

For National Guard recruits, community service is a part of the job

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ALTON - On a cold rainy December morning, Pvt. Andrew Angleton of Alton, Illinois, a recruit with Company M, Recruit Sustainment Program, lays a wreath against a military headstone at the Alton National Cemetery. Angleton and 13 other Illinois National Guard Soldiers with Company M teamed up with Boy Scout Troop 16,

members of the Patriot Guard and area veteran organizations to participate in Wreaths Across America Dec. 17.

Angleton said the whole experience was a moving tribute to pay respect to service members of the past. He said it also gave him a chance to show students from his high school how the Illinois National Guard serves communities throughout the state.

"I think they could get an idea of them transitioning into a higher role in their community and maybe into the service themselves," Angleton said.

Company M's participation in Wreaths Across America is the latest in a series of community service events the company has participated in for nearly a decade.

Scott Radunz of Troy, Illinois, Company M first sergeant, said being involved in community service is part of being a Soldier in the Illinois National Guard.

"As Soldiers, this is what we do. We are here to serve the community," he said.

Radunz said having new recruits involved in these activities teaches them the importance of selfless service, a core Army value. He said events like these also allows communities to embrace new Soldiers.



Sgt. 1st Class Mario Saenz of Waterloo, Illinois, a recruiting and retention non-commissioned officer with Company M said he hopes having the recruits help the communities early in their careers will instill a desire to serve.

"It all starts at home," said Saenz. "If we can start it at home in the company, this will continue throughout their careers."

Saenz said community service is what he believes ties the National Guard to communities throughout the state.

"This is what makes the Guard unique from all other branches of service," said Saenz.

Radunz said his team of non-commissioned officers are always looking for new ways to assist the communities. In recent months the company has organized a blood drive which collected 29 units of blood and participated in a 5K run/walk to honor the memory of a fallen Illinois servicemember.