

National Western Stock Show announces 2024 Citizen of the West

By Luige Del Puerto The Denver Gazette
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Retired Gen. Ralph E. "Ed" Eberhart is the National Western Stock Show's pick for the 2024 Citizen of the West. He is a former commander of the U.S. Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

Courtesy: National Western Stock Show

The National Western Stock Show has picked a former commander of the U.S. Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Defense Command as the 2024 Citizen of the West, an honor the group bestows on an individual who embodies the "spirit and determination of the Western pioneer."

The honoree is retired Gen. Ralph E. "Ed" Eberhart, who has had an illustrious career in the military.

"He exemplifies our Western way of life and all the qualities befitting a great Citizen of the West," the group said in a statement.

Each year, the National Western Stock Show picks an individual whose life personifies that "true representative of Western lifestyle, ideals, agricultural heritage, and traditions." Eberhart, the 45th Citizen of the West, will be honored in a ceremony in January, the group said.

In a statement describing his career, the National Western Stock Show noted Eberhart's 36 years in the military, including serving as commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, positions he held during a critical period in American history.

After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, then-President George W. Bush asked Eberhart, a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, to stand up the U.S. Northern Command, and, under his guidance, both NORAD and USNORTHCOM implemented measures to enhance homeland defense and protect the country against future threats.

Eberhart, who had 300 combat missions under his belt, also held the positions of commander of U.S. Forces, Japan; vice chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force; and commander in chief of U.S. Space Command.

He received numerous accolades, including the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He also served as chair and president of the Armed Forces Benefit Association.

After retirement, Eberhart joined the boards of several companies and nonprofit groups, including TERMA, Jacobs Engineering, Rockwell Collins, Triumph Group, VSE and Segs4Vets. He also served as a U.S. Air Force Academy Association of Graduates Board director. Currently, he is a trustee for the Falcon Foundation and a director on the board of the USAFA Endowment.

Eberhart and his wife, Karen, reside in Colorado Springs. They have two daughters, Erika and Jessica.

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Luige Del Puerto
Managing Editor