

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Army National Guard graduates latest class of officers and warrant officers

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by Staff Sgt. Katie Theusch

FORT MCCOY, Wis. – The Wisconsin National Guard’s newest officers and warrant officers officially joined the ranks during an Oct. 17 ceremony at the 426th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), which houses the Wisconsin Military Academy.

Thirteen Officer Candidate School graduates representing OCS class 62, and accelerated OCS class 62B, and nine Warrant Officer Candidate School graduates from class 20-001, were recognized at the ceremony.

The newly minted officers and warrant officers will now become junior leaders in the ranks of Wisconsin Army National Guard units after completing a rigorous commissioning program. Two commissionees will join units outside the Wisconsin National Guard.

Col. Carl Meredith, commander of the 426th Regiment, commended the officers and warrant officers on their growth throughout their courses.

“Each of you came here with leadership ability, and now you are prepared to lead and influence with character and intentionality in the Wisconsin National Guard,” Meredith said. “An organization, by the way, with a sacred mission to serve our fellow citizens, our communities, our state, and our nation.”

Meredith added that this is a critical time for the graduates to lead in the Wisconsin National Guard as the organization has served in the longest sustained domestic operations mission in the Wisconsin Guard’s history this year supporting the state’s response to COVID-19. Wisconsin National Guard troops have simultaneously responded to civil unrest missions, supported elections in the state, assisted with wildfires in California, and supported its federal mission overseas with hundreds of troops deployed to combat zones around the globe.

“In all of these instances, it has been Wisconsin National Guard Citizen Soldiers who stepped up, answered the call for leadership and service, and never in our history has the need for flexible and adaptable leaders been more apparent and prevalent than now,” Meredith said. “This is the operational environment that you are about to enter.”

Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, Wisconsin’s adjutant general, instilled his trust in the graduates.

“We don’t promote or progress you in the military because of what you have done – those are the awards and the ribbons and the decorations that you have,” Knapp said. “We promote and show your progression because of what you will do, because of the potential that we feel you have to be a leader in this organization.”

Knapp also urged the graduates to really get to know the Soldiers they lead.

“The decisions you make affect lives,” he said. “Not just the lives of the soldiers under your care, but their families as well. So lead them, guide them, mentor them, and most of all, care for them.”

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Troy Bittner, the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s command chief warrant officer, recommended that the graduates continue to network with their other classmates, as their paths will likely cross again.

“I encourage you to build those relationships and to benefit from each other’s knowledge, skills and strengths as leaders, and to rely on each other as you meet

and overcome challenges throughout your careers,” Bittner said.

Knapp administered the oath of office to the graduates accepting their commission before they were pinned with their new ranks as either second lieutenants or warrant officer one, and each new officer received their first salute as commissioned officers and warrant officers from current or former enlisted members of the military.

Newly commissioned officers included:

- 2nd Lt. Jeffrey Brasch, of Waupaca, Wisconsin, assigned to Detachment 1, 107th Maintenance Company (Viroqua, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Kyle Brockman, of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, assigned to Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery (Oak Creek, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Nicholas Bures, of Mauston, Wisconsin, assigned to 950th Engineer Company (Superior, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Ethan Effinger, of Mukwonago, Wisconsin, assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation (Madison, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Thomas Erickson, Minnesota Army National Guard
- 2nd Lt. Jessica Goodew, of Rochester, Minnesota, assigned to Company H, 132nd Brigade Support Battalion (Neillsville, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Miranda Holmes, of Madison, Wisconsin, assigned to Headquarters Company, 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (Milwaukee)
- 2nd Lt. Eric Jones, of Onalaska, Wisconsin, assigned to 273rd Engineer Company (Medford, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Dustin Nolan, of Waukesha, Wisconsin, assigned to Troop B, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry (Watertown, Wisconsin)
- 2nd Lt. Nicholas Rudd, of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, assigned to 107th Maintenance Company (Sparta, Wisconsin)

-2nd Lt. Michael Stephenson, of La Crosse, Wisconsin, assigned to Headquarters Company, 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion (Wausau, Wisconsin)

-2nd Lt. Michael Streblow, of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, assigned to Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery (Oak Creek, Wisconsin)

Newly commissioned warrant officers included:

-Warrant Officer 1 Colin Crawford, of Waterford, Wisconsin, assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation (West Bend, Wisconsin)

-Warrant Officer 1 Brandon Fettig, of Milwaukee, assigned to Headquarters Company, 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (Milwaukee)

-Warrant Officer 1 Renae Giertych, of Tomah, Wisconsin, assigned to Detachment 1, Company D, 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion (Camp Douglas, Wisconsin)

-Warrant Officer 1 Vanessa Pederson, of Reedsburg, Wisconsin, assigned to Headquarters Company, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Camp Douglas, Wisconsin)

-Warrant Officer 1 Brian Reier, of Stillwater, Minnesota, assigned to Detachment 1, Company C, 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation (Madison, Wisconsin)

-Warrant Officer 1 Joshua Smith, Michigan Army National Guard

-Warrant Officer 1 Alex Wotachek, of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, assigned to 108th Forward Support Company (Sussex, Wisconsin)