were very much impressed.”

“THANK YOU for organizing this wonderful event, I know it took a lot of hard work. It was a great turnout, over 4,000 VietNam vets walking together to the cheers of all along the 5 blocks of the parade. We finally received our "Welcome Home".”

“Thank you so much for the event that you put together for us. It was a very moving experience and I really enjoyed being a part of the entire event. I know there was a lot of planning that went into this and please thank everyone for all of their hard work. - Leon Mortland”

“Thanks for the great parade. There were many teary eyed Veterans in the parade over the response and support from people lining the streets. - Charles Krautbauer”

“Hey Sarge, thanks for putting this together!!! Enjoyed the time with the vets. Again, thanks, Tony Wieneke Vietnam 67-69”

“On behalf of myself, my wife and family and my brother-in-law Orville Mandan who was a forward observer and tunnel rat in 'Nam and still can't handle the crowds and noise of the Fair, but whose name I carried on my cap and so was with us in spirit, thank you so much to you and your team for recognizing us. Everything was perfect and well organized from the time we heard about it until it was over. It meant so much to all of us-a very emotional and meaningful day that we won't forget. Thanks again for a job perfectly done. Thank you for your service as well. Jay Gregerson U.S. Army. Phu Bai, Rep. S. Viet Nam 1967-1968.”

“Please pass my thanks and the thanks of my family on to all who had a hand in making the Military Appreciation Day a huge success. David C. Dahl, LTC, USA (Retired)”

“I just cannot thank you enough for putting this together. It had such great meaning to me and I surprised myself when tears came with all the cheers from the bystanders. I had never been in any Welcome Home parade in all these past 50 years. The whole program was just outstanding. Thank you, Dave Rist”

“Today was a wonderful day. Thank you so much for your efforts in putting it together. After 44 years of inner turmoil, I know that today flushed it all away. Thank you again, and thank you for your service to our country. Dave Schaaf”

“Thank you and the state fair for organizing this event. As an Era Veteran I do not want to steal the honor from in country Vietnam veterans, but I am glad that you are allowing Era Veterans to participate. Thank you again for this event. John C. Gavnik”

“I wish to thank you and all who are responsible for this SHOW of SUPPORT for the Vietnam Veterans , We made beach landings in South Vietnam from QuiNhon to the DMZ. from July 7 1965 to April 1966. During that time I had the pleasure of the jungle, rice paddies, the monsoons and the scorching heat. The Welcome Home in Minnesota is only fitting with the thousands of lakes and acres of forests, and miles of Boundary Waters Canoe Area that calls. Thanks to You, and all the Minnesota National Guard for a Minnesota. THANK YOU, One Happy Old Marine, Semper Fi ! Vincent L. Hendren”

“I raised my right hand and joined the navy December 25th 1975, delayed enlistment in High school with an machinery repairman guarantee with full GI benefits, my dad is a Korea tin can BT., we are marching in the parade at the end and not too long because he is slow. Last year he really enjoyed veterans day at the fair. Thank You\*\*\*\*, Thomas and Tony.”

“Thank you, Al is a disabled vet but has trouble taking recognition for his service, so this is a nice gesture. - Donna Pederson”

“I could never date a guy who had not been in the military. To me, they just aren't ... well ... manly! I have always been extremely proud of my boyfriend of 30+ years because he served in Nam; however, he always downplayed his service and said he was a poor soldier, felt as though he was bossed around by morons, didn't want to be there, get the picture? He won't even take advantage of free lunches on Veteran's Day. The only reason he marched in the parade is because the word "free" is what he is all about!!, not to mention we are avid State Fair goers. HE WANTED FREE TICKETS! I honestly worried he would take the tickets and not march, but I should have known he was too honest for that.

I watched him as he marched and I saw something I had only seen once before ... he was swaggering! He was smiling, waving his hand on occasion, something had happened. After the parade he came up to me and said it was the first time he had ever been proud of his military service. You don't know what that meant to me.

I walked beside him in the parade, only as close to him as I could get without being IN the parade. I cried most of the way. I had no idea the bystanders would react the way they did, all the cheering and clapping. It meant the world to me for my much loved boyfriend and all the other brave guys and chicks who served.

Thank you from the bottom of my aging heart for this wonderful gesture.

Linda Stephenson”

“Dear MN National Guard, I am a Viet Nam veteran who participated in the "Welcome Back" parade at the State Fair last Tuesday. I wanted to tell you that for the first time since I returned in 1970 I felt proud of my service. I had no idea of what that parade would mean to me.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Sincerely, Bruce Montgomery, Saint Paul.”

“My father a Vietnam Vet and myself would love to thank the MN State Fair and anyone else that was involved in the Vietnam parade on August 27<sup>th</sup>. It meant the world to my father. He felt wonderful. We can't thank you enough for recognizing our American Heroes.”