

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Guard Soldier recognized for giving back to community

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A Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier from Warrens, Wisconsin has been recognized for his tireless volunteer support in his community.

Sgt. 1st Class John Battista, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion, received the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal Nov. 6 during a surprise ceremony in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

"I believe as a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, we not only have a responsibility to the Soldiers we lead, but also the community in which we serve," Battista said.

The Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal is a service award of the general service medal category, and is just below the Humanitarian Service Medal in order of precedence. The award recognizes substantial volunteer service — considered above and beyond the call of duty — in the local community.

Battista is very active with his church, Bible Free Evangelical Church in Tomah, Wisconsin, where his wife Krishna is also the children's ministry director. He partnered with other church leaders to initiate a Care ministry, which address a vast array of needs. The ministry can mobilize volunteer teams to quickly respond to reports of food or money shortages, people needing help relocating, and other needs.

He also organized a volunteer team to teach hunter's safety education courses at the church to more than 100 students, and developed a ministry at his church to

engage youth, primarily those with uninvolved fathers, through outdoor activities with an organized team of positive male role models. In addition, he filled in as a volunteer helper for the kindergarten and first grade Sunday School program at his church until another volunteer could be installed.

Battista recently volunteered as lead counselor in a cabin at the Kentucky Mountain Mission's Sunshine Camp, a Christian camp for adults with special needs. According to his award nomination, he "won over the campers and other counselors alike" with his "positive and energetic compassion," and helped his cabin win various camp competitions.

"My faith in Christ, my family and the Soldiers I support have been the main focal point in my life for many years," Battista said, explaining that his personal and professional life is based on servant leadership. He described servant leadership as focusing on the growth and well-being of people and their communities, putting the needs of others first, and helping others develop and perform to their best ability.

Battista also volunteers with Family Promise of Monroe County, providing hospitality to families experiencing homelessness, and regularly transports people and beds for the program, and he serves as a volunteer EMT/firefighter in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin.

Battista has also invested countless hours connecting Soldiers in crisis with services to address their immediate and long-term needs. He raised more than \$3,000 for Non-Commissioned Officer clubs in the Wisconsin National Guard by volunteering time to park cars for the Marshfield Clinic.

Lt. Col. Jeremy Duffy, Battista's commander, described him as "an exemplary [noncommissioned] officer who consistently leads by example."

"He not only excels at his duties as the retention NCO for the 108th Forward Support Company, but he regularly seeks out opportunities to give back to his community during his off-time," Duffy continued. "His actions and volunteer work inspire those around him to be and do better. It is an absolute honor to know and work with such a fine example of a selfless NCO."

Battista said he was surprised to receive the award, and considers it an honor and a privilege to serve his community with the men and women of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

“If it had not been for the support from my chain of command and my family, I would not have been able to participate in these organizations,” Battista said. “I am very honored to receive this award.”