

# Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin National Guard gains first woman deputy adjutant general for Army

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by Vaughn R. Larson

VOLK FIELD, Wis. — The Wisconsin Army National Guard celebrated the first woman — as well as first Native American — to serve as Wisconsin's deputy adjutant general for Army during a formal change of authority ceremony last Friday (June 1).

In the shadow of where the Wisconsin Army National Guard came to train before there was an Air National Guard, Maj. Gen. Mark Anderson relinquished the post in which he had served since 2008 to Brig. Gen. Joane Mathews, who most recently has served as the assistant adjutant general for readiness and training.

Though Mathews has a lengthy history of setting “firsts” in the Wisconsin Army National Guard — from commanding the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation to commanding the 64th Troop Command, to serving as the Wisconsin Army National Guard's chief of staff and then as assistant adjutant general for readiness and training — she approaches each new opportunity with humility.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be standing here,” Mathews said at the ceremony, after her installation as deputy adjutant general for Army. “I am very proud and extremely humbled, and thankful that you have chosen me for this position.”

Anderson had high praise for his successor.

“I’ve had the opportunity to watch her grow as a senior leader to where she is at right now,” Anderson said. “There could not have been a finer officer selected to be my successor. She is absolutely ready, and I am 100 percent confident in her capabilities — not only because of her leadership, but because of the men and women in the audience.”

Anderson ascribed the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s success as an organization to its Soldiers and leaders.

“We have the opportunity at our level to influence — kind of having our hands on the tiller — but it is the people that are rowing, day and day and day, that truly make this organization as phenomenal as it is,” Anderson said.

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin’s adjutant general, presided over the ceremony and praised Anderson for his performance the past 10 years, calling him “an exceptional deputy adjutant general.”

“Under his watch and his stewardship he has made this Army National Guard the envy of the 54 and I couldn’t be happier,” Dunbar said. “It’s been an honor to serve with you.”

Over the past decade the Wisconsin Army National Guard has been hard at work fulfilling its dual-mission as both the primary combat reserve of the Army and as the state’s first military responder in times of emergency. During Anderson’s tenure, the Wisconsin Army National Guard mobilized nearly 5,500 Soldiers and 95 units for overseas combat operations. It simultaneously mobilized to state active duty on dozens of occasions to serve in the aftermath of floods, winter storms, civil unrest and other emergencies including large mobilizations to Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands last fall in the wake of a destructive hurricane season.

“From the day I took the guidon back in 2008 up until right now, we have had Soldiers deploy each and every year, constantly,” Anderson said. “And I know that’s going to continue for the foreseeable future. But this organization shines because of the culture that we have of trust, the culture that we have of continuous improvement, and just the phenomenal leaders that we have standing in our formation each and every day.”

Turning to Mathews, Anderson said, “All I can say is ‘strap in,’ because it’s going to be a heck of a ride.”

Dunbar offered similar comments to Mathews' husband Ric and her daughters Shannon and Lindsey.

"Ric, ladies, I'm going to apologize to you up front, because over the next several years I may see Brig. Gen. Mathews more than you do," Dunbar said. He also expressed his confidence in Mathews.

"I am absolutely convinced that Brig. Gen. Mathews is ready for this chance," Dunbar said. "Exactly where she wants to be — taking over a great organization from a great leader."

Mathews thanked Anderson for his mentorship and instruction over the years as she served in personnel and administration, and then as chief of staff and as assistant adjutant general for readiness and training. She said his shoes would be difficult to fill.

"Sometimes when you take on a new job you want to see where there is room for improvement," Mathews said. "Well, I don't see anything — we are that good. That's all attributable to you and the senior leaders in this room."

She thanked Anderson for his dedication and strong leadership.

"One of the best things I am very thankful for is I can call you a friend," Mathews said. "Thank you for that."

During his tenure, Anderson also served as the deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard at the Field Artillery Center, Fort Sill, Oklahoma from 2009-12, where he was the advisor and personal representative of the commanding general of the U.S. Army Fires Center of Excellence for all Army National Guard members. From 2015-18 he also served as a special assistant for diversity to the chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Anderson will continue in his duties as deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard at the U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), where as the principal Army National Guard advisor to the commanding general he will ensure that the Army National Guard mission, skill sets and capabilities are considered and integrated into the Total Army and Joint transformation.

"It's been an honor and a privilege these past 10 years to have the opportunity to serve as your deputy," Anderson said. "I salute you."