



Annual Report 2022

Wisconsin National Guard Foundation, Incorporated

The Wisconsin National Guard Foundation (WNGF), Inc., was created in 2021 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization to provide educational opportunities and emergency financial resources for Wisconsin Air and Army National Guard members and their families. Additionally, the Foundation works to raise public awareness of the valuable role the National Guard plays in assisting and protecting Wisconsin communities experiencing natural disasters and civil and humanitarian emergencies.

Current officers and directors are:

President: Brig Gen (Ret) Gary Ebben, Sun Prairie, WI
Vice President: CCMSgt (Ret) Greg Cullen, Janesville, WI
Secretary: CCMSgt (Ret) Meredith Conn, Holmen, WI
Treasurer: LTC DJ Klauser, Madison, WI
Executive Director: COL (Ret) Michael Williams, Fort Atkinson, WI

Directors

SMSgt (Ret.) Jamie Butcher, Lake Geneva, WI CSM (Ret) Rafael Conde, River Falls, WI
COL (Ret) Peter Fox, Big Timber MT COL (Ret) Bob Klinger, Florence, AZ
COL (Ret) Rob Ronge, Richfield, WI LtCol Christina Schmoker, Cottage Grove, WI
Ms. Renee Simpson, Camp Douglas WI (Veteran)

Executive Summary

The Wisconsin National Guard Foundation supports the men and women of the Wisconsin Air and Army National Guard and their families for mutual aid for them and their families, professional growth to support both their Guard and civilian careers with the intention of helping retain these citizen-soldiers as incomparable assets for the State of Wisconsin and their fellow citizens of the state as well as in Federal Service.

Through its three standing committees – Development, Grants and Scholarships, and Communications – the Foundation experienced significant growth during 2022.

Development

Building on its inaugural financial base of 2021 individual gifts, the Foundation applied for and received the \$11,000 remaining balance of a related nonprofit under provisions of IRS Code and Wisconsin Statutes. The Board of Directors of Providing Relief to Our Uniform Dependents, In., elected to direct all remaining assets to the Wisconsin National Guard Foundation upon its dissolution in February. The funds were directed to the Foundation's unrestricted general fund balance.

In August of 2022, we were notified of an opportunity to apply for a donation to the WING Foundation from Connexus/Heritage Credit Union. After a formal application and vetting process, we were notified that the Heritage Credit Union Legacy Fund donated \$10,000 to the WING Foundation. The Heritage Credit Union Legacy Fund was established as part of the merger between Heritage Credit Union and Connexus Credit Union effective March 1, 2022. To provide a greater impact to the community, Connexus Credit Union's philanthropic program, Connexus Cares, matched the Heritage Credit Union Legacy Fund donation for a total of \$20,000 that was donated and accepted on October 21, 2022, at the Connexus Headquarters in De Forest, WI.



L to R: COL (Ret.) Michael Williams, WNGF Executive Director; Josie Matuszak, Connexus Director of Product and Channel Marketing; COL (Ret.) Rob Ronge, WNGF Donor Development Director; Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Gary Ebben, WNGF President; and Heather Ristow, Connexus Marketing Director

Our final highlight for 2022 was the solidification and reorganization of our current sub-committee members to further develop active philanthropic

organizations in Wisconsin who will be anxious to support the WING Foundation's vision and mission moving forward.

Grants and Scholarships

The Wisconsin National Guard Foundation believes our Soldiers and Airmen are our greatest resource. It provides financial resources to assist with "filling the gaps" for our National Guard members in temporary need. The Foundation Service Member Grant is available to aid eligible service members experiencing a financial hardship and can demonstrate a financial need prior to negatively impacting their credit, security clearance or affiliation with the Wisconsin National Guard. Financial assistance grants are available up to \$2,000 annually and do not require repayment.

The Foundation Scholarship Program is available to service members and their dependents up to 12th Grade for higher education. Eligible programs include associate, bachelor's and master's degrees, technical degrees and/or training, certifications and licensing programs. Scholarships of up to \$1,000 are awarded to individuals based on financial need and availability of funds annually.

Applications are due no later than July 1 of each calendar year. Scholarships will be disbursed no later than August 15th to the institution of higher learning.

The Al Wilkening Memorial Scholarship Program was created in memoriam to honor Major General Albert H. Wilkening who served as Wisconsin's Adjutant General from 2002 to his retirement in 2007. This program is available to Guard Members, spouses and dependents. Eligible programs include traditional four-year degrees, technical degrees and/or training, certifications and fees related to obtaining a professional licensure. Scholarship recipients may renew for two years. Two scholarships of \$1,000.00 each will be awarded annually. Application deadline is by July 1st of each calendar year. Scholarships will be disbursed no later than with August 15th to the institution of higher learning.

Please visit <https://www.wi-ngfoundation.org/> for on-line applications for all financial-aid grants and scholarships.

Communications

Responsibility for creating donor and general information about the Foundation falls to the Communications Committee although the Executive Director and other Directors also contribute to this effort. In addition to making recommendations to the Board, is tasked with developing materials for Development Committee who interface with prospective donors as well as for public information.

Products for unit bulletin boards informing Air and Army Guard members of the Foundation's financial assistance program as well as scholarship opportunities are being developed by the Committee.

Examples of "team effort" Communications work include:

- New logo identification was created for the Foundation.
- Website upgrades included a "donation button" function for on-line donations and added grant and scholarship application forms. Photos and biographies of the Foundation president and executive director also were added.
- Foundation letterhead and business cards were developed.
- PowerPoint presentations will be available for specific audiences.

Submitted 20 March 2023
Communications Committee