

STATE GAZETTE

20K raised for 168th MP Battalion families at breakfast benefit

Tuesday, March 10, 2020



On Monday morning, March 9, State Sen. Ed Jackson and State Reps. Rusty Grills and Chris Hurt held a breakfast fundraiser in Dyersburg for families of the deployed 168th Military Police Battalion. The event raised \$20,000 for families of the deployed.

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State Reps. Chris Hurt (above, with Dyer County Mayor Chris Young alongside) and Rusty Grills (below), and State Sen. Ed Jackson (bottom) took a moment to address those in attendance and expressed their thanks for the support of the soldiers and their families.

On Monday morning, March 9, State Sen. Ed Jackson and State Reps. Rusty Grills and Chris Hurt hosted a breakfast fundraiser at The Lannom Center in Dyersburg to benefit the support fund established for families of the 168th Military Police Battalion. Approximately \$20,000 was raised from the event.



The 168th Military Battalion was deployed in December 2019 to the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba where they are currently assisting police and security operations. The unit was named Task Force Gardner in honor of Dyersburg native and Medal of Honor recipient James Gardner who was killed in action while in Vietnam in 1966. The duration of their deployment to Guantanamo Bay is for one year.



Many local residents and elected officials were in attendance at Monday's benefit, which began at 7 a.m.

The event began with a welcome from Sen. Jackson and prayer over the meal from Rep. Grills.

Following the breakfast, Rep. Hurt briefly addressed those in attendance.



Rep. Grills and Sen. Jackson receive certificates from Dyersburg VFW Post 1972 for their support of local veterans.

Hurt, who represents Crockett, Haywood, and Lauderdale counties, stated, "I always appreciate the invitation to be involved over here, and we do what we can. I want to thank everybody who

had anything in putting this on this morning. I want to thank everyone who this is honoring – we can't thank you enough for the sacrifices you make to protect our country.”

The program began with the Presentation of Colors by the Dyer County High School ROTC and a performance of “The Star Spangled Banner.”

Dyer County Mayor Chris Young thanked everyone for attending and supporting the families of those who are deployed. Mayor Young also recognized the numerous sponsors who assisted with the event as table sponsors as well as those who helped with the event setup.



Bill Reffert, Ermco President and CEO (fifth from left) presented a check on behalf of all Ermco employees in the amount of \$10,000 for the benefit fund. In all, a total of \$20,000 was raised from the event.

He then introduced Bill Reffert, President and CEO of Ermco, who presented Mayor Young with a check for \$10,000 on behalf of the company for the fund.

George Winters from the Dyersburg VFW Post 1972 presented Sen. Jackson and Rep. Grills with certificates showing the VFW's appreciation of the men's assistance with numerous veterans' organizations. Winters also presented the local National Guard with a certificate adopting the 168th MP Battalion unit.

“Anything we can do to help them, we're going to see that they get it,” Winters stated.



Sgt. Maj. Robert Jones of Jackson, Tenn.

Sen. Jackson returned to the podium and praised those in attendance and spoke highly of the support for the deployed and their families from the local community.

“Anytime Dyersburg, Dyer County, [and] northwest Tennessee put their minds to something, they go all out,” Jackson stated. “This is a wonderful community, and thank you all for being here and showing your support for the troops deployed and the families here at home. That’s why we’re here – to support the families.”

Jackson introduced Rep. Grills who began by thanking everyone present for their support.



Dyer County High School ROTC conducted the Presentation of Colors.

“Senator Jackson carried the burden for this. I am a recipient of his hard work, as well as [the work] by Dyersburg and Dyer County. We have a whole lot to be thankful for,” said Grills.

“My grandfather was a veteran of World War II, and to see men and women come out to honor the veterans we have – there is just a special place in my heart for the men and women who have fought for our freedom. Many of these guys have scars and wounds we’ll never know about,” Grills added. “I’m so thankful that Dyersburg and Dyer County have come out to support these guys who are overseas right now on deployment.”

Sen. Jackson added the idea of benefitting families of those deployed was derived between he and Sgt. Maj. Robert Jones of Jackson.

“This is something he and I had talked about, and we hope to maybe one day take this across the state,” said Sen. Jackson.

“I can’t begin to tell you how happy I am for what you all have accomplished here for our soldiers and their families,” stated Jones.

He added the idea benefit fund was created through a National VFW program from VFW Post 6496 of Jackson who adopted 194th Infantry Brigade. Through the adoption, Post 6496 began a family-day event for the 194th. With continued conversation and continued support, Post 6496, along with Sen. Jackson, created a benefit fund for families of the 194th Infantry Brigade.

“We decided the best thing we can do is that the deployed soldier doesn’t have to worry about anything he left behind – his family, children, and his property,” explained Jones. “Senator Jackson liked the idea, so we got organized and had an event like this. We raised money, and now that initiative, we hope, will go statewide. We hope that every VFW Post that is in close proximity to a National Guard unit will take this initiative, adopt the unit, and establish a family-support group.”

Prior to closing, Mayor Young stated a total of \$17,891 had been raised from the fundraiser. However, due to additional contributions, the number had grown to \$20,000 by mid-Monday afternoon.

The fundraiser closed with prayer from Jeff Agee, President and CEO of First Citizens National Bank.