

# Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Guard raises visibility at open house

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MADISON, Wis. — An estimated 450 people got a closer look at the Wisconsin Army National Guard during a warm Saturday June 3 at Warner Park.

The inaugural event was an open house of sorts to reacquaint the public with the Wisconsin Army National Guard, and it went very well according to the event's organizer.

"We were able to showcase some of the latest National Guard equipment and connect with community members and leaders," said Lt. Col. Seth Kaste, commander of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team and former commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

Visitors registered for a chance to win various prizes by completing a checklist of stations set up throughout the park. Stations included a rock-climbing wall, vehicle displays, an Army Combat Fitness Test demonstration, an Army field kitchen unit which made maple bacon donuts from scratch, a demonstration of the 54th Civil Support Team's Talon IV unmanned robot, an ice cream booth manned by the Service Member Support Division, a performance by the 132nd Army Band and a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter arrival.

Kaste said the purpose of the open house was to revitalize the Wisconsin Army National Guard as the "hometown Guard," and the state's first military responder in times of emergency.

"Community involvement is critical to the Wisconsin Army National Guard becoming visible among the public again," Kaste explained. "We want to continue to share the

mission of Wisconsin's hometown Guard and connect with the community. Recruiting and retention is always in the back of our minds as we have this community involvement, but we also want to share with the community what a great asset the state has in their National Guard."

Kaste said the open house took a lot of time and effort to plan and execute, but they learned some great lessons from the first such event.

"We were successful in partnering with local police and fire agencies and will look to continue that, and maybe expand that in the future," Kaste said. "We were able to communicate the event to Madison city alderman but would like to involve them earlier on in the process so they can publicize this with their constituents."

Kaste said there was value in Wisconsin National Guard members sharing their experiences and expertise with community members.

"The community members appreciate seeing our equipment, and hearing about our experiences," Kaste said.