

NMNG hosts first Army Combat Fitness Test challenge

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The New Mexico National Guard hosted its first Army Combat Fitness Test Challenge this past weekend at the University of New Mexico's Johnson Field, opening the doors to friends and family to experience the Army's newest physical training test.

The event -- free and open to the public -- drew a diverse crowd, including local fitness enthusiasts and even professional fighters from the Jackson Wink MMA Academy. The new ACFT, aimed at better preparing soldiers for the physical demands of combat and reducing training injuries, offers a demanding series of six events to test a Soldier's physical skills and abilities.

Pvt. 1st Class Diego Torres, a Black Hawk helicopter mechanic in Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation, brought his fiancée, Hope Bryant, along with his father, Alex Torres, a wrestling coach at Highlands High School, and brother Gabriel. They joined others in embracing the challenge and pushing their limits.

Torres' family, who had never completed the full ACFT before, welcomed the opportunity to understand what physical demands their Soldier must be prepared for.

"He's been in for two years," Alex said, "but I've never taken the entire test. He's come to run part of it for our students a few times. I like it. It's a good time."

The group from the Jackson Wink MMA Academy traded in their typical Saturday morning trail run to participate.

The fighters included Spc. Abran Lujan, a Military Police officer currently attending the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program at UNM; Spc. Kabody Bryson, a horizontal construction engineer in the 920th Engineer Construction Company; Senior Airman Kenny Epps from the 377th Mission Support Group's Civil Engineer Division Explosive Ordnance Disposal team based on Kirtland Air Force Base; and Ricardo Canales, a professional mixed martial arts fighter, who praised the event for its intensity and realism.

The ACFT Fitness Challenge served as an opportunity for the public to connect with their friends and loved ones who serve in the Army National Guard and better understand the rigorous training that goes into preparing the nation's service members.

Six winners were selected based on their total scores covering the six events. Each event is graded on a scale of 100 according to a person's age and sex, with the maximum points being 600.

First place in the female category was Rebekah Bryson, who is attending ROTC at UNM.

Second place was Hope Bryant.

Third place was Celestina Chaparro.

First place in the male category was Senior Airman Kenny Epps.

Second place was Alejandro Tagle, an infantryman in Charlie Company, 1-200th Infantry Battalion.

Third place was Staff Sgt. Victor Grossetete, from the NMNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

"The ACFT has created so much conversation through the news and social media," said Master Sgt. Gualterio Quintana, a NMNG recruiter who helped plan the event. "The idea was to give an open invite to anyone who wanted to try it, even if they aren't able to join the Guard. We have people from the active Air Force and families who just wanted to see what their loved ones do during drill."

"This was our first time holding an event like this," Quintana said. "Hopefully, we get an even bigger group to try it next time."

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