



photo by Barbara Crane

Rhonda Togiak, a medic with Company A of the 4th Battalion in Togiak, was named the Distinguished Honor Graduate in the Guard's leadership class.

Guard graduates 41 in first step to leadership training

by Barbara Crane
Tundra Times reporter

March 15 was graduation day for 41 students attending the Alaska Army National Guard's Primary Leadership Development Course.

The men and women received diplomas certifying successful completion of the 15-day course which is the first step in the Guard's formal leadership training program.

"Every step up in the Alaska Army National Guard adds additional responsibility," Command Sgt. Maj. Clifford Newell, commandant of the Noncommissioned Officer Academy, told the graduates.

"At this academy we try to give you the skills necessary so you can accept that additional responsibility and advance in your careers."

In his remarks to the graduates, Lt. Col. Chuck Soxie, commander of the Guard's 3rd Battalion, talked about the tradition of Guard service in Alaska.

"In looking over the class roster," Soxie said, "I see so many familiar names — names like Ballot, Kanulie, Soolook, Charlie — and I think of your relatives I have served with."

"You are keeping up the family tradition. You should be proud. You are our future leaders."

The Distinguished Honor Graduate, Spec. Rhonda Togiak, a medic with Company A of the 4th Battalion in Togiak, is a good example of the tradition of family Guard membership.

"I have four other family members in the Guard right now," she said, "including Spec. Alex Togiak who is graduating from this class with me."

As the Distinguished Honor Graduate, Togiak is the number one graduate of the PLDC class.

To be eligible for this honor, she had to be one of the top three students academically. Further scoring was based on demonstrated leadership abilities, contribution to group effort, daily inspections, the commandant's inspection and the evaluation of her fellow classmates.

During the graduation ceremony, Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer presented Togiak with the Army Achievement Medal in recognition of her accomplishments.

Also recognized were Spec. Fred Onalik of Noatak who was named Honor Graduate, Sgt. Robert Soolook Jr. of Little Diomedes who won the Leadership Award, and Spec. Jack Clair of Ft. Richardson who was the Commandant's Inspection Award winner.