

Sertoma leader lauds local efforts

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Speakers impressed the crowd at the 48th Sertoma Freedom Banquet Saturday. Sertoma International President Woody Hudson and White Sands Missile Range Garrison Commander Col. Gary Geibel made the audience laugh and think seriously. And award winner Chuck Galusha was eloquent and short in his speech, generated by surprise at being a winner.

Hudson told attendees this was the first time he and his wife have been to New Mexico. "We are goggle-eyed over the beauty of creation," Hudson said. Although he admitted to being a bit disconcerted when he never saw any lakes or ponds.

"We visited White Sands today and frolicked like children," Hudson said. "We love your city and we love our topography."

Hudson said Sertoma clubs across the nation have 18,000 men and women working with people like the four clubs in Alamogordo do.

"When I look over my shoulder now I see men, women, children whose lives are better now," Hudson said, referring to the good works being done by Sertoma clubs. "Freedom is an aspect of service. It is an obligation to help others grow and mature."

Geibel's platform for his speech was the soldier.

"The hallmark of the Army is the soldier and his family," he said. "This is going to be a long war. We are

fighting an enemy with no respect for human dignity."

He said the country has 19-year-old soldiers out there walking in harms way.

"And they do it to keep our way of life that we so well enjoy," Geibel said.

Geibel referred to his job as garrison commander as somewhere between being mayor and city manager. If something goes wrong at WSMR, he is the first to hear about it, he said.

The profile of the Army has changed a great deal since Geibel signed up more than 20 years ago, he said.

Today, 18 percent of the Army is 18 to 20 years old, 70 percent is 21 to 40 years old and 12 percent is over 40. Sixty-three percent of the soldiers are married, Geibel said.

"When I came in, if they wanted you to have a wife, they issued you one," he said.

Forty-eight percent of the Army's men and women have children, 40 percent have master's and doctor's degrees and 60 percent have bachelor's degrees.

Then he talked a bit about future growth at WSMR.

Preparations have begun to bring in a combat engineering battalion of 525 soldiers this summer, which equals an additional 1,300 people at the range.

A brigade combat team is also planned, which will bring in an additional 9,400 soldiers by 2013, Geibel said.

To help move people and equipment, a railroad spur is planned out to the missile range. Over the next several years, \$161 million will be spent getting the rails to WSMR.

Surprised Service to Mankind Award winner Chuck Galusha received his plaque at the end of the event. He spoke briefly.

After listening to an extensive list of his accomplishments during his 12 years in Alamogordo, Galusha told the audience the secret to getting things done.

"You just have to do it the immediate time it happens," Galusha said. "Don't do it in a minute or tomorrow. Do it right then."

But still he is modest and self-deprecating about it all.

"When people ask me how I get up at 7 a.m. to go to a meeting on Saturday mornings, I just say 'I've had five heart attacks, I don't work. I get up one day a week, go to the meeting and then go back home to bed,'" Galusha said.