

In Support of Families

Event meant to thank those missing deployed loved ones

By Sgt. Marc Yablonka
California State Military Reserve

GLENDALE, Calif. – When soldiers leave to defend their country, they aren't the only ones making sacrifices. Their families must also face the temporary loss of a loved one and the many challenges that come with it.

Wanting to thank military families that endure hardships along with their deployed soldiers, Congressman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., headlined a Military Families Appreciation Day in March at a National Guard armory in Glendale.

"The families' sacrifices are incredible," Schiff told a drill floor filled with sons, daughter and spouses of Guard members and other military personnel. "The public is really grateful, but I don't

think it truly understands the extent of the sacrifices."

Command Sgt. Maj. Stuart Fuller, of the 40th Infantry Division (Mech.), said there about 1.5 million family members affected by current military deployments.

"For every one soldier, there is a group standing behind him or her — spouses, children, grandmothers and grandfathers," Fuller said.

Besides offering entertainment in the form of USO

singers and comedians, the event served to inform families about the military and the deployed roles of their loved ones. Several static displays of military vehicles, including a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and a HMMWV, hugged the Armory's walls. The Red Cross manned an informational table, ready to assist in communication between deployed personnel and families

back home. Also present was a representative from the

Employer Support for Guard and Reserves, which serves as a link with civilian employers of Guard members.

Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Teilmann, executive director of

the Bob Hope/Hollywood USO, served as master of ceremonies for the event, which also featured speeches by Glendale Mayor Frank Quintero, Burbank City Councilman-elect Todd Campbell, Fuller and Brig. Gen. James Combs, of the 40th ID (M).

"You are what they look forward to coming home to," Combs told the families. "This

is how we can show our appreciation."

Also participating in the event were members of the

Glendale Fire Department, who provided free hot dogs. Many in the department had prior military experience in Vietnam, the Gulf War and other conflicts.

“For every one soldier, there is a group standing behind him or her.”

— Sgt. Maj. Stuart Fuller, 40th ID (M)

Running Together

Division soldiers take on marathon

By Sgt. Marc Yablonka
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Staff Sgt. Douglas Dietel is always up for a run, but he had extra incentive in running this year's Los Angeles Marathon.

Dietel, from the G-1 section at 40th Infantry Division Headquarters, said he felt the need to serve the California Guard during a time when many of his fellow Guard members were putting themselves in harm's way to protect American interests at home and abroad.



Photo by Sgt. Marc Yablonka

Runners from the 40th ID (M) prepare to tackle the Los Angeles Marathon.

"We belong. We're an integral part of the force," Dietel said. "Whether we're overseas or here, we're still doing the same job."

Dietel was among at least 20 California National Guard soldiers who took part in the marathon in March. Many ran the 26.2 miles in their distinctive PT uniforms, while others wore patriotic-themed T-shirts and hats. All of them agreed the marathon was a great forum to promote the Guard and its ef-

forts around the world.

Among them was Capt. Andrew Swick, attached to 40th ID (M) headquarters. A seasoned veteran of the L.A. Marathon, Swick ran the race in 2000 and 2002. Training up to six miles every day, he said his commitment to running parallels his commitment to the armed services.

"I love the Guard," Swick said. "I'm proud to support it."

Sgt. Michele Franks, of the 40th ID (M) G-3 section, was running in her first marathon, but stays in shape through her civilian job as a personal trainer. While not at immediate risk of being deployed herself, she said she processes soldiers for deployment at Camp Roberts and feels a connection with them.

"I'm here to support the Guard, too," she said. "I'm supporting our country."