

OSM EMPLOYEE LEN MEIER RECEIVES PATRIOT AWARD

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) Employee Len Meier Wins Department of Defense Award for Support of National Guard and Reserve

OSM's Len Meier, Branch Chief for Program and Technology Support in the OSM's Mid-Continent Region (MCR), received an award for his hiring of National Guard and Reserve troops. The military service in the United States has changed drastically in the past few years. At one time, men and women who served in the National Guard or Reserve forces were known as "weekend warriors," a moniker that grew from their once-per-month drill duties.

Now, at any given time, Guardsmen or Reservists serve side-by-side with active duty troops in and around war zones. The necessities of fighting two wars simultaneously led the U.S. to adopt the 'blended unit' concept, which, more than ever, turned the "weekend warrior" of the past into a vital member of the wartime workforce. The increased demand for National Guard and Reserve troops led Meier to recognize that OSM had an opportunity to support the part-time citizen soldier, sailor, and airman.



OSM employee Len Meier (right) receives Department of Defense's Patriot Award for supporting National Guard and Reserve members. Meier was nominated by OSM employee Richard O'Dell (left), an OSM employee who serves in a Medical Support Unit as an environmental science/engineering officer. Photo by OSM.

"What I did was just hire great people who were also serving in the Guard or Reserve, while understanding that they might be here one day and gone the next," said Meier.

"These folks give up their time and possibly their lives to serve the Nation. Hiring and supporting employees with that kind of character and commitment is an easy choice," he explained.

Three of the seven people in Meier's branch are part-time soldiers. Richard O'Dell is one of them.

"I'm an environmental specialist, and in my field, you will find some people who are not supportive of the military," said O'Dell. "Many of them will go out of their way to find a reason not to hire you."

O'Dell serves in a Medical Support Unit as an environmental science/engineering officer. Fellow employee LaVon Edwards commands a Medical Command Detachment from St. Charles, Missouri, and Nicholas Grant teaches Modern Army Combatives, the Army's close quarters fighting system for the Illinois National Guard.

Since joining OSM, all three have left for long tours of duty. Edwards is currently on a four-hundred day tour of duty in Iraq following a 14-week pre-deployment training cycle. Earlier in 2010, O'Dell traveled to El Salvador on a humanitarian medical mission after several landslides there. Grant served in Afghanistan in 2008 and 2009 and also took extended training to win a key certification related to being an Army Combatives instructor.

For Meier, the deployments represent just another challenge he must deal with during a period of increased workload.

“Len has always been supportive of my military mission and duties,” said Nicholas Grant. “He understands the importance of our citizen soldiers and strives to ensure we have the means needed to succeed both in the office and on the battlefield.”

Because of that dedication, the Department of Defense gave Meier its coveted Patriot Award for supporting the National Guard and the Army Reserves. For more information on how to support America's Citizen Soldiers, visit <http://www.esgr.mil>. To nominate another person for the Patriot Award, visit <http://esgr.mil/site/Programs/PatriotAward/tabid/171/Default.aspx>.