



# **MOUNTAINEER** **DEFENDER**

**Magazine of the West Virginia National Guard**

## **Understanding** *Family Programs*

**Youth programs offer  
fun, support for military  
kids**

**Which Tricare option is  
right for you?**

**Updating information  
in DEERS first step  
in getting benefits**

**Meet the new Director  
of Psychological Health**

**FALL 2009**

# MOUNTAINEER DEFENDER

Magazine of the  
West Virginia National Guard  
Fall 2009

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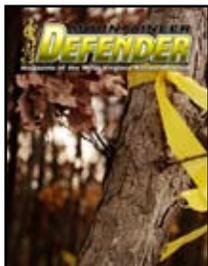
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**On the cover:**

Tie a Yellow Ribbon. Symbolizing military support for decades, this decoration can be seen across the state -- from brightly colored bows on doorways to vehicle magnets and tattered streamers on fenceposts. With so many of West Virginia's military forces deployed, the 'blue and gold' may be a little more gilded for days to come.



**Adjutant General**  
Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett

**State Senior Enlisted Leader**  
Command Sgt. Maj.  
Lawrence R. Vance

**State Command Chief Master Sergeant**  
Command Chief Master Sgt.  
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## The Adjutant General

I strongly believe that Soldiers and Airmen are the backbone of the West Virginia National Guard. We are recognized around the globe as a world-class organization because of more than 6,800 brave men and women who have chosen to be part of our organization.

When asked what makes the West Virginia National Guard so successful, I often use a three-legged stool example. With a three-legged stool, each leg must be strong or the stool falls over. So it is with our organization.

The first leg of the stool is the Soldier or Airman with an unwavering commitment to serving state and nation, sometimes enduring tremendous hardship to do so. The second leg is the Guard member's employer, who must also sacrifice so that Guard members are trained and ready to do overseas combat or homeland defense missions.

The final leg is family. Guard members cannot be successful without family support. I can't emphasize that enough. That's why we've worked so hard to create support programs for Guard families. Since 9/11, we've grown from a



**Maj Gen. Allen E. Tackett**

staff of three to 28 in the family programs area, with the potential to hire even more.

The programs we manage include support to families of deployed Soldiers; financial assistance, counseling and referrals; child and youth programs; spiritual, moral and ethical leadership

from religious support teams; veterans benefit assistance and referrals, and much, much more.

The family programs staff can help service members and families address many of these issues internally and will make referrals to the Guard's civilian agency partners on those issues outside our scope of expertise. Last year, the family programs staff had nearly 100,000 contacts with current and retired service members and families, replying to e-mails, answering phone calls, responding to letters, or helping someone who visited the family programs office.

Taking care of families is one of my top priorities, and I'll do everything in my power to continue creating programs that make serving in the Guard easier for Soldiers and Airmen and their families.

I get many opportunities to thank Guard members for their service. But I don't get as many opportunities to visit with families. So, on behalf of the state leadership team and our Soldiers and Airmen, I want to say, "thank you" for supporting the West Virginia National Guard.

## The State Senior Enlisted Leader

You have probably heard the phrase "it's the best bang for your buck" at one time or another. We have heard it most recently used by key leaders across the country. This phrase has typically been used to describe the National Guard being the best bang for our military buck.

Without a doubt it describes the ability of National Guard units to transition from a direct combat role into a humanitarian mission. This description also fits the many Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the West Virginia National Guard. Many times their civilian acquired skills help increase the standard of living for our troops deployed to a combat environment. The ability of our National Guard leaders to interact with other military and civilian leaders

is a much coveted ability.

I would like to bring your attention to one of the best bangs for our National Guard buck: WVNG Family Programs. This organization is comprised of paid and volunteer employees who work tirelessly to assist in anyway possible when a service member or family member is in need of assistance. These unsung heroes have added much to the success of the WVNG.

The great success in Soldier and Airman care could not be maintained without these wonderful dedicated individuals. Their hard work has greatly improved the WVNG's ability to maintain its high standard of Soldier, Airman, and unit readiness. All leaders need to get more acquainted with these dedicated people and what they can do to assist troops.



**Command Sgt. Maj. Vance**

Their hard work here allows our Soldiers and Airmen to stay more focused during training and deployments.

Without a doubt we're getting the best bang for the buck!

Thank you all for all you do! Hooah!

## The State Command Chief Master Sergeant



**Command Chief Master Sgt. Bowe**

As I come to you in this issue of the Defender, I would like to talk to you about a

family program called Yellow Ribbon. A group of concerned citizens came together in August 2001 as a result of hearing and seeing challenges that veterans face. Together, they formed what is now known as the Yellow Ribbon Program. This program is a military cooperative with a goal of providing training and assistance to ensure family readiness.

Yellow Ribbon includes partnerships with all military services within the state; all major veteran service organizations; relevant state government departments and agencies; civilian organizations; community service organizations and disaster response organizations.

The Yellow Ribbon Program provides information, services, referral and outreach opportunities for Airmen and Soldiers, families, employers and youth throughout the deployment cycle, to include pre-alert, pre-deployment, post deployment, and reintegration.

As we all know, since 9-11 both the Air Force and Army have been deploying nonstop. Some members have deployed several times and will probably deploy again, so it is programs like this one that help keep our Guard family strong. I salute all the men and women for their sacrifices and the outstanding jobs they do every day. Thank you.

# Consider custody arrangements before deployment

## *Soldiers, Airmen should seek JAG advice prior to receiving alert order*

by Maj. Kelly Ambrose  
Assistant Judge Advocate General

One of the most important things a service member can do before deploying, is make all the necessary arrangements for the care of family members. This is especially true if the member is the sole or joint caretaker of a child.

Judge Advocate General officers frequently deal with the changing of custodial arrangements in the event of a deployment. Unfortunately, most Soldiers have not addressed this issue prior to receiving an alert order. In addition, they often have other tasks on their plate, making this issue one in a long list of important things to do.

If you are the sole or joint custodial parent

of a child, it is important that you discuss with the other parent what should happen in regard to custody of children during deployment. In the most recent legislative session, W.Va. National Guard leaders submitted proposed changes to the law in regard to special custodial issues surrounding military members and deployments

Currently, state law allows a Soldier or non-service member parent to request an expedited temporary parenting plan allowing for a change in custody during the term of the deployment. This law also provides that the non-service member parent make the child reasonably available to the military member if the service member is able to come home on leave.

A modification of child support can also occur during the term of military service but reverts to



**AMBROSE**

the amount paid prior to deployment upon the Soldier's return. Lastly, the fact that one parent is in the military cannot be the sole factor supporting a change in circumstance for permanent modification.

Service members should be aware that a Power of Attorney is not sufficient to change custodial rights. Such change can only be done through the Family Law Courts. In addition, while JAG can give advice to Soldiers on their particular situations, we are

prohibited from representing military members in a civil or criminal matter.

Remember, it is never too early to plan ahead, so Soldiers should review custody arrangements prior to a deployment to make this transition less challenging.



Elizabeth Coffey was hired as the West Virginia National Guard's Director of Psychological Health in January 2009. Her resume includes extensive education and experience in the mental health field.

Coffey received a Masters degree in counseling from West Virginia University in 1993 and became a licensed professional counselor soon thereafter. She worked for a local mental health agency for seven years and has conducted counseling services in individual, group and family settings.

Mountaineer Defender staff sat down with Coffey so she could introduce herself, explain her role in the West Virginia Guard, and help Guard members and families understand her approach to addressing mental health issues associated with military service.

Coffey is married to Chap. (Lt. Col.) Gary Coffey, a full-time support chaplain with the West Virginia Army Guard who is deployed to Iraq with the 151st Military Police Battalion.

**M.D. -- Why were you interested in this job?**

Coffey -- "I've experienced the same feelings

## West Virginia National Guard's Director of Psychological Health

*as a lot of families who've had to deal with deployments. I have a passion for the military and I see this as a good blend of what I'm professionally trained to do and what I have a passion for. And I feel like there's been a gap in mental health care for service members and families and I want to help fill that gap."*

**M.D. -- How do you see your role as the Guard's Director of Psychological Health?**

Coffey -- "I think it's two-fold. The first part is a focus on wellness, resiliency and readiness. I plan to talk about wellness during briefings and any other platform I can get to talk about wellness issues. I want Soldiers and Airmen and their families to be psychologically ready for deployments. Soldiers and Airmen train physically and mentally for their missions, but psychological preparation is just as important. My second role is what I call triage -- clinical assessments of a service member's mental health and linking, if needed, the individual to an appropriate provider. Then, I'll offer case management services so, if the provider is not a good fit, I can adjust treatment and follow up until the service member completes the treatment."

**M.D. -- What do you hope to achieve in this position?**

Coffey -- "What I would hope is that everyone gets past the stigma that people attach to mental health. Everybody has problems at one time or another, and they should understand that it's not a

*sign of weakness to seek help. I want to help Soldiers and Airmen understand that they will not be perceived as weak for seeking help."*

**M.D. -- Why is it important for the National Guard to address the psychological health of its members?**

Coffey -- "Forty-nine percent of Soldiers are identifying on the post-deployment health reassessment that they have psychological issues. In addition to that, in January [2009], more service members committed suicide than died in conflict [DoD data]. This is a huge issue that Soldiers can't brush under the rug. The issues are there whether we want them to be or not, and we've got to identify these issues and take action."

**M.D. -- What should Guard members know about seeking assistance from your office?**

Coffey -- "My services are totally confidential, except in duty to warn situations. I tell everyone upfront when we meet what I'm mandated to report. I'm mandated to report evidence of a homicide, suicidal plans, domestic violence, child abuse, those sorts of things. It's important for service members to know the difference between suicidal plans and ideations. If I've got a Soldier or Airman having suicidal thoughts, it doesn't mean he has a plan, and it requires a different reporting process than someone actively planning to commit suicide. Bottom line ... thinking about suicide is not reportable, but it may be depending on the situation and severity."



## Addressing Guard members' mental health

by **Elizabeth Coffey**  
WVNG Director of Psychological Health

Abraham Lincoln once said, "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." This quote emphasizes that increasing one's quality of life is critical.

No one is immune to stress. And stress, if not managed appropriately, can lead to negative outcomes. Statistics indicate that 49 percent of Army National Guard members reported psychological health concerns on the Post-Deployment Health Reassessment conducted approximately three months following deployment.

In response to these reports, as well as the ever-increasing operational tempo impacting all facets of the Armed Forces, the Department of Defense has developed several programs to deal with stress felt by service members and their families before, during and after a deployment. One of these programs -- specifically addressing the psychological needs of Reserve Component service members and their families -- places a Director of Psychological Health at each National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters.

One of the main objectives of the DPH is to assist service members and their families in taking a proactive approach to psychological wellness. Total

mission readiness demands that Guard members be as ready psychologically as they are physically.

Unfortunately, seeking behavioral health services has a negative stigma attached to it. Individuals are often concerned about appearing weak or worried that their military careers will be negatively impacted if they seek assistance. Therefore, a major task of the DPH is to address an individual's psychological issues in the quickest, least restrictive and most convenient manner, while strictly respecting the Guard member's confidentiality.

The DPH is responsible for overseeing and coordinating behavioral health services including assessment, referral, clinical case management and follow-up services. Positive results can be achieved if individuals are provided with appropriate tools and resources.

But wellness is not only about mission readiness. It must include all aspects of the service member's life -- including spouses and children.

In the event a service or family member experiences a critical situation and assistance is needed immediately, DPH services can be accessed at any time by contacting the West Virginia National Guard's DPH, Elizabeth Coffey, at (304) 561-6690, (304) 546-1026 or by email, [elizabeth.coffey@us.army.mil](mailto:elizabeth.coffey@us.army.mil).

## Survivor Outreach welcomes new coordinator

by **Leigh Ann Hill**  
WVNG Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator

I am the Survivor Outreach Service Coordinator for the West Virginia Army National Guard. My goal for this program is to improve services for survivors, improve responsiveness and streamline the assistance process for families.

Survivor Outreach demonstrates the Army's commitment to families of the fallen. This service is a multi-agency approach to delivering services to communities where families live.

My role as the SOS Coordinator is to provide long-term support for survivors; form groups and networks that will give surviving families the opportunity to receive support; work closely with

benefit coordinators and the Casualty Assistance Officer to ensure survivors receive needed services, guidance and assistance in regards to benefits and entitlements and work with Military Family Honors and offer support services to survivors of our retired service members.

I will be researching local, state and federal benefits and entitlements, and meeting with military leadership, social services, military agencies, and private groups that can serve as resources.

I am going to partner with 4-H groups, veteran's centers, American Legions, Rotary Clubs, and any non-profit agencies that have a heart for the military to be resources for our families.

I want to make a difference one family at a time. For more information, please call (304) 561-6830.

## Transition advisor helps vets access benefits, entitlements

by **Lisa Silver**  
Former Transition Assistance Advisor

Guard members work, live, and play in communities across West Virginia. Yet accessing care, benefits and entitlements once they return from a deployment can be challenging. The job of the Transition Assistance Advisor is to collaborate with federal, state, and community agencies and resources to strengthen and expand the web of support available to veterans and their families.

The mission of the Transition Assistance Advisor is to facilitate optimal access to medical care and benefits for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom veterans and their families. The TAA serves as an advisor to the Joint Forces Headquarters leadership to identify barriers and challenges encountered and recommend actions necessary to overcome them. The TAA also talks with lawmakers to let them know what service members need in order to receive the care and services they so rightly deserve within federal, state and community facilities and agencies.

Another facet of the TAA's job is to provide education and support to service members, families and retirees through briefings all over the state. The advisor participates in demobilization and reintegration events and coordinates all Veterans Affairs involvement for the Post-Deployment Health Reassessment screenings. The TAA also helps with important issues such as VA healthcare, Tricare, employment, education and access to counseling services.

All returning veterans are strongly encouraged to enroll in the VA healthcare system. Establishing VA eligibility quickly after returning from overseas will alleviate the search for supporting documentation at a later date, making access to benefits and entitlements much easier.

For more information, or to speak with someone in the Transition Assistance office, please call (304) 561-6824.

# Military and Family Life Consultants offer WVNG families ray of hope

by Donna Cooke  
Military Family Life Consultant

During a routine visit to his primary care physician for treatment of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, a Soldier with nearly 25 years of service discussed some of the issues his family was facing.

One issue was the family's lack of income due to the Soldier's inability to continue working. He was very concerned about preparing legal documents to protect his family in case he became incapacitated, but he had no money for an attorney.

Because the Soldier's physician was familiar with the Military and Family Life Consultant program, a referral was made and a meeting coordinated with the family to assess their concerns. The MFLC called on military and civilian resources to meet the family's legal, emotional, financial and physical needs.

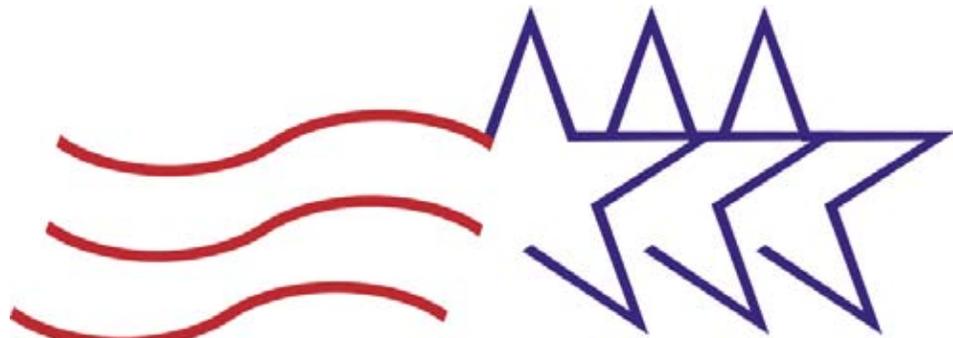
Many resources from the West Virginia National Guard Family Programs Office were used. Travel funds for the family were provided by a local VFW Post, and a retiree from Morgantown assisted with lodging while the family was there. Several retirees even came to the hospital to provide support to the family during long hours spent in the waiting room.

Through the combination of a grant from the West Virginia National Guard Foundation and donated labor from a local Sons of American Legion chapter, a wheelchair ramp was built at the Soldier's home. In addition to making a referral for legal services, the MFLC guided the family in reapplying for Social Security disability benefits. A consultant also referred the family to counseling -- helping address each member's emotional needs during a difficult time.

Military and Family Life Consultant program employees are available to help with these services any time, not just during deployment and reintegration.

Consultants are available to assist with issues that impact quality of life and are trained to help meet the needs of all military families, particularly those serving in National Guard and Reserve units that are not connected to a military installation.

For more information about how Military and Family Life Consultant personnel can assist you or someone you know, call Donna J. Cooke at (304) 545-5714 or e-mail at [donna.j.cooke@mhn.com](mailto:donna.j.cooke@mhn.com).



**T R I C A R E**

## Benefits available to active, reserve component and retired WV military

by Toney Colagrosso  
WVNG Tricare Representative

The Department of Defense provides affordable health care for all members of the U.S. military. Before the 1980s, only a few health care options were available to service members, their families and retirees. Military members received their treatment at military medical facilities. Retirees and family members either received free treatment at military medical facilities, or they could enroll in Civilian Health and Medical Program Uniformed Services to receive government-subsidized medical care from civilian providers.

Tricare has since replaced these limited plans. Tricare is complex, so personnel need to understand the system in order to get the best care. Tricare is a regionally-managed health care program for active, reserve and retired members of the armed forces, their families and survivors.

Tricare brings together the healthcare resources of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and supplements them with networks of civilian health care professionals to provide better access and high-quality service while maintaining the capability to support military operations.

Currently, five Tricare options are available to service members and their families: Tricare Standard, Tricare Prime Remote, Tricare Assistance Management Program, Tricare for Life and Tricare Reserve Select

- **Tricare Standard** is a program for active duty military members, military families, and retirees under age 65. With this plan enrollment is not required and there is no monthly premium. However, this plan does have a deductible, co-pays, and a catastrophic cap.

- **Tricare Prime Remote** is a program

for active duty members and their eligible dependants. Under this plan, the member and eligible family members are required to sign up with a Primary Care Manager and receive care and referrals through this physician. This plan has no monthly premium, deductibles, co-pays, or catastrophic cap.

- **Tricare Assistance Management Program** is a plan for active duty members and their eligible family members. This plan covers the active duty member and their eligible family members with Tricare Standard for 180 days following discharge from active duty. This plan is used for the members returning to Drill Status, and is used after all unused military leave has been taken.

- **Tricare for Life** is a plan for retirees who are covered by Medicare Part B. With Medicare Part B paying 80 percent, Tricare for Life pays the remaining 20 percent. By using Medicare Part B in conjunction with Tricare for Life, retirees have 100 percent medical coverage. Tricare for Life also pays all but the \$3, \$9, or \$22 cost share for prescription medication.

- **Tricare Reserve Select** is a plan for traditional members of the Guard or Reserve and their eligible family members. This plan works like Tricare Standard. The service member must enroll and pay monthly premiums, annual deductibles and cost shares. Monthly premiums for this plan are currently \$47.51 for a member only plan, \$180.17 for service member and family plan.

Many service members say that the cost of Tricare Reserve Select is less than what the service member is paying for health coverage through a civilian sponsored health plan.

The first step to using any Tricare Plan is to have all dependents enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.

# Family Assistance Centers aid service, family members

by Judy Reed  
Family Assistance Center Coordinator

During one of the coldest days of 2008, a commander overheard a Soldier talking about having problems keeping her house warm. The boiler system heating the home was not functioning properly and would cost a lot of money to get repaired.

The Soldier's husband, who was deployed, had installed a wood burning stove before deploying, but she and her three children were living in one room of the house to stay warm.

The couple had no support system here as both of their families lived out of state.

The Soldier was referred to one of the National Guard's Family Assistance Centers. A staff member at the assistance center contacted a veteran's service organization to request help for the family. The VSO member contacted the family and scheduled a time to assess the heating system. It was determined that a small gas heater, complemented by the wood burning stove, would be sufficient to heat the home until the deployed spouse returned and could replace the existing boiler system.

A gas heater was purchased for the family using a CareNet grant received by the W.Va. National Guard Family Programs Office. After the gas company checked existing lines in the house to make sure they were safe, a fellow service member, along with a volunteer, installed the heater.

Family Assistance Centers are located around the state to assist members of all military branches. Staff members provide information on a host of topics and -- in more challenging

## TYPES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTERS:

- Referral to federal, state and local humanitarian agencies and veteran's service organizations
- Roof repair/replacement
- Repair/replacement of heating systems
- Coordination between hospital and deployed service member to webcast the birth of a service member's child
- Minor home repairs
- Emergency assistance due to natural disasters
- Minor car repairs
- Referrals for financial assistance

cases like the one described above -- referrals to resources within the National Guard or surrounding community.

Professional consideration and confidentiality are fundamental elements found at each Family Assistance Center.

Staff members make contact with families through phone calls, e-mails and letters. Proving the need for family outreach, the Guard has received more than 185,000 contacts in the past three years.

West Virginia has seven Family Assistance Centers located throughout the state. The Family Assistance Center in Charleston is staffed around the clock to meet the emergency needs of families when other offices are closed.

# Family Programs improve quality of life for families

by Maj. Allen Martin  
State Family Programs Director

Since the Revolutionary War, one challenge has remained constant for members of the armed forces -- the personal sacrifices service members and families make on a daily basis. National Guard families know the pain of this sacrifice, enduring long periods of separation and often called on to leave familiar surroundings and establish a new home in a strange place. It is the spouse that bears this burden, enabling the service member to carry out the mission.

Prior to 1989, few West Virginia National Guard units had structured readiness groups. They did have auxiliaries -- spouse-run groups who's main function was to raise funds and hold social events.

Through the years, auxiliaries have evolved, developing a system of working together to meet the challenges associated with military life. Today's Family Readiness Groups evolved from a reactive support role to a proactive role aimed at educating, informing and looking after each other in times of separation and uncertainty. Families wanted more than support -- they wanted to be as trained and ready as the service members going off to war.

The Family Programs Office has a team of dedicated staff members managing programs designed to enhance quality of life of service members and families. Family support outreach initiatives are designed to ease demands on commanders by improving morale at home.

Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, West Virginia Adjutant General, understands families form a critical part of the strong foundation needed for National Guardsmen to be successful. Happy families mean happy Soldiers and Airmen, which leads to improved retention and readiness.

## Useful Phone Numbers

### Family Assistance Centers

### Member/Family Services

<i>Charleston FAC</i>	(304) 561-6545	<i>Survivor Outreach</i>	(304) 561-6830
<i>Glen Jean FAC</i>	(304) 201-3221	<i>Transition Advisor</i>	(304) 561-6824
<i>Wheeling FAC</i>	(304) 201-3586	<i>Psychological Health</i>	(304) 561-6690
<i>Eleanor FAC</i>	(304) 201-3087	<i>Tricare</i>	(304) 779-2685
<i>Camp Dawson FAC</i>	(304) 791-4055	<i>Military and Family Life Consultant</i>	(304) 545-5714
<i>130th AW FAC</i>	(304) 341-6625	<i>Child and Youth Programs</i>	(304) 561-6821
<i>Martinsburg FAC</i>	(304) 616-5590	<i>Judge Advocate General</i>	(304) 561-6323



Kids Kamp participants raise the flag that Staff Sgt. Eppie Jaramillo sent his son, Matt, from Afghanistan.



Photos by Mike Pitzer, JITEC Public Affairs

Matt Jaramillo, 12, son of Staff Sgt. Eppie Jaramillo, 167th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, holds the U.S. Flag his father sent him from Afghanistan. The flag was flown over Staff Sgt. Jaramillo's base for 13 days before being shipped home to be flown at Kids Kamp 2009.

## Kids Kamper brings flag, pride from Afghanistan

by Mike Pitzer  
JITEC Public Affairs

**KINGWOOD, W.Va.** (June 18, 2009) -- Twelve-year-old Matt Jaramillo is attending the National Guard Kids Kamp at Camp Dawson, Preston County this week. His father, Staff Sgt. Eppie Jaramillo is a member of the Martinsburg, W.Va., based 167th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and is currently serving in Afghanistan.

Jaramillo shipped a U.S. flag that was flown over his base in Afghanistan from May 12 until Memorial Day 2009. Jaramillo shipped the flag home with a personal letter instructing his son to fly the flag

during the 2009 Kids Kamp.

"I am excited. My dad wanted me to bring this flag to the camp," Matt said. "I was proud that he built the flag pole and flew the U.S. flag in Afghanistan."

Kids Kamp is hosted by the West Virginia National Guard. More than 230 children from around the state are attending this year. The kampers participate in craft activities, learn to work as teams, and observe traditions such as raising the colors each morning.

This Wednesday morning at Camp Dawson, Matt Jaramillo and his fellow Kid's Kampers raised the U.S. Flag his father sent him from overseas.



Kids Kamp participants receive a karate lesson from a mixed martial arts group from Dunbar, W.Va.



Photos by Lt. Col. Mike Cad...

Soldiers, family members and retirees... at the commissary on-site sale in E... Commissary Agency stores from Vir... and other areas bring in meats, dry go... items to set up mini-commissaries at N... across the state.



# of the state



Courtesy photo

on from White Tiger Karate, a



ie, JFHQ Public Affairs Office

took advantage of deals  
leanor, W.Va. Defense  
ginia, Washington DC,  
oods, produce and other  
ational Guard armories



Courtesy photo

Launching water rockets at Kids Kamp with help from the West Virginia Starbase Academy.

The W.Va. Air National Guard mini C-130 rolls through the streets of South Charleston during the city's annual Armed Forces Day parade. South Charleston is believed to host the longest-running Armed Forces Day parade in the nation.



Photo by Lt. Col. Mike Cadle, JFHQ Public Affairs Office

# Air Guard offers programs for members, families

*“We should never forget that we’re successful because of the love and support of our families, and we owe our families a great debt of gratitude for their unwavering support.”*

*- Command Chief Master Sgt. Ronald Bowe*

## 130th Airlift Wing family programs staff targets individual needs

by Sharon Peters  
130th Airlift Wing Family Program Coordinator

Air Guard family programs are relatively new compared to Army National Guard programs. Prior to 2001, family members and loved ones of service members were usually the foundation for base family programs. After 9/11, as more and more Air National Guard units began deploying, ANG leaders realized that a full-time person managing family programs was needed.

Today, there are 88 Wing Family Program Coordinators working in U.S. states and territories. This means that an Airman or family member can travel to any ANG base and find a person who can provide assistance. It also means collaboration between the Wing Coordinators in helping each other serve Air Guard members wherever they may be.

A good example of that support occurred when the 130th Airlift Wing had an Airman deploying with another unit -- located across the country -- who needed assistance getting papers completed before deploying the next day. The 130th AW Family Program Coordinator worked with the deploying unit’s coordinator and first sergeant to get the papers signed and faxed to the Airman in time for him to deploy.

But family programs are not just the responsibility of the full-time coordinator. Family support, like many other personnel issues, is a command program, and one

that can have a significant effect on morale and readiness.

Recently, the family of a deployed Airman requested assistance moving to a new home. The unit was advised of the request by the Family Program Coordinator, but the situation was complicated by the fact that the family wanted to move on a drill weekend and the spouse was having surgery the following week. Four men from the member’s unit volunteered to help with the move. Two of the volunteers were still on leave following their own deployments.

It is times like these that make being involved in Family Programs worthwhile -- when you know that whatever is done, however small, made a difference for an Airman or family member and lightened their load, eased their worry, and helped solve a problem.

## New 167th Airlift Wing families welcomed to unit alongside incoming Airmen

by Susan Sanders  
167th Airlift Wing Family Program Coordinator

Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom have presented many challenges for deployed Guard members and their families. The Iraq deployment set two records at the 167th Airlift Wing -- the longest deployment and largest number of members mobilized in the unit’s history.

After the deployment, Col. Roger Nye, Wing Commander, congratulated members of the family programs staff for their hard work.

“Due to the FRG and the Family Program Coordinator, there were very few family issues that reached my office,” he said during a Family Readiness Group recognition dinner.

Family Readiness Groups have much success at the 167th Airlift Wing because support begins often before deployment is even thought of. As soon as members join the unit, they and their families are invited to an orientation

briefing their first weekend on base. Then, throughout an Airman’s career, volunteers, retirees, and the Wing Family Program Coordinator provide resources, programs and activities to keep families informed and bring them together.

When deployments do occur, briefings and information packets are provided to families prior to the Airman’s departure, and monthly courtesy calls are made to check on their well-being.

Information on programs such as Military OneSource, Marriage Enrichment, Yellow Ribbon, and services provided by the Veterans Affairs offices are also provided.

Supporting Airmen and their families can be challenging as many situations encountered are very unique, and it is important to remember that Family Programs support not only Air Guard members, but also military members and families of any branch of service, as the following examples illustrate.

A Marine family whose son had been wounded in combat called requesting directions to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., as the Marine was going to be flown there for treatment. The Family Program Coordinator was able to give the family directions to Andrews and get members in touch with the liaison officer that would meet their son’s flight. His parents were able to visit with him for a few hours and to feel better about his injuries.

Another situation involved a deployed Army Reservist who was concerned that he had not completed remodeling a furnace that his family would need when the weather turned colder. The Family Program Coordinator was able to contact the president of a company who developed a schedule for completing the work under a very affordable payment plan.





Photos by Sgt. Waine D. Haley, 30th HBCT Public Affairs Office

Soldiers of 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, hold the Martinsburg Institute banner at Camp Stryker June 10 in appreciation for a \$5,000 donation to support the squadron's family readiness group. The banner circulated to all locations the squadron occupies in Iraq for Soldiers to sign thank you messages on before it was returned. The school, located in Martinsburg, W. Va., donated the money to cover expenses for a welcome home awards ceremony banquet.

## Martinsburg Institute donates to Cavalry Pride FRG

by **Spc. Ruth McClary**  
30th HBCT Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD** (July 8, 2009) -- West Virginia's Martinsburg Institute recently donated \$5,000 to the 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team "Cavalry Pride" family readiness group to support the squadron's homecoming awards banquet next year.

The Institute, located in Martinsburg, has an active enrollment of 87 West Virginia National Guard members, and school officials wanted to support the student-Soldiers working toward degrees while serving their country.

"We had a great experience providing education for military personnel, and through those relationships we acquired an even greater respect and admiration for what service members are doing for us and the country, and we just wanted to express it," said Bill Cochrane, the institute's military education manager.

Cochrane presented the family readiness

group with a check to cover expenses for welcoming home celebrations, phone cards and sports equipment for the Soldiers and events for the Soldiers' families during the deployment.

"We were proud to provide financial assistance to support the celebration of West Virginia National Guardsmen returning home safely from deployment," Cochrane said.

"The family readiness group, Soldiers, and their families are extremely grateful and very appreciative for the generous and thoughtful donation," said Sheila Rakes of Beckley, W.Va., the Cavalry Pride support coordinator.

"The money has really provided solid ground for all of the goals that we want to achieve."

The institute takes into account the specific needs of its deployed students.

"We are very flexible and focused on military needs," Cochrane said. "We are aware that Internet and computer access can be problematic for many military students.

"Martinsburg's model allows students

to better overcome these typical problems by progressing without Internet access for significant periods of time," he added.



Oceana, W.Va., native Sgt. Christopher Nelson, 150th ARS, 30th HBCT, signs the Martinsburg Institute banner to express his appreciation for the donation.

# Youth programs offer support, fun for WV military children

by Susan Izzo

WVNG Child and Youth Programs Coordinator

In 2008, the Defense Manpower Data Center reported that 7,120 military children resided in West Virginia's 55 counties. Of that number, nearly 5,000 were school-aged.

That is why it is so important to provide outreach activities for military children -- a task the Child and Youth Programs staff enjoys very much. Military children are special and unique. They share a parent with the world in order to defend our way of life. They sacrifice a normal family life so we may all benefit and they do not ask for anything in return.

Unlike children of active duty parents who live on or near a traditional installation, Reserve Component families often live without the benefit of being near a military base where they can access programs and support systems to help deal with stress and issues that come when a parent is in the military and facing deployment.

One of the events geared toward West Virginia National Guard and Reserve children is Kids Kamp, conducted at Camp Dawson, W.Va. Children attending are able to participate in activities that their military parents experience, only with a little more fun. Campers sleep in the barracks, eat in the mess hall, visit the firing range, learn to march and sing cadences, and -- probably one of the most important activities -- bond with other military children.

Child and Youth Programs Office personnel also celebrate the Month of the Military Child in

*"I'll never forget my first Kids Kamp. It was a very hot summer week but it turned out to be an experience I'll never forget.*

*It was so very overwhelming, but in a way that was good for the soul.*

*That summer, Kids Kamp was celebrating its 16th year and we had a record breaking year.*

*More than 200 military kids from around the state attended. The kids were watched over by a group of about 60 volunteers who are the most dedicated volunteers you could ever ask for."*

*- Suzan Izzo*

April. Adjutant General Allen E. Tackett signed and presented more than 450 military youth with certificates of appreciation, honoring them for their service. There was also a celebration at the Eleanor Armory where 48 children and their parents had a dance, great food and bouncy house. Military parents also had the opportunity to pick up information on resources available to them.

Child and Youth Programs staff is also involved in community and national outreach programs aimed at supporting military families. Our West Virginia staff was proud to host the Supporting Children of National Guard and Reserve Institute through our partnership with the Military Child Education Coalition. The two-day program, held

in Morgantown, W.Va., was attended by nearly 50 people who received valuable training provided thru MCEC at no charge to the attendees.

Participants discussed the deployment cycle, emotions military children experience as a result of their parents' service, and resources educators, counselors and community members can use to best meet a child's need. Staff members also participated in school counselor workshops, school-based health workshop, West Virginia Social Work Conference, CareNet Governor's Conference, and the State Volunteer Conference by providing displays, handouts, and providing presentations.

It is our goal during these community outreach events to create a network of community support for our geographically dispersed military families, helping to minimize parental concerns during times of deployment.

While having fun is a very important part of working with military children, the CYP staff also works to support our military families during deployments by providing them information on national, state and local programs available to ease the stress of deployment. Staff members participated in many deployment and reunion briefings and activities during 2008.

Our CYP staff will continue to build upon networking opportunities, explore educational partnerships, and work with community service groups to ensure that programs provided to military children meet their needs and interests, while providing the support needed to strengthen military families.

For more information on Child and Youth Programs, please call (304) 561-6821.



(Left) A military child creates forensic evidence during Mountain State University's forensic workshop at Kids Kamp. (Above) Campers measure the distance between pieces of evidence for a crime scene sketch. Campers at the annual event, located at Camp Dawson, Kingwood, W.Va., participate in a variety of activities that allow them to have fun and get a taste of their parent's military lives.

Photos by Spc. Anna-Marie Hizer, Joint Forces HQ Public Affairs Office



## Military OneSource your source for information

by Patricia Snodgrass  
Military OneSource Representative

Whether it's help with child care, finances, emotional support during deployments, relocation information, or reunion and reintegration, Military OneSource is here for service members and their families.

For example, during a deployment a service member worked with researchers at Military OneSource to explore scholarships. Military OneSource employees located five scholarships for the service member's family.

Military OneSource is a support service provided at no cost to service members and their families by the Department of Defense. It serves as an extension of support services and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The program is especially useful to service members and families who live far from an installation.

Military OneSource provides consulting and counseling to service members and family members for deployment stress, relationships, parenting, and grief and loss. Employees also provide guidance on financial, education and career issues. Specialty consultations in special needs, education and finances are also provided.

Consultants provide information and make referrals on a wide range of issues. Free face-to-face mental health counseling in the member's local community (up to six sessions per issue) is also available.

Web-based services are also available. The OneSource website gives service members and families access to hundreds of articles, booklets, CDs, and tool kits for concerns about wellness, deployment, parenting, child care, relocation, education, and reunion and reintegration. Users can view, download or order materials free of charge at [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com). Child care, summer camp and distance-learning center locators can also be found on the website. In addition, financial calculators, online workshops, podcasts, and the opportunity to communicate with a consultant are available.

To reach a Military OneSource counselor, call 1-800-342-9647 or visit [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com).

# Not in DEERS?

## Benefits, eligibility may be compromised

by Sgt. Michael K. Clark  
DEERS

The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System is a database of service members, family members and retirees who are entitled to Tricare and other benefits. Registration in DEERS is required to receive many of the benefits available to military members and their families -- including Tricare. Active-duty, National Guard, Reserve and retired service members are automatically registered in DEERS, but they must take action to correctly register their family members.

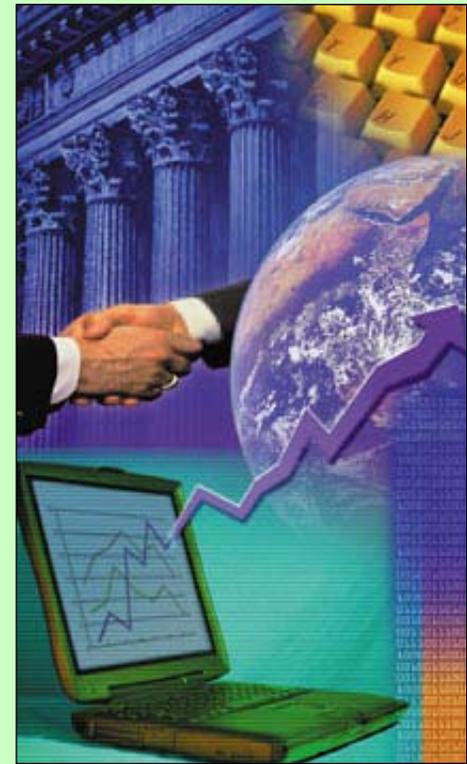
Mistakes in the DEERS database can cause problems with Tricare claims, so it is critical to maintain DEERS information. This information can be verified by calling the nearest uniformed services personnel office, an ID card facility; the regional Tricare-managed care support contractor; or the local Tricare service center. Sponsors or registered family members may make address changes; however, only the sponsor can add or delete a family member from DEERS, and proper documents -- such as a marriage certificate, birth certificate, or divorce decree -- are required to make such changes.

### To update DEERS information:

- Visit your local uniformed services personnel office or contact the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office at 1-800-538-9552. Uniformed services personnel office listings can be found at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/>.
- Fax address changes to DEERS at 1-831-655-8317.
- Mail the address change to the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office, ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955-6771.
- Go online to Tricare to update information: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/deers/>.

### Things to Keep in Mind:

- Each family member's eligibility record must be updated separately when changes occur.
- Any changes that impact you or your family -- for example: marriage, birth, divorce or death -- need to be reported to DEERS so that eligibility can start or stop under Department of Defense and service guidance.
- If you are active duty and re-enlist, separate, retire, or move, make sure your information gets updated in DEERS as soon as possible. If you do not, you and your family might experience a break in eligibility, which means a break in health care coverage.
- As soon as you re-enlist, take your



reenlistment paper to your personnel support center or ID card facility so your information can be updated before your previous enlistment expires rather than waiting for the paperwork to go through distribution.

- Once you retire, you need to make sure DEERS reflects your change from active duty to retiree status.
- If you or your family were previously Tricare Prime under your active duty status, you need to re-enroll in Tricare Prime under your retiree status. Contact the regional managed care support contractor in your retirement location to find out if Tricare Prime is offered in your area.
- It is important to update your home addresses because Tricare information will be sent to that address.
- Retail network pharmacies check Tricare eligibility through DEERS. Your prescriptions will be filled only if you are in the system.
- If you have a child that is over age 21 and a full-time student, you need to get his or her student status entered into DEERS so that Tricare eligibility is not interrupted and access to health care is not lost.
- If you or a family member is Medicare-eligible, entitled to Part A and enrolled in Part B, DEERS must be updated to reflect Medicare Part A and B status to retain Tricare coverage. When you turn 65, the medical section of your military ID card may also need to be updated.

## Amidst War, Charity

# Red Cross aids family during tough times

by Karen Allen  
American Red Cross

A West Virginia resident and U.S. Army veteran was struggling with brain, back and knee injuries sustained while serving in Iraq. The Soldier's wife quit her job so she could take him to extensive medical and physical therapy appointments.

A clerical error with one of the Soldier's military paychecks left the family strapped for cash. Unless the service member came up with money to pay delinquent property taxes, his home would be auctioned off on the courthouse steps.

Now this family -- with three children, ages 16, 15 and 10 -- was in the financial fight of their lives.

The family came to the Central West Virginia Red Cross to apply for an emergency loan through a military aid society. The news was not the miracle the family had prayed for. While funding was provided for household expenses, the money for property taxes was denied because it was not considered a daily expense.

Determined Red Cross volunteers scrambled to find a solution. They worked the phones, did research and tried to reassure the family. Volunteers contacted CareNet, a program operated by the West Virginia Council of Churches that identifies available resources and needed support networks for military members and their families.

On the same day the home was scheduled to be sold at auction, a grant in the amount of the delinquent taxes was approved through CareNet. The family would not be forced to leave the home.

When a crisis happens, Red Cross provides a support network, information and referral, and can deliver emergency messages and work to help those who are facing a hardship. For those who had sacrificed so much, it is an honor to be of service.

The Red Cross now offers free *Coping with Deployments: Psychological First Aid for Military Families*, a course designed for military family members. The course was developed by the Red Cross to specifically address the stresses and strains that deployments bring.

For details or to schedule a course in your community, contact your local Red Cross Chapter or Karen Allen, Manager of Service to Military Families for West Virginia, at [allenk@usa.redcross.org](mailto:allenk@usa.redcross.org).

# Family Readiness Assistant:

*A guiding force before, during, after deployment*

by Jessica Tackett  
Family Readiness

Red, white and blue filled the Air National Guard hangar on a hot summer day. Streamers, flags, and banners of all shapes and sizes were in every space of the hangar and the fence surrounding the runway. Feelings of excitement and anticipation filled the hangar. It was breathtaking when the planes landed and the engines stopped turning.

This scene was described by a Family Readiness Support Assistant. But the rush of excitement when Soldiers stepped off those planes would not be possible without much planning and preparation. Planning a homecoming ceremony is part of a Family Readiness Support Assistant's duties and includes many tasks -- coordinating with

the arrival location, decorating the building, helping families with banners, and working with several veteran's groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Am Vets, Patriot Riders and the Women's Auxiliary. These groups provided refreshments for more than 2,000 people that were there to welcome home the 111th Engineer Brigade from a year-long deployment to Iraq.

Family Readiness Support Assistants have been placed at brigade-level units to maintain the continuity and stability of unit Family Readiness Groups as those organizations experience changes in volunteer leadership.

Taking the administrative burden off volunteers allows FRG leaders to concentrate on performing outreach to service members and their families. In a nutshell, FRSA's help commanders implement a family care program that educates, informs, and assists service members and families dealing with the unique demands of military life before, during and after deployments.

## Ministry teams support troops day-to-day

by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Bruce Reed  
Full Time Support Chaplain,  
West Virginia Army National Guard

It is a team effort to provide ministry to the members and families of the West Virginia National Guard. Presently, the Religious Support Team includes 13 chaplains and 13 chaplain assistants. These pastors, Soldiers and Airmen are motivated by love of God, Soldier, family, and country.

The RST mission is to ensure free expression of religion within the West Virginia National Guard, which is a religiously pluralistic community. Members of the RST are people of faith, bringing a variety of religious training and values from their personal and local church experiences.

The RSTs are best known for Ministry of Presence -- being with Soldiers and Airmen in their daily routines. During this time of high intensity operations, RST members bring private moments of listening and understanding for those working through challenging issues.

RST personnel are frequently called upon to perform religious services. Chaplains enjoy many opportunities to be with Guard families during weddings and funerals as well as

speaking at local events such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day celebrations.

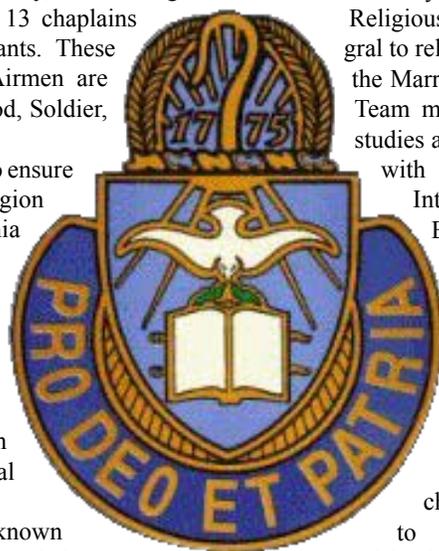
At any moment, RST members may be called on to provide compassionate and skilled religious support in emergencies such as suicide prevention, civil emergency, family crisis and casualty notifications.

Religious Support Teams are integral to religious education, especially the Marriage Enrichment weekends. Team members also provide Bible studies and religious items, working with organizations like Gideon International and International Bible Society.

The support teams are responsible for briefing deploying service members and families on suicide prevention, battle mind and reunion and reintegration.

As staff officers, chaplains are also required to advise command of the spiritual, moral, and ethical health of the units. This can also involve a liaison between Soldiers, their commanders and higher headquarters.

Motivated people of faith serving on RSTs would describe their mission as a calling to ministry with Soldiers, Airmen and families of the West Virginia National Guard. Chaplains and chaplain assistants go, with strength of spiritual courage, where many would not.



# Yellow ribbon binds families

by **Stacey Toler**  
Yellow Ribbon Support Staff

The West Virginia National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program began in 2008 and supported four innovative events. Program events are held post-deployment at the 30, 60, 90 and 180-day marks for units that have been deployed.

These events are typically located in a relaxing environment away from military installations or armories and are coordinated with area hotels, conference centers or resorts. Activities for the 111th Engineer Brigade's 30-day event were held in Eleanor, W.Va. Eighty-nine soldiers attended, bringing with them 66 family members. The unit's 60-day event was held at a hotel in Charleston, W.Va., in conjunction with the Freedom Salute ceremony. Turnout for this event was notably greater, with more than 275 Soldiers and family members attending.

The 821st Engineer Company should be commended for their attendance as well during 30- and 60-day reintegration Yellow Ribbon events. The unit's 30-day event was held in Charleston, W.Va., and boasted nearly 200 Soldiers and family members. The 60-day event -- held in Flatwoods, W.Va. -- brought 177 Soldiers and their families together at the center of the state.

The National Guard Bureau has provided specific guidance regarding the Yellow Ribbon Program. The program is designed to serve members from all service components. The



Photo by Lt. Col. Mike Cadle, JFHQ Public Affairs Office  
Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, The Adjutant General, West Virginia National Guard, poses with Gov. Joe Manchin, members of the WVNG Family Programs office and Legislative representatives at an Army Family Covenant meeting.

National Guard has established and coordinated efforts for all states and territories that will allow concise and unified support to service members and their families. This guidance helps provide for a safe, healthy and successful reintegration following deployments.

Events are funded through National Guard Bureau and cover lodging, mileage and food. Childcare is also offered for younger family members at no cost to the service member.

Each event provides a network of information and brings a buffet of resources to one table. During each deployment phase, the Yellow Ribbon Program offers information on resources

available to service members and their families, such as Military One Source, veteran's benefits, Family Assistance Centers, DEERS, ID Cards, Tricare, Marriage Enrichment, Military Family Life Consultants, American Legion, Operation Home Front, Child and Youth Services, Guard Foundation, CareNet, Wounded Warrior Program and Am Vets, in addition to other local and state organizations to include some community outreach services.

Feedback for the Yellow Ribbon Program has been phenomenal. "It's a fun, informative, family inclusive event," said Sgt. Hissem, 111th Engineer Brigade. He added that during his previous deployment there was only a minimal amount of information and resources available before and after his deployment.

Hissam said he is grateful for the care and attention that the Yellow Ribbon Program offers National Guard Soldiers and families. He added that the program gives family members a chance to let their hair down for a weekend and enjoy each other's company.

"The food was great, the rooms were nice and the information was helpful," he said. Hissam added that if given the opportunity, he would do it again.

The West Virginia National Guard's Yellow Ribbon staff is looking forward to working with Guard command, families and communities for future events and is hopeful for the success of the Yellow Ribbon Program.

## FRG volunteers go extra mile for Soldiers, families

by **Cathy Hammack**  
State Family Readiness Assistant

During my first week as a Family Readiness Assistant, I received a call from a mother of a deployed soldier. After we talked for a few minutes, she told me that she could not go on. Her son had deployed and she had no reason to get out of bed.

As a military spouse and mother my heart was breaking for her, but my mind was going crazy with all the ideas I had to help her. I suggested she volunteer with the unit's Family Readiness Group, collecting calling cards to send to deployed Soldiers. I also told her that we had several community resources willing to help, and I gave her the information needed to contact those resources.

Two days later the mother phoned and told me that I had "saved her sanity" and "given her a reason to get up." I knew then that I had a big job ahead of me, and that there were many more families to reach who needed a reason to get up in the morning.

National Guard Bureau began funding family readiness assistant positions in October 2003. Commanders are required to create and support Family Readiness Groups, but many commanders needed help mobilizing volunteers to manage unit FRG programs. Family Readiness Assistants act as liaisons between units and FRGs, which allows commanders to focus on mission.

The FRA's main function is to coordinate FRG development and sustainment. FRAs train and support FRG outreach efforts by linking the FRGs, Family Assistance Centers and Rear Detachment Commanders so they can communicate with one another.

A successful FRG program promotes peace of mind, togetherness, and instills pride in individuals, families and units.

In 2008, West Virginia National Guard Family Readiness Group members racked up an amazing 14,899 volunteer hours, which equates to nearly \$300,000 worth of family support services if the Guard had to pay someone to provide the same services.



