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'People person' devoted to service

David Carney takes helm of veterans coalition

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He's a behind-the-scenes organizer. A cheerleader for Soldiers, veterans and their families. An emcee and speaker at local patriotic events.

Now, David Carney is also the incoming president of the North Alabama Veterans and Fraternal Organizations Coalition.

And, if you ask him about it, he has only one thing to say: "Hooah!"

This Soldier's Soldier has long been a part of Huntsville's and Alabama's military scene. He has developed a reputation as a "go-to man" who will support any good Soldier cause with plenty of energy and determination.

"It's very exciting to be the president of the North Alabama Veterans and Fraternal Organizations Coalition," Carney said. "It gives me the ability to work with so many different groups of people to make things happen for veterans, Soldiers and their families."

The coalition is an umbrella group of more than 40 military and community organizations that work behind the scenes to

organize and volunteer staff several events for Soldiers, veterans and their families, including Blue Star Service Banner programs, Huntsville's Veterans Day Parade and dinner, 9/11 ceremony, Flag Day ceremony, Operation Christmas Bear, and various deployment and Welcome Home ceremonies. Carney has been involved with these events for several years.

Carney particularly appreciates the efforts of the coalition because they include all branches of the military.

"I am very inclusive about everything," said the former National Guard sergeant. "I work with Marines, Army Reserve and all the active military branches. We all have U.S. in front of our name branch of service tags. That U.S. means 'us.'"

Carney's community involvement includes being on the board of the Spirit of America Foundation in Decatur, serving as commander of the Cahaba Shrine Temple Legion of Honor, serving as treasurer of the Madison County Military Heritage Commission and serving as vice president of the Huntsville chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army. He will take over as president of the coalition at its annual awards and recognition program to be held tonight at 6:30 at the Cahaba Shrine Temple.

Carney follows in the footsteps of several coalition presidents who have been commit-

ted to Soldier and veteran causes. The organization was started by Ed Banville and Hal Meeker in 2003. Bill Meyers later served as a president, giving the organization a sharp focus on events directly related to Soldiers,

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Coalition support group roll call

The following military and community organizations read like a Who's Who List of groups that support North Alabama's military. They are all members of the North Alabama Veterans and Fraternal Organizations Coalition:

- Air Force Association
- Armed Forces Communications Electronics Association
- Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs
- Alabama Military Moms
- American Legion Post 237
- American Legion Post 229
- Army Reserve
- Association of the U.S. Army-Huntsville, Redstone Arsenal Chapter
- BPO Elks 1648
- Cahaba Shrine
- COPS (Christian Officers Preaching Salvation)
- Disabled American Veterans
- 8th Air Force Historical Society, North Alabama Wing of Alabama Chapter
- 1st Brigade Alabama SDF
- 40/8
- Huntsville Police Department
- Jewish War Veterans Post 111
- Knights of Columbus
- Korean War Veterans Association, Tennessee Valley Chapter
- Madison County Military Heritage Commission
- Madison County Sheriff's Department
- Marine Corps League, Brandon-Wilbourn Detachment 820
- Military Officers Association of America, Huntsville Chapter
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Military Order of World Wars
- Moms of Marines
- National Defense Industrial Association, Tennessee Valley Chapter
- 19th Alabama Volunteer Infantry Regiment Inc.
- Redstone Command Staff
- Redstone Garrison
- Sergeants Major Association, Redstone Arsenal
- Sons of the American Revolution, Tennessee Valley Chapter
- Still Serving Veterans
- Space and Missile Defense Working Group
- Tennessee Valley Republican Club
- Veterans Memorial Museum
- Veterans of Foreign Wars 5162
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Warrant Officers Association
- War Veterans of Madison County
- West Point Society of the Tennessee Valley



Photo by Kari Hawkins

AND A 'HOOAH!' TO YOU— David Carney, incoming president of the North Alabama Veterans and Fraternal Organizations Coalition, drives around with his favorite word on his truck's vanity plate. The 2006 version was "Hooa1." He is waiting for his new 2007 tag that will say "Hooah" to arrive from the state. Carney will be inducted as the coalition's new president at its annual awards and recognition program tonight at the Cahaba Shrine Temple.

Coalition

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veterans and their families. Then, Joe Fitzgerald, the 2006 president, built on that focus and made sure the organization was recognized for its efforts.

Carney will be at the helm of a 2007 coalition board of directors that will include Army Reserve Command Sgt. Maj. John Perry, executive vice president; retired Col. Joe Paddock, treasurer; Army Reserve Lt. Col. Valerie Coffey, secretary; retired Col. Bob Wilkie, vice president for military affairs; retired Sgt. 1st Class Russell Kimball, vice president for finance; and Joe Fitzgerald, vice president for membership. The coalition's advisory board will include retired Lt. Col. Bill Meyers, retired Capt. Bill Hogan, retired Col. Tom Brown and AMCOM Command Sgt. Maj. Ricky Yates.

"I want to continue what they've begun," Carney said of his predecessors. "You can see from the quality of people we have on the board that this is going to be a great year. It's just a matter of planning what we can do and what we should do. Teamwork is a big thing with me. The coalition and its 40-plus members will work together and make things happen."

Carney, 61, describes himself as a "people person" who likes to organize patriotic events. The military has been his whole life. He dropped out of high school to join the Army. His career has included eight years in the active Army and 16 years with the National Guard, the last two as a full-time family support coordinator and public affairs officer for the 142nd Signal Brigade in Decatur. Along the way, he obtained bachelor and master degrees in administrative science, worked as a bank loan officer at Regions Bank, published books and magazines, and worked in computer programming.

He was deployed to Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia in 1996-97 as part of Operation Joint Endeavor, and to Kuwait in late 1997. While in Hungary, he coordinated media tours, including one with a *Huntsville Times* reporter and photographer. He's also done minor deployments to Japan, Thailand, and tours in Germany and Italy.

"I enjoyed it," Carney said of his military career. "I came to realize what service means. To me, service is everything — service to others, to the nation, to the military. That's everything, right there. I'm privileged to be in a position where I can do that."

It was while he was working for the 142nd Signal Brigade that Carney's reputation as an organizer of military events statewide began to be noticed. He organized deployment ceremonies in 18 cities throughout the state when parts of the 142nd were deployed during a six-week period in late 2003.

"I wanted to do something for these Soldiers and their families," Carney said. "How can I help them? The only thing I

can do is give them the right attitude. Attitude is everything during a deployment."

So, Carney took his brand of "Hooah!" all over the state in support of the 142nd.

"You can't say 'Hooah!' without feeling good about yourself," he said. "When you get people doing that, it helps them in ways you can't imagine."

Carney has organized more than 100 military and patriotic programs in Alabama. He organized the first Welcome Home ceremonies in Alabama for deployed Soldiers. One event — with two plane loads of returning military — involved 2,000 family members on a rainy Sunday morning in January 2005.

"It was at that event when everybody started getting on board and wanting to help," Carney recalled.

"When it was time for Signal Soldiers to start returning (in late '04), I visited with mayors, media and military support groups in 18 cities and explained to them how a Welcome Home should be conducted — a few minutes at the arrival point with a big event later. I wasn't about to allow anybody to have a massive three-hour event the moment they arrived, as some cities had started talking about. The mayor of Foley gave me the key to the city for what I did for the Soldiers there."

Carney also spoke to community organizations and at churches. He organized media trips to Fort Campbell (Ky.), Fort Bragg (N.C.), Fort Polk (La.) and to Hurricane Katrina sites. He coordinated weekly radio programs for Soldier phone calls in Albertville, Birmingham and Mobile. He worked with media throughout the state and taught deploying Soldiers how to write, which resulted in weekly articles in several newspapers.

"I know how important it is for servicemembers and families to see their names in print," Carney said. "It publicly validates their service."

Everywhere he went, Carney gave out his business card. He wanted to make himself accessible to any group needing help organizing military or patriotic events. As he helped various organizations with their ceremonies, Carney became part of those organizations — including the coalition.

"You do things and it does change you," said Carney, who works in communications and community relations with Lockheed Martin Corp., managing his volunteer duties in his off time.

"I traveled to over 30 countries, most for military reasons. I saw how things were in other countries. It made me realize our country is the greatest nation on Earth. I am proud to be a part of it and to be able to wear the uniform. I've served most of my life and I want to continue serving. I have been very privileged to be in a position where I could help so many people who are so deserving."

To attend the coalition's awards and recognition program, contact Carney at 652-2460 or david.r.carney@us.army.mil. For more information on the coalition, visit its web site at www.vetcoalition.org.