

Illinois National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program ranks ninth nationwide

Written by U.S. Army Sgt. Jason Treadway, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
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SPRINGFIELD, IL (08/01/2013)(readMedia)-- For the second consecutive year the Illinois Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) earned a top 10 ranking nationwide for the number of Soldiers who complete their initial entry training as honor graduates.

The RSP, created in 2004 by the National Guard Bureau, ensures Soldiers are physically, mentally and administratively prepared for the rigors of initial entry training.

In fiscal years 2012 and 2013 more than 12 percent of the Illinois Army National Guard recruits completed Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training as distinguished honor graduates and honor graduates.

"I look at the number of Soldiers graduating as either honor graduate or distinguished honor graduate as a reflection of the high quality of Soldiers that are being enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard and the training we do at the RSP prior to Soldiers going to basic combat training," said Lt. Col. Mark Alessia of **Sherman**, commander the Illinois Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command.

The RSP makes significant difference in the overall success of Soldiers, said Master Sgt. Allen Morris of **Rochester**, who has served with various RSP companies throughout the state since 2005 and now serves as the program's noncommissioned officer in charge.

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"The training consists of a lot of basic Soldier tasks, such as rank structure, marching, learning the general orders and the Soldier's creed," said Morris. "But the big focus is on resiliency training."

Resiliency training is an Army program that gives Soldiers the skills needed to face challenges and bounce back from adversity.

Soldiers learn what to expect in basic combat training and advanced individual training and develop the skills to endure some of the hardships they may encounter during that, said Morris.

RSP training includes obstacle courses, tactical combat procedures and classroom instruction and learning tactical combat procedures.

"We like to leave a training weekend on a high note because when we do recruits want to come back and they want to do well," said Morris.

Morris said innovative training plays a large role in the continued success of the RSP.

"We're constantly working with the 13 companies in the RSP to find fresh ideas for training," he said. "A part of our state training meeting is an hour and a half block of new ideas that the first sergeants of these companies can see and say, 'Hey, I want to try that.'"