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State Family Program Director

Greetings to Everyone,

Where does the time go? 2008 flew by so fast, it's a surprise we don't all have whiplash with the fast pace life we all lead!

Please pay special attention to the quarterly events page. The Chaplain's office is offering 2 Marriage Retreats and 1 Single Soldier event in Arlington VA this quarter. Also, the Ladies Auxiliary Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Virginia and Stein Mart will assist the Families of the Virginia National Guard and the ChalleNGe program by hosting an evening of live music, door prizes, decorating tips, informal modeling, fashion consultation, personal pampering and refreshments Sunday, February 8, 2009 at the Commonwealth Centre Parkway Stein Mart near Interstate 288 and Hull Street in Midlothian, Virginia. Family Programs will be providing many more events next quarter. (see page 2 for more information).

My staff is working on several initiatives to make our program the very best it can be. There will be a lot of exciting news about programs and activities for kids that our Youth Coordinator is diligently working. Also, keep an eye on your mailbox next month to receive a mailing from Family Programs. We have come a long way in the last several years so we would like to provide you with the most current information about our programs.

As always, please contact our Family Programs Office for any questions or concerns you may have. Our staff is always ready to serve you and we are proud to be serving the families of the Virginia National Guard.

Vickie Sais
State Family Program Director

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Family Resource Corner

My Army Life	http://myarmylifetoo.com
National Guard Family Program Portal	http://guardfamily.org
After Deployment	http://www.afterdeployment.org
Turbo TAP	http://www.turbotap.org
Issues Impacting Pregnancy and Young Children	http://www.theparentreview.com/DoD/
Free Military and Family Guides	http://www.govamerica.org
Healthy Way of Living	http://www.ymca.net/healthyfamilyhome/welcome.html
My GI Bill	http://www.mygibill.org
Tuition Assistance for Military Spouses	http://www.ed.umuc.edu/news/news081104.html
Women Veterans Support	http://www.graceafterfire.org
Spouse Education Assistance	http://www.aerhq.org/AER_Spouce_Stateside/SpouceSSApplicationCheck.asp
Virginia Resource Websites	http://www.easyaccess.virginia.gov/relatedlinks.shtml
Military Spouse Scholarship	http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Spouce_Scholarship
Force Health Protection and Readiness	http://fhp.osd.mil/fhponline/
Army Knowledge On Line	http://www.us.army.mil
Save and Invest	http://www.saveandinvest.org/
Education Benefits Database	http://www.militaryconnection.com/edubenefits.asp
Operation Military Kids	http://www.operationmilitarykids.org
TRICARE	http://www.tricare.mil/
Veteran Jobs	http://www.vetjobs.com
Military Home Front	http://www.militaryhomefront.org

Upcoming Events

Single Soldier Retreat	6-7 Feb 09	Arlington, VA	Kay Baber
Marriage Retreat	13-15 Feb 09	Arlington, VA	Kay Baber
Marriage Retreat	13-15 March 09	Arlington, VA	Kay Baber
Advanced FRG Training	14 March 09	Central, VA	Julia Alaric
Single Soldier Retreat	15-17 May 09	Williamsburg, VA	Kay Baber
Abington Youth Camp	17 May 09	Abingdon, VA	Dana Ivory
Annual Volunteer Recognition Workshop	29-31 May 09	Tidewater, VA	Vickie Sais
Evening Under The Stars	TBD May 09	Hampton, VA	Angie Wade
Marriage Retreat	12-14 June 09	Williamsburg, VA	Kay Baber
Wilderness Adventure Teen Camp	28 June-2 July 09	Eagle Landing New Castle	Dana Ivory
Marriage Retreat	17-19 July 09	Williamsburg, VA	Kay Baber
Single Soldier Retreat	24-26 July 09	Williamsburg, VA	Kay Baber
Junior Youth Camp	3-8 August 08	VA Beach, Camp Pendleton	Dana Ivory
Marriage Retreat	7-9 Aug 09	Williamsburg, VA	Kay Baber

“Share the Love”

Please join The Ladies' Auxiliary VFW Department of Virginia and Stein Mart in cooperation with the VNG State Family Readiness Advisory Council for an event to benefit Families of the Virginia National Guard and the ChalLeNGe program for at-risk youth.

Sunday, February 8, 2009

Commonwealth Centre Parkway Stein Mart, near 288 and Hull Street

Midlothian, Virginia

Tickets \$20 each

6:00– 6:30 pm special opening for National Guard Families

6:30 – 8:30 pm all ticket holders

Live music, door prizes, decorating tips, informal modeling, fashion consultation, personal pampering, and refreshments

Ticket holders receive at 20% off one item coupon when entering the store.

Just in time for Valentine's Day! Buy something for the one you love while supporting two very worthy causes.

Call 804-328-2464 or 804-643-7843 for details or to purchase tickets.

The Virginia National Guard has been defending Virginia since 1607. In today's world, the Guard continues this important mission. Whether it's conducting rescue operations following a natural disaster, serving in their local communities, or patrolling a street in Baghdad, the citizen Soldiers and Airmen of Virginia serve proudly.

However, their service comes at a tremendous sacrifice. Careers are put on hold, important family events are missed, and families must find a way to adjust as our Guardsmen spend a year or more in service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although Virginia and our Country are doing more than ever to support our Guardsmen and their Families, many of us find that we are at a loss as to how to support our fellow Virginians.

The “Share the Love” event is the perfect way to support two very specific Virginia National Guard groups. First, funds will be committed by the Virginia National Guard Family Readiness Advisory Council to directly impact Guard Families. The Advisory Council exists to identify needs of our military families, offer solutions to those needs and make recommendations on current and future Family Readiness Programs and Services as well as to promote family readiness, quality of life and empowerment of military families through education, communication, resources and community involvement. Second, funds will benefit the Virginia National Guard Commonwealth ChalLeNGe Program. ChalLeNGe offers the opportunity for at-risk youth to choose to turn their lives around. This program is offered at no cost to those who apply and are accepted and provides them the values, skills, education and self-discipline needed to produce responsible, productive citizens.

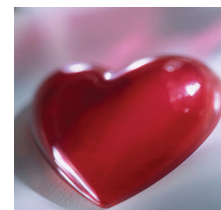
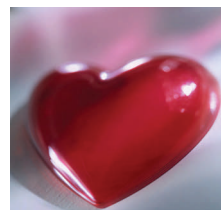
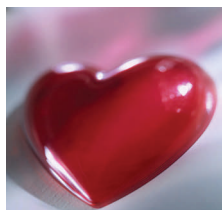
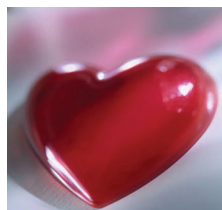
“Share the Love” is a special shopping event designed as an entertaining and fun evening with live music, door prizes, personal pampering, and light refreshments. Many of us will be buying something for that “special someone” for Valentine's Day. Why not “share the love” and participate in this special event?

If you would like to purchase a ticket, please call 804-328-2464 or 804-643-7843. While tickets will also be available at the door on Sunday, February 8th, pre-purchase of tickets will help us with our planning.

Spouses of currently deployed Virginia National Guardsmen are offered a free ticket to this event. Please be our guest and let us pamper you! Please contact Cathy Mercer at 804-559-2036 prior to February 3rd to secure your ticket.

If you are unable to attend the fashion show, but would still like to show your support, please make your tax deductible donation payable to Ladies Auxiliary VFW Dept of VA and mail it to: Ms. Harlow Sullivan, 202 N. 9th Street, 4th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219

Thank you for supporting Virginia's Guardsmen and their Families!



Free Tax Consultation and Filing

Military OneSource is pleased to announce that beginning Monday, January 19, 2009, we will once again provide free tax consultation and filing services to military service members and their families during the tax season.



As in the three previous years, users will have free online access to the TaxCut Basic program.

A brief overview

of the program:

- * Users must register for Military OneSource and log on to the site for access to the online TaxCut program. A separate logon for the TaxCut site is required.
- * Those eligible for the program are active duty, Guard and Reserve (regardless of activation status),

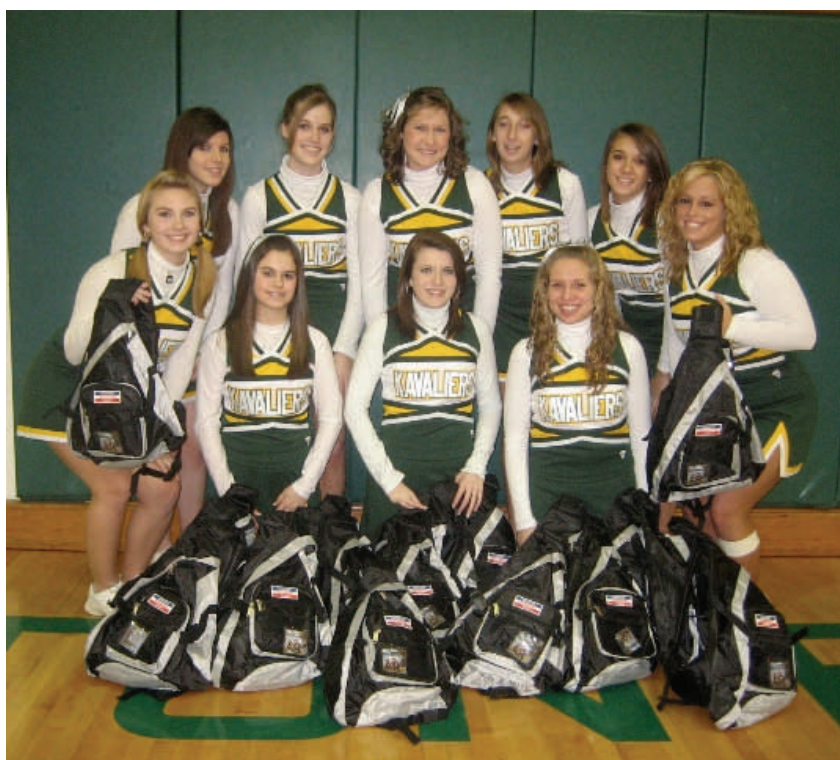
spouses and dependent children (authorized in DEERS), family members handling the affairs of a deployed service member, DoD employees working in support roles (Army Community Services, Fleet & Family Services, Family Support Center, Marine Corp Community Services), and severely injured service members or family members handling their affairs.

- * Participants will have free access to the H&R Block Basic TaxCut program. Those with more complicated returns may incur charges if they upgrade to the H&R Block TaxCut Premium program.

- * Participants can e-file one state resident return for each federal return that they e-file with TaxCut Online.

Find out more about the program by visiting the Military OneSource Tax page <http://www.militaryonesource.com>

Hero Back Packs for Deployed Kids



Kenston Forest School Varsity Cheerleading Squad recently held a fundraiser to purchase supplies to fill 20 backpacks for Operation Military Kids. The Family Hero Packs will be given to children who currently have a parent(s) deployed. The backpacks are filled with fun items and tips on ways to stay connected with their deployed parent(s). The squad also wrote letters thanking the military child for their family's service, patriotism, and sacrifice.

Front Row: Left to right: Cheyenne Facchina, Kelsey Mulligan, Kayla King, Gallion Taylor, Taylor Magda, Back Row: Preslee-Anne Thomas, Erin Duncanson, Elena Outlaw, Hannah Billmyer, Mary Kathryn Hite

Children & Deployment: Resources for Families

By Cindy Blevins

Military children are special. This group, estimated to be 2,000,000 strong, has a unique set of collective experiences, skills and abilities, and life issues. And, because of the current operations tempo, Soldiers and their families are experiencing an increased level of adjustments issues. The American Academy of Pediatrics website (www.aap.org) states, "As the United States and its allies continue to support the Global War on Terrorism, the secondary effects of prolonged war stress on military families and children are beginning to be recognized and characterized. Many military children and adolescents receiving healthcare in pediatric and family practices across the country are bearing a complex psychosocial burden that may not be readily apparent....."

How can families respond to these stressors? There are many wonderful online sources and books that answer this question. The National Military Family Association (www.nmfa.org) can guide family members to some of the many resources to address this. Use this link, or cut and paste into your browser, to view an article about dealing with deployment: http://www.nmfa.org/site/DocServer/Helping_Children_Cope_During_Deployment.pdf?docID=5201.

Also check out the following:



The Military Family Research Institute: www.cfs.purdue.edu. This site lists many resources including Military One Source, www.militaryonesource.com, which provides a wealth of resources for military families

www.milspouse.com

www.military.com

www.militarychild.org

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (the federal medical school in Bethesda, MD): www.usuhs.mil

There are many, many books but a few of my favorites are Karen Pavlicin's books, [Surviving Deployment](#) and [Life After Deployment: Separated by Duty, United In Love](#) by Shellie Vandevoorde, and [Chicken Soup for the Military Wife's Soul](#) by Canfield, Hansen, Preston and Pederson

www.childcareaware.org

Cindy Blevins is the Child and Youth Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC), part of the Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP) in VA. She can be reached at (540) 266-2349, or at Cindy.J.Blevins@mhn.com

Veterans Safe Driving Initiative

With motor vehicle crashes being a leading cause of deaths among combat veterans during the first years after their return home, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Defense (DOD) are working together to reduce these accidents. NASCAR legend and safe driving advocate Richard Petty, will be an active partner in the "safe driving" initiative.

For more information regarding the VA, DOD and DOT's safe driving initiative for veterans, visit www.safedriving.va.gov

That Thing Called Readiness

By Julia Alaric

Many National Guard Spouses and Family members have little familiarity with their Soldier's "part-time" job as a Virginia National Guard Soldier. Many Spouses and Family members of Guard Soldiers still don't consider themselves "Military Families"! Well hello, it's time to wake up and smell the coffee because each one of you who has a Soldier in the Virginia National Guard IS part of a Military Family!!!

It is the mission of the Virginia National Guard Family Programs staff to help your unit commanders build strong, resilient and self-sufficient Guard Families, Families that can take care of themselves during times when their Soldier's are separated from them due to military service. This does not only mean deployments over seas, but also state call ups and emergency service. In the last year my Soldier has been called up for active service on three separate occasions for three very different missions ranging from helping to put out wildfires in the Bedford and Roanoke areas, being staged and ready, waiting to brace a category 1 hurricane (that never came!) in the Tidewater area and then most recently to assist with the security for the inauguration of our 44th President in Washington DC. Now what would have happened had I needed assistance during these times? My Soldier was out of my communication loop so I could not ask him for help. I, like the rest of you, have to know what to do, where to go and who we can turn to for help! Of course there is a term for what I am describing and that is READINESS! So how do you get started on your path to Family Readiness? The following are some tips to get you pointed in the right direction. These tips include information to help you gather the knowledge and resources that you will need to make yourselves ready for what ever may come your way!

Get to know your Soldier's unit:

Find out who is in your Soldiers chain of command and what their roles are in relation to your Soldier. Ask your Soldier!

Know your Information Resources:

www.guardfamily.org

www.myarmylifetoo.com

www.hooah4health.com

All of these are really good websites, all providing lots of information and resources that includes online training and up to date info on all things Army and Guard.

For those of you that don't have computer access there is the "Army Soldier and Family Readiness Handbook" available through your Family Readiness Group or Family Programs office. This is the ultimate tool on your path to readiness.

Connect with your State Family Programs Staff:

There are folks on the Family Programs staff who specialize in Family Readiness. They are the Family Readiness Assistant (FRA) and the Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSA). The FRA and FRSA's work directly with the Commanders to

assist with the units Family Readiness Programs. They are an excellent resource for the Family members and can be reached as follows:

FRA	Julia Alaric	434-298-6336
FRSA (BCT)	Melody McGhee	540-280-4186
FRSA (91 st TC)	Rosa Pratt	804-843-4376

Know your Assistance Resources:

Without a doubt, in Virginia the absolute best resource for assistance is the Family Assistance Center Specialists (FACs). These trained Specialists can provide you and your Family with the assistance you need regardless of whether your Soldier is deployed or not. For more information on what the FACs can do and how to contact the one closest to you refer to the article "The Facts about FACs" on page 9 in this newsletter.

Stay Connected with your unit's Family Readiness Group:

Every unit should have an active Family Readiness Group (FRG). This is the most informative resource available to you! The person that heads up your FRG is officially appointed by the unit commander and answers directly to him/her. The Family Readiness Group Leader (FRGL) is a volunteer and has received official army training on how to oversee and maintain their units FRG. The FRGL is the I.R.S of the unit:

Information –conduit for information from the commander to the Families.

Referral – refer Families in need of assistance

Support –provide an empathetic ear to those needing a little extra TLC!

It is vitally important that you know who your FRGL is and how to contact her/him. In turn your FRGL needs to know how to contact you. It is your responsibility to keep your contact information current with your FRGL. This will guarantee that you receive all information from your Soldier's command especially during deployments.

What to do if your unit doesn't have an FRG? The first step is to contact one the State Family Readiness Specialists (FRA or FRSA's). The FRA/FRSA will then contact the unit commander and a plan will be discussed and implemented to find the perfect volunteer to take on the role of FRGL for your unit.

So as you can see there is plenty for you to get started on. If at any time you have a question reach out to the FRA, FRSA or FRGL these folks are there to provide you the guidance and support that you need to help you achieve that state of readiness. And for you single Soldiers reading this article, this information pertains to you also. Your parents and adult siblings also need to be familiar with the information in this article, so please be sure to share it with them.

Singles Soldiers Retreat Registration Form 2009

Williamsburg, Virginia

15-17 May 2009 24-26 July 2009

Please circle your choice

I'm doing pretty well. Why should I consider attending a Singles Retreat?

Everyone starts off their relationship committed to make it work. The Singles Enrichment Retreat provides concrete strategies and tools to help build strong relationships before and after deployment

Soldier's Name: _____

Last

First

Middle initial

Unit: _____

Address: _____ Home Phone: _____

Street

Work Phone: _____

City

State

Zip

*Soldier's Email: _____

****Registration confirmation and correspondences will be sent via email.***

All orders are the responsibility of the commands.

For Air Guard questions and registration contact Angie Wade email:

angeli.wade@us.af.mil

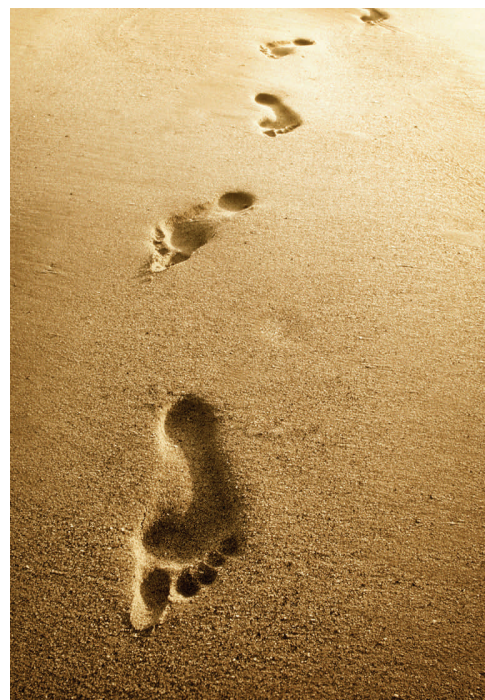
757-764-2388 or 804-338-4152

Please fax this form to SGT Estelle Christiansen

Fax: 434.298.6281

Email: Estelle.christiansen@us.army.mil

Office phone: 434-298-6463



Let's Talk Facts About the FAC'S

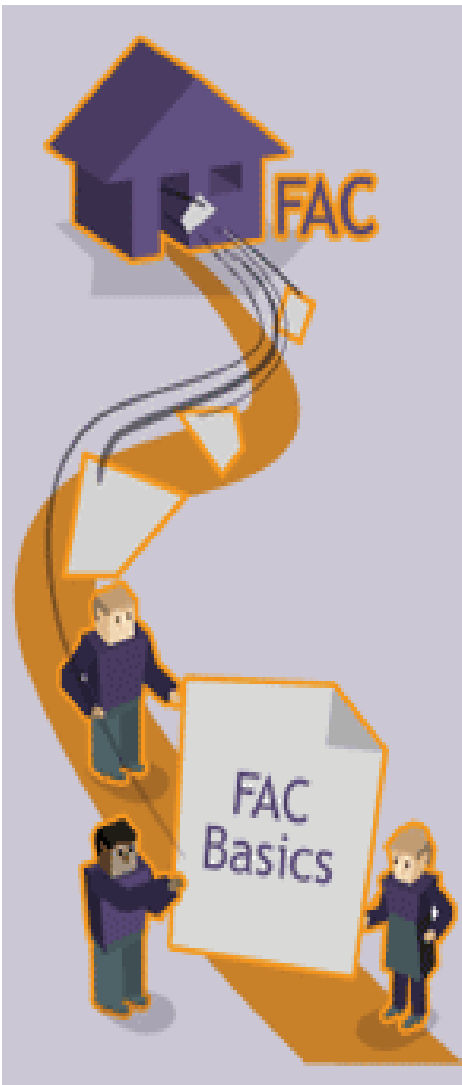
By **Tina Harrison**

The Family Assistance Center or "FAC" is your One Stop Shop for assistance and referral. From questions about TRICARE to financial needs, the FAC can assist you with a variety of different issues. There are 7 FAC offices strategically located throughout the Commonwealth to serve you no matter where you live. The FAC is available Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm. Your call is important to us! If you call a FAC office after office hours, please leave a message so that your call may be returned the following business day. Everyone is always welcome to stop by one of the FAC offices for assistance or just to pick up information on a variety of topics pertinent to being a National Guard Family Member.

The FAC Specialist work with many organizations such as local VFW posts, American Legion, Operation Homefront just to name a few. The FAC Specialist will also work with the soldier's unit leadership to assist with issues as necessary.

In the event of an emergency, you may contact the FAC hotline at 1-800-542-4028. You may use this line if you are calling after office hours or are unable to contact a FAC Specialist right away.

The FAC Specialists are here to assist any military member and their Families, so do not hesitate to call!



State FAC Coordinator

(757) 455-0829 *812

(757) 416-2095 (M)

Powhatan FAC

(804) 598-8037

(434) 294-5764 (M)

Abingdon FAC

(276) 628-7698

(276) 634-7386 (M)

Roanoke FAC

(540) 983-6838

(540) 718-5888 (M)

Chatham/Southwest VA FAC

(434) 432-7266

(434) 770-3284 (M)

Staunton FAC

(540) 851-4164

(540) 292-2636 (M)

Manassas FAC

(703) 392-8858

(540) 718-2417 (M)

Virginia Beach FAC

(757) 961-6545

(757) 353-9621 (M)

For Emergencies only call 1.800.542.4028

Serving All Military Families