



# Dakota Gas employee shows gratitude through a familiar symbol

Jill Thomas presents a flag to Dakota Gas Board President Don Applegate. Others pictured, left to right: Roy Ireland, Wayne Child, Ron Harper, Thomas Owens, Cliff Gjellstad, Kermit Pearson, Heidi Heitkamp, Wayne Peltier, Roberta Rohrer, Reuben Ritthaler, Dean McCabe, Gary Drost, and Charlie Gilbert.

By Tracie Bettenhausen

A personal mission that started during a National Guard deployment in Kosovo is now complete.

Jill Thomas, warehouse supervisor at the Great Plains Synfuels Plant, spent a year in Kosovo, from September 2009 to September 2010. Toward the end of her North Dakota National Guard deployment, she bought three U.S. flags, and had them flown over the U.S. National Support Element Headquarters in Film City, Pristina, Kosovo, on Aug. 6, 2010.

“You pick a significant date, and bring in the flags. They will fly them for a certain amount of time, then fold them up in the honored, traditional way, and then present them to you. You can do whatever you need to do with the flags when you get home,” Thomas says.

For Thomas, her significant date was Aug. 6 because her first day of work at Basin Electric’s Dakota Gasification Company was Aug. 6, 1984 – 26 years earlier.

On March 15, she presented the flags to the Dakota Gas and Basin Electric boards of directors, and to her co-workers, the Dakota Gas maintenance section. “The flag has always been the symbol that has kept the American soldiers going. So, I

thought it was fitting that I chose the American flag to show my gratitude to Basin Electric, for the support they gave me while I was in Kosovo,” Thomas says. “And flying a flag over where you serve is probably the only way you can really show how much gratitude you have for the people you want to present it to.”

“Flying a flag over where you serve is probably the only way you can really show how much gratitude you have for the people you want to present it to.”

*Jill Thomas, Dakota Gas*

Thomas was serving in Kosovo as the military assistant to the political advisor, supporting the NATO mission there. Thomas worked alongside soldiers representing 31 countries.

On Jan. 20, 2011, Thomas retired from the Guard as a lieutenant colonel, after having served for 33 years.

Watch the video to see Thomas present the flags: <http://bit.ly/ThomasPresentsFlags>.