



News Release

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Gov Pawlenty, National Guard Honor Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

Gov. Tim Pawlenty, National Guard Maj. Gen. Larry Shellito, area legislators and about 150 community members gathered at Century College on Jan. 5 to honor Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and a dozen other local governments, churches and business that have gone out of their way to help the families of deployed National Guard members and other veterans.

The honored organizations received Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Proclamations from Gov. Pawlenty and Maj. Gen. Shellito. Accepting for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities were Board Chair David Olson of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and Steven Frantz, the system's director of student affairs who has overseen expansion of veterans programs and services in recent years.

Washington County and the cities of Hugo, Stillwater and Woodbury were among the government agencies that received awards.

The year-old Beyond the Yellow Ribbon campaign is a grassroots effort that was started by the National Guard to educate community leaders on how they can develop a network of support for service members and their families. The campaign depends on local volunteers who want to donate their time and talent to help military families with such things as shoveling driveways, providing meals, transporting children and helping with household repairs when service members are deployed.

Annette Kuyper of Farmington, an active Beyond the Yellow Ribbon volunteer whose son is serving in Iraq, said when you are cleaning the bathroom of a returning soldier's home, you understand this program. "I have been surprised at how isolated and unsupported our military family members are," said Kuyper. "These people are proud, and they don't ask for help. We have to reach out to them."

Kuyper said in Farmington, a core group of 25 volunteers meets once a month to brainstorm outreach ideas. The group has held "mom and grandma luncheons" for the relatives of deployed military members, and fundraising spaghetti dinners and cookie walks. The group members partner with other community organizations at a variety of community events to raise awareness of military families' needs.

"Military family members are the real heroes," said Kuyper.

Said Gov. Pawlenty, "I do believe that small acts done with great love can change the world. When Americans mobilize around a good cause, they are an unstoppable force."

Pawlenty said he hopes to make Minnesota the most veteran-friendly and military-friendly state in the nation.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities have opened veteran centers on 45 campuses, including Century College. Service men and women on active duty can take a wide variety of online courses through Minnesota Online. They also can take advantage of an [online planning program called GPS LifePlan](#), which was developed at Century.