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# Families in focus

VIRGINIA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

## Operation Family Fun Great Wolf Lodge

What started out as an idea to recognize the soldiers of the returning 654 MP Company, turned into a 2 day fun filled experience for 275 military families from across Virginia, of which approximately 50 were Virginia National Guard families.

Cathy Chaplain, Sales & Marketing Director for the Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg, was browsing through her local newspaper one January morning when she came across a small article covering the homecoming of the Petersburg based 654 MP Company. The soldiers had just returned home after a year long deployment in Iraq and Cathy wanted to do something special to recognize and thank them and their families for their service to our country. So a decision was made to offer a complimentary over night stay for the soldiers and their families at the Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg. An event that had already been scheduled to kick off the lodge's newest ride, "The Howling Tornado" turned into "Operation Family Fun".

VA National Guard families began arriving the afternoon of 30 January and checked into their suites. Not that much time was actually spent in their themed suites, because the lore of the water park was strong from the moment you entered the lodge. Children and parents alike rushed to change into their bathing suits and headed immediately to the water park. They spent hours playing in the wave pool, shooting down water slides, getting repeatedly doused by 1000 gallons of water from a 48-ft. tall tipping bucket, screamed and yelled as they were plunged down a

six story drop off, which was only part of the fun, fast "Howling Tornado" ride. All the while the youngest of our guard family members played in their very own "Cub Paw Pool", complete with trough waterfall slides and other interactive toys. As the evening wound down, many took advantage of a few relaxing minutes in one of the hot tubs before going back to their suites exhausted.

Then the next morning it started all over again. With restaurants on site, families ate breakfast together and then headed back to the water park. At 1000 hrs the air was filled with the sounds of a local high school marching band following a Colonial Color Guard to the area where a short ceremony was held to welcome the military families to the park. A military spouse brought tears to the eyes of many with her rendition of "The National Anthem". Curtis Brown, Vice President of the lodge welcomed everyone and thanked the service members and the families for their service and sacrifice. Wiley the Wolf, the lodge's mascot made a special appearance and was available for photo opportunities with the children. Then after enjoying a luau buffet everyone continued "playing" in the water park. All in all everyone who attended "Operation Family Fun" had a blast.

For information on The Great Wolf Lodge, visit their website at [www.greatwolf lodge.com](http://www.greatwolf lodge.com) "Operation Family Fun" is also the code for a year round promotional rate for military families.



Lilly Kate McGonegal and Maeve Alaric enjoying their stay at the Great Wolf Lodge



Welcome sign for Military Families



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# March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 
25 	26	27	28	29	30 	31 

## Schedule of Events

-  **Marriage Enrichment Seminar**  
Date: 24-25 March 2007  
Location: Washington D.C.
-  **Advance Family Readiness Group Leader Training**  
Date: 30-31 March 2007  
Location: Williamsburg, VA

### Upcoming Events

**Branch Out Expo**  
Date: 19 May 2007  
Location: Manassas, VA

**2nd Annual Youth Summer Camp**  
Dates: 24-29 June 2007  
Location: Camp Pendleton, Virginia Beach, VA



### Branch Out Expo Northern Virginia

The purpose of the Branch Out Expo is to bring together all members of the Military branches and their families in the Northern region of Virginia in one location and provide them with community support, information and many fun activities.



## Successful Marriage Enrichment Retreat in Washington D.C.

Ask anyone who attended and the resounding response will be it was GREAT!!!! What are they talking about? The Marriage Enrichment Retreat held at the Sofitel Hotel in our Nations Capital, Washington DC. the weekend of 23-24 February 07.

Couples from the recently returning 654 MP Company and 2-224<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion enjoyed themselves in Washington DC while learning how to reconnect as a couple after a long separation due to deployments. The attendees were given tips and guidance on keeping their marriages strong and how to communicate more efficiently to understand one another better, especially after their separation

The 2 day retreat included the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP®) as well as other lessons such as deeper communication that concentrated on knowing your soul mate.

The following are comments from February's attendees:

*"For the first time in 20 years, I understand why at times my husband may choose to avoid/withdraw from a conflict...because he loves me and doesn't want to crush me as his instinct to "win" takes over...not because he doesn't care." M.B.*

*"I believe it is important for married couples to have this seminar to reconnect." L.R.*

*"A valuable and enjoyable investment of time in our family's future." C.D.*

*"I feel more comfortable about being able to communicate with my wife." W.T.*

*"I encourage all couples to attend. I have a wonderful marriage, but it was good to learn some new techniques to make it better. It was wonderful to be able to spend time as a couple in a beautiful place." A.T.*

*"Any couple should take advantage of this service. It gives you a very informal setting to learn great ways to address everyday situation in your marriage. We had a great time and recommend it to everyone!" K.W.*

*"This program was a good opportunity for my wife and I to work on areas that needed attention. It is good to know that the military is investing in the soldiers' family well being. I highly recommend this program to any couple who cherish the relationship with their spouse." Anonymous*

The Marriage Enrichment Retreats are especially designed for returning soldiers and their spouses. The retreat serves as a platform for couples to communicate and spend quality time together in a very comfortable setting. It is **not** therapy, it is a way to enhance what already is good in your individual relationship!



## *TSGLI Administrators Clarify Misperceptions about Insurance Program*

Traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (TSGLI) is intended to help military personnel and their families avoid the financial hardship that often follows a serious injury. The program, founded in December 2005, has already made payments of more than \$110 million to traumatically injured Soldiers. However, the program faces challenges in the form of three common misperceptions about eligibility for compensation and how claims should be made. The first misperception is that TSGLI is just for combat injuries.

In fact, any qualifying injury incurred after December 1, 2005 may receive compensation. Retroactive coverage is available to Soldiers receiving combat injuries in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom between October 7, 2001 and November 30, 2005. Another misperception is that a healthcare provider's statement is all that is needed to support a claim. Applicants do need to provide additional documentation beyond a statement from a healthcare provider. Last, TSGLI does not replace a traumatically injured Soldier's income. It is a one-

time payment of up to \$100,000, based on the type and severity of the injury, intended to help Soldiers and families get through short-term financial hardship. For more information about TSGLI, contact the U.S. Army TSGLI service center at 1-800-237-1336 or TSGLI@conus.army.mil or visit <http://tsgli.army.mil>.

Source: Edition AUSA Family Programs Newsletter, March 2007 Vol. 1



## *Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC)*

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) is a DoD program designed to provide anonymous, confidential support to Soldiers and their family members, especially those returning from deployments. The MFLC Program uses licensed clinicians with master's degrees and at least five years experience in social work, counseling, or a related clinical discipline. Consultants are trained on military-specific topics including the deployment cycle, military culture, the chain of

command, and reporting requirements in accordance with Army Family Advocacy Program. The program serves active duty and mobilized National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers and their families. Military Family Life Consultants can help you and your family address issues resulting from deployment, reunions, reintegration and other times of change including: Marriage and Relationship Issues; Family Issues; Stress and Anxiety; Depression; Grief and Loss; Anger Man-

agement; and Parent and Child Communication. Soldiers and families are entitled to six prepaid, face-to-face counseling sessions. For more information, call 1-888-755-9355. Requests for MFLCs can be made through the Family Assistance Centers.

Source: My Army Life Too website, Family News February 2007, [FamilyNews@MyArmyLifeToo.com](mailto:FamilyNews@MyArmyLifeToo.com)

## *Reservists Exempt from 10% Early Withdrawal Penalty for Some Investments*

Military reservists called to active duty can receive payments from their individual retirement accounts, 401(k) plans and 403(b) tax-sheltered annuities, without having to pay the early-distribution tax, according to the Internal Revenue Service. The newly-enacted Pension Protection Act of 2006 eliminates the 10-percent early-distribution tax, commonly referred to as the 10-percent early-withdrawal penalty that normally applies to most retirement distributions received before age 59½. The new law provides this relief to reservists called to active duty for at least 180 days or for an indefinite period. Eligible reservists activated after Sept. 11, 2001, and before Dec. 31, 2007, qualify for relief from this tax. Regular income taxes continue to apply to these payments in most cases. More information is available from the IRS [here](#).

Source: Edition AUSA Family Programs Newsletter, March 2007 Vol. 1



## *Virginia Air & Space Center Hosts Fourth Annual FREE-dom Days for Military Families*

In a show of support for our troops and their families, the Virginia Air & Space Center in Hampton, Virginia is hosting FREEdom Days, a series of military appreciation days where the Center is giving away FUN for FREE! FREEdom Days include free exhibit admission, free activities for kids, discounts on IMAX admission, free rides, and 10 percent off at Imagination Station. FREEdom Days is open to all active duty military, National Guard, spouses and dependents. Military ID must be shown to participate. For more information, call 727-0900 ext 730 or visit [www.vasc.org](http://www.vasc.org).



# Reserve Income Replacement Program (RIRP)

The Reserve Income Replacement Program (RIRP) was developed to provide specific payments to eligible members of the National Guard and Reserve who are involuntary serving on active duty (the term active duty includes full-time National Guard duty) and who are experiencing a monthly active duty income differential of more than \$50.00, as determined by the member's Service Secretary.

An active duty income differential is the difference between the average monthly civilian earned income of the member before mobilization and the member's total monthly military compensation while involuntarily mobilized, when the member's average monthly civilian income exceeds the total monthly military compensation.

RIRP is an entitlement that must be paid to all eligible service members. To be eligible for RIRP payments, the member must be currently serving on active duty in an involuntarily status and have:

- Completed 18 consecutive months of active duty, or
- Completed 24 months of active duty during the previous 60 months, or
- Been involuntarily mobilized for 180 days or more within six months of the previous involuntary period of active duty of more than 180 days

RIRP is effective as of August 1, 2006, the first full month following the 180-day period after enactment of P.L. 109-163. Income replacement payments will be made only for full months of qualifying involuntary active duty performed from

August 2006 through December 2008.

The first RIRP payments for eligible service members will occur in September 2006, for duty performed in August 2006 (the first full month authorized for payments). RIRP payments will be made to an eligible member on a monthly basis. RIRP payments may not exceed \$3,000 per month.

Guard and reserve members serving on involuntary active duty and earning at least \$50 less than their normal civilian income each month must verify eligibility for this benefit through their military service's personnel system, using a [new DD form](#) created for this program.

Financial records submitted with the RIRP application must include the member's most recent federal income tax return or other record of earnings that shows gross income during the 12 months before the member's mobilization.

Congress authorized the Reserve Income Replacement Program as part of the [National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2006](#). The authority for RIRP will expire Dec. 31, 2008, unless Congress takes action to extend the program.

For more detailed information about RIRP or assistance in determining/verifying your RIRP eligibility, please visit the [Reserve Affairs web site](#).

Source: [Reserve Affairs web site](#)



## Happy St. Patrick's Day



## Webinars Show How New Technology Can Help Military Families

Military OneSource has begun hosting webinars, interactive online workshops that allow users to view a presentation while listening to a teleconference that includes the presenter and other attendees. The webinars cover a variety of topics of interest to military families and allow individuals to interact virtually with the presenter and attendees through phone conversation, live chat, polling, and other online tools. One of the most recent webinars focused on resources for special needs children and provided information on locating local, state and

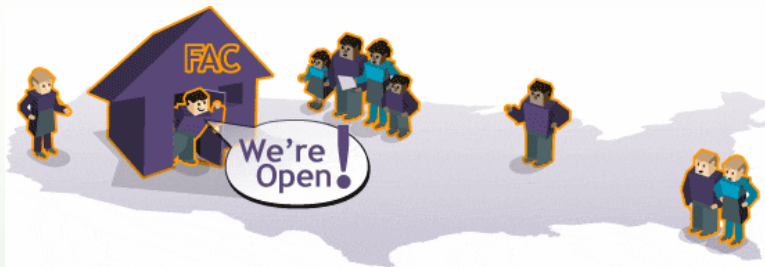
community resources as well as giving parents the opportunity to connect with other families. Although each webinar is a one-time event, Military OneSource does keep an online archive of earlier workshops. The webinar schedule and archives are available at <http://militaryonesource.com>.

Source: Edition AUSA Family Programs Newsletter, March 2007 Vol. 1





# Family Assistance Centers



Family Assistance Centers (FAC) were originally established to provide assistance and support to soldiers and their families at times of contingency call-up, mobilization and large scale deployment. However over the past years the FACs have branched out to assist any and all military members and their families during times of need regardless of deployment status or branch affiliation. Each FAC is staffed with a professionally trained FAC Specialist who is dedicated to providing assistance to service members and their families. Each of Virginia's FAC specialists has the added first hand experience of what it means to be either a military service member or member of a military family.

The FACs are considered one-stop shopping for those who need services and support. Through partnerships with agencies such as Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The American Legion, The Red Cross and other local and national organizations and working closely with military personnel such as chaplains, commanders, JAG officers and family readiness group leaders, the FAC specialists are able to provide the very best assistance possible. Some of the areas in which a FAC specialist can provide assistance includes but is not limited to; TRICARE, DEERS, ID cards, financial and legal assistance, service and family member employment/re-employment and crisis intervention referral.

Family Assistance Centers are located through out the state. FAC specialists are available to soldiers and family members experiencing a crisis or emergency no matter when it may occur.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the FAC specialist closest to you or in an emergency call 1-800-542-4028.

## Family Assistance Centers Location



### FAC Coordinator Norfolk FAC

Mrs. Tina Harrison  
(757) 455-0829 \*812  
(757) 416-2095 (M)

[tina.a.harrison@us.army.mil](mailto:tina.a.harrison@us.army.mil)

### Manassas FAC

Mrs. Kat Higgins  
(703) 392-8858 \*41  
(703) 554-5520 (M)

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### Sandston FAC

Mrs. Tricia Riggs  
(804) 328-3004 \*811  
(804) 380-6343 (M)

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### Staunton FAC

Mr. Maurice Harrison  
(540) 332-7859  
(540)292-2636 (M)

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### Chatham/Southwest VA FAC

Ms. Knyla Robin Harris  
(434) 432-7228  
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### Virginia Beach FAC

Currently Vacant

**New FAC Locations coming soon**

**Abingdon Armory and Roanoke Armory**