

Photo by Sergeant Jessica L. Sheldon



# Engineer Training Benefits School

By Specialist Ruth McClary

**S**oldiers from the 875th Engineer Company, 505th Engineer Battalion, North Carolina Army National Guard, have been clearing topsoil for a future construction project at the University of North Carolina –

Charlotte (UNCC) as training this year. A member of the unit who is an employee of UNCC helped organize the project. This was the unit's first engineering project since its return from Iraq in September 2006. The project is one example of how the North Carolina Army National Guard supports the community, no matter what the need.

The engineers were tasked to transport 5,000 cubic yards of topsoil two miles to a dump site on the UNCC campus beginning in late April. They used six 20-ton dump trucks that rotated between two loading points to transport loads to the designated dump site. A D7 bulldozer whirled through the mound, loosening the soil for a hydraulic excavator operator to scoop up and drop into the dump trucks. Two of the trucks developed minor maintenance problems that were taken care of on the spot by the Soldiers of the maintenance section, who were armed with a portable toolbox and their trusty multitools. They categorize themselves as the "backbone of the unit," ready and willing to repair with care.

The 16 Soldiers on the site agreed that this project was good training, good for retention, and good for readiness redeployment. Honking the horn of a dump truck as UNCC students passed by waving and shouting support, one Soldier said that he is up for reenlistment and ready for another 6-year term. Serving in Iraq gave him a sense of overwhelming pride in his country, a feeling that is different from accomplishing tasks in the civilian sector. He felt he made a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people and is proud of the work his unit accomplishes on the home front, whether it's removing debris after a hurricane or moving soil at a state university.



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**A hydraulic excavator fills one of the six 20-ton dump trucks on the project.**