



# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



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# MESSAGE TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS



LTC David C. Leonard USA (Ret)  
State Family Program Director

Reflecting on Fiscal Year 2018, there were so many highlights to choose from, far more than this page will hold. For example, I had the privilege to accompany Vermont's Army National Guard Gold Star Families to a Red Sox game in Boston. The Vermont National Guard Charitable Foundation's Fallen Heroes Memorial Committee sponsored this event for our Gold Star Families. To see the mothers, fathers, sons, daughters of our fallen heroes go out on the field to meet the players- with a smiles from ear to ear- was indescribably poignant.

We were honored to receive the Seven Seals Award from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). This is given for "meritorious leadership and initiative in support of the men and women who serve America in the National Guard and Reserve". ESGR has and continues to be a valued partner of Family Programs and we are humbled to receive such an honor.

There were many great annual events of which we were a part such as the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Defenders vs Enforcers benefit hockey game and the Lake Monsters Military Appreciation Night. These two events are very family-oriented and always brings together our families who are dispersed throughout the state.

We conducted a Yellow Ribbon Event in May 2018 for our 3-126 AVN unit that deployed in June 2018. There were more than 160 participants in a 2-day event at Lake Morey Resort. This pre-deployment gathering allowed us to educate our military families on all the benefits and services we provide. Additionally, this was an opportunity to connect in person with the families so they understand we are here for them while their loved one is deployed.

Month of the Military Child in April is always a special highlight of our year and this year was no exception. We always kick off the month with a visit to our statehouse to meet the Governor. In response to one of our youth's request, Governor Scott graciously wrote a "please excuse (insert name here) from school today." letter on his official letterhead for each of the children present! Our youth just thought this was the coolest thing ever.

Sadly, in November, 2018, we lost a great man and stalwart supporter of Family Programs: Brigadier General Michael Heston. Brigadier General Heston truly understood the value of Family Programs and his support was unwavering. "Mike" had a heart of gold and would step up when needed without hesitation. He was a mentor, a sounding board and a trusted friend. Mike, you will be missed.

This annual report is dedicated to Brigadier General Michael Heston and his family.

# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM



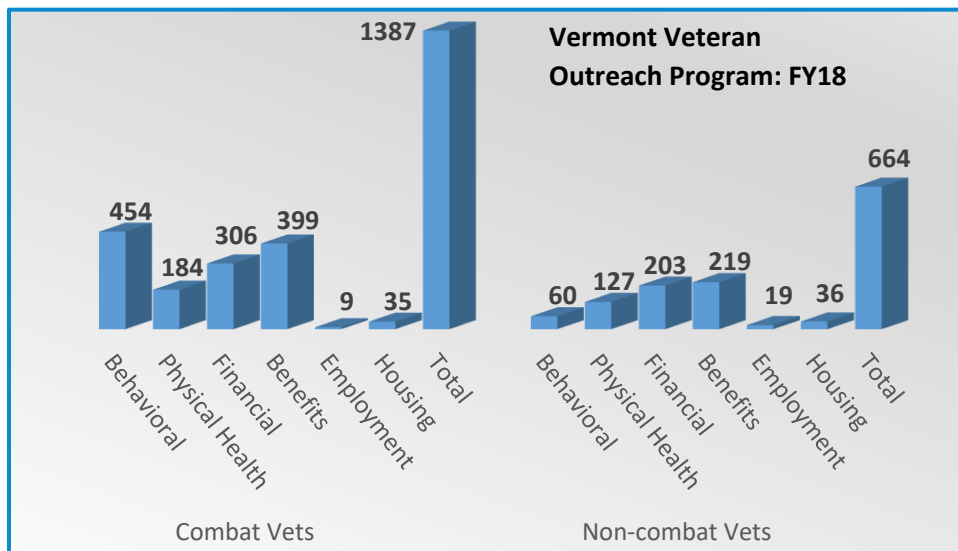
Andre Wing

Vermont Veterans Outreach Coordinator

## Mission:

***Vermont Veterans Outreach (VVO) is a one-of-a-kind program established in 2007. VVO assists combat and non-combat veterans navigate the VA health and benefit administrations, assists with homelessness or at risk homelessness, peer-to-peer services, secure mental health services and much more.***

For FY18, the Vermont Veterans Outreach program reports included two additional categories to better reflect the trends noted with our Vermont veterans: housing and employment. There has been an increase number of cases involving at-risk homelessness as well as under/unemployment to warrant making changes to the monthly summaries. In addition, a new report was created titled *Veterans Service Barriers* which details gaps in service, to better identify issues and possible resolutions. Below is a snapshot of the cases the team managed for fiscal year 2018 and the top issue categories; the team works with both combat and non-combat veterans.



A major turning point for the program in FY18 was the creation of a new Access Database and the migration of over 5000 records into this database. One of the goals in developing this new record system was to be able to track the outcomes in the interactions with and for our clients. The database allows reports to be produced that reflect referral sources-both "to" and "from". Collection of this data is not new-over the last 10 years the Vermont Veterans Outreach team has established relationships with organizations that assist us in resolving issues for our veterans and their families. Only now, the data can be gathered more easily and efficiently. In addition, one of the byproducts of this database will be that our Outreach Specialists will be able to create a current community partners resource guide that they will be able to update as needed.

# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM



Team Call Log for September 2018	
Combat Veteran (CV)	48
Veteran (V)	106
Family Member (FM)	35
Community Partner (CP)	113
Within team (other outreach specialists for advice, etc.)	107
VA Medical Center (VAMC)	25
Family Programs (FP)	18
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>452</b>
Incoming Calls:	149
Outgoing Calls:	303
<b>Monthly Totals:</b>	<b>452</b>

For the last couple of years, more attention has been placed on capturing the level of communication this team conducts on a daily basis. The team members are very effective communicators-they understand the level of anxiety or stress their clients/families may be feeling and know that direct contact is the best way to affect positive outcomes for their clients and families. In fiscal year 2018, largely due to the new database, the team’s program analyst was able to start reporting on the number of the team’s incoming and outgoing calls on a monthly basis. It was eye-opening to see how many calls they make, but not surprising given their dedication to their clients. The above table is a snapshot in time and breaks down the type of calls made/received by category.

Looking ahead the team will continue to fine tune the database with the goal of going paperless. One feature of the database that will be utilized is the ability to immediately include case notes when working with veterans. That will allow other team mates involved in the case to view in real time what the issues are with the veteran.

One of the long term goals has been to utilize a better method to identify all Vermont veterans and offer them the services this program provides. Achieving this goal is hindered by the rural nature of the state and how difficult it is to access the very rural communities. The program will continue to explore avenues in which to connect with all Vermont veterans because it is the right thing to do.



*Rusty Dewees visited Albert Wheeler, USN WWII and thanked him for his service- August, 2018*



# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM



Below are a few examples of the veterans served in FY18. There is no better way to explain the impact this program has than to tell you our Veterans' stories:

## **(USA) Vietnam Veteran:**

*I met this veteran soon after his wife passed away. He has no other family, and he was passing the time sitting alone in his apartment listening to country music on the radio while chain-smoking cigarettes. Initially, the veteran and I focused on covering the financial costs of his wife's funeral. During our discussions I encouraged him to focus on himself and how he wanted to move forward from this point. I found out that he listened to the radio because his television did not work. He wasn't concerned about fixing it because his glasses were broken. And, he was ready to try to give up smoking.*

*I helped him enroll in the VA and we began scheduling appointments. The veteran and I would spend time together joking while the Optometry folks at the CBOC dilated his eyes for his appointments. Finally, after a trying amount of appointments, he received new eye glasses. During our waiting room discussions I discovered that he was a lifetime member of the local VFW. So, I went to the Post and told them I was working with a lifetime member in need of a new television. The Post Commander at the time provided a flat screen for him to keep the next day. He was now able to watch old western shows, his favorite genre, with his new glasses.*

*His outlook began to improve greatly and he even had the VA send him smoking cessation products. After smoking two packs of cigarettes per day, he gave up smoking. We then shifted our focus to working with Age Well and their Meals on Wheels program in an effort to help him reach a healthy weight.*

*Unfortunately a short time later, he was diagnosed with the first of what would be three bouts of cancer. He bravely attended every appointment as we uncovered the extent to which the cancer had affected him. We would spend hours driving snow-covered roads in temperatures well below zero to White River Junction where he would spend long hours undergoing exhausting and invasive procedures. One day, coming back from an appointment that had required mild sedation, he was sitting quietly in the passenger seat, exhausted and somewhat out of it. He turned to me and let me know that he would be alone through all this were it not for myself and the other members of the Outreach Team who had stepped in when I was unavailable. My client went in for surgery at White River Junction in July and because our team was no longer able to transport clients, I was not with him, he was alone. I received a phone call that day from the VA, and from his sister Shirley, telling me that no one could find him. I contacted his landlord and the Burlington Police Department and was prepared to enter his house, worried at what we would discover, when he called me from White River Junction. He had been in the waiting room the entire time as he was not sure how to get to his room across the street in the Motel 8. He underwent surgery and then got himself and his luggage back to Burlington in a DAV van. It was not easy, but he proved to himself that he had the strength to persevere.*

*This veteran has won his fight against cancer but it has taken a toll on him physically. He is frail and much less energetic than when I first met him. He still enjoys watching his western movies in the peace and quiet of his apartment and I check on him frequently. In August of 2018, I went to visit and inform him that the VFW post commander and I had coordinated for him to attend the Equine Therapy Program. He has had a love of horses since his childhood and was thrilled to be able to participate with other Veterans. He continues to maintain a positive outlook as we move into the future.*

# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM



## **(USA) OIF Combat Veteran**

*This veteran contacted me in July 2018. She was working and had enrolled in school but the tires on her car had either gone flat or were unfit to safely use. I instructed her to obtain estimates for replacement tires and service fees while I notified our supporting partners that she required financial assistance. She quickly got a number of estimates and met with me to fill out paperwork for Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association and Blue Star Mothers of Vermont. The following day I received an email from our team lead, that the Blue Star Mothers of Vermont application had been approved. I contacted NTB Tires and let them know to begin services once the Combat Veteran's Motorcycle Association application received approval. Within a week, the veteran had four new tires on her automobile and was able to safely travel to both work and school. The timely support of our community partners minimized the amount of stress that the veteran faced while trying to work and obtain her degree. She continues to do well with school and has moved to working part time in order to increase her course load at school and graduate early.*



## **(USA) Combat Veteran**

*My client was referred to us by a community partner who was looking for possible financial assistance in replacing his furnace as well as assistance in finding a company to provide a quote for the repairs. At this time, the client was heating his home with his oven. He is a Vietnam Combat Veteran/Purple Heart recipient.*

*I contacted a local company who completed the in-home estimate quickly. I then contacted the community partner to get an update on the application for financing and was told it was pending. I reached out in September and October and was told they were not sure of the total amount they were in need of at that time. The cost for a new furnace was \$6000.00 and this community partner had approximately \$3000.00 in funding towards the new furnace. This amount did not include a storage tank replacement or actual fuel in which to heat the unit. I was concerned and set up a meeting with my client and his son to see if there was anything else that I could assist with while the funding was being organized for the furnace. After speaking with the client and his son I learned of NETO-Northeast Employment and Training Organization who was working in the home the prior fall. NETO provides weatherization to low income residents of the Northeast Kingdom. I immediately followed up with NETO to see if there were any possible benefits for the client from their organization. Within two days of me initiating contact with NETO, a new furnace was installed at no charge, a new fuel tank was installed three days later at no charge, and the fuel was filled and paid in full within five days. The prior funding gathered by the community partner was utilized to pay for the heating fuel.*

*I am also working with the client and his son concerning the bills they are receiving from the VAMC and other medical facilities. The client and his son were elated with the progress made by Outreach in such a short time.*

# MILITARY AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER



Mark Lemnah  
VT Military & Family Support Center Manager

**Mission:**

*Our 24/7/365 centralized call center is available to assist all veterans, service members and their families as well as our civilian community partners. Our call specialists answer questions and direct calls to resources for financial assistance, military service providers, and education VA benefits.*

Family Programs’ 24/7 Support Center was established in 2008 and has been an invaluable part of our program. Our support center allows us to centralize all incoming calls and distribute them to our various programs for timely follow up and resolution.

Having a dedicated **local** call center for service members, veterans, families, community partners, law enforcement, etc. to utilize has been in some cases-live saving. Having a safe place to call is like a port in a storm for some of our callers. It is not unusual for a veteran to call late at night just to talk to someone who understands their experiences; a battle buddy, brother or sister in arms. Sometimes that is all it takes, other times callers are truly in a crisis and needs immediate assistance-that is what our call center provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.





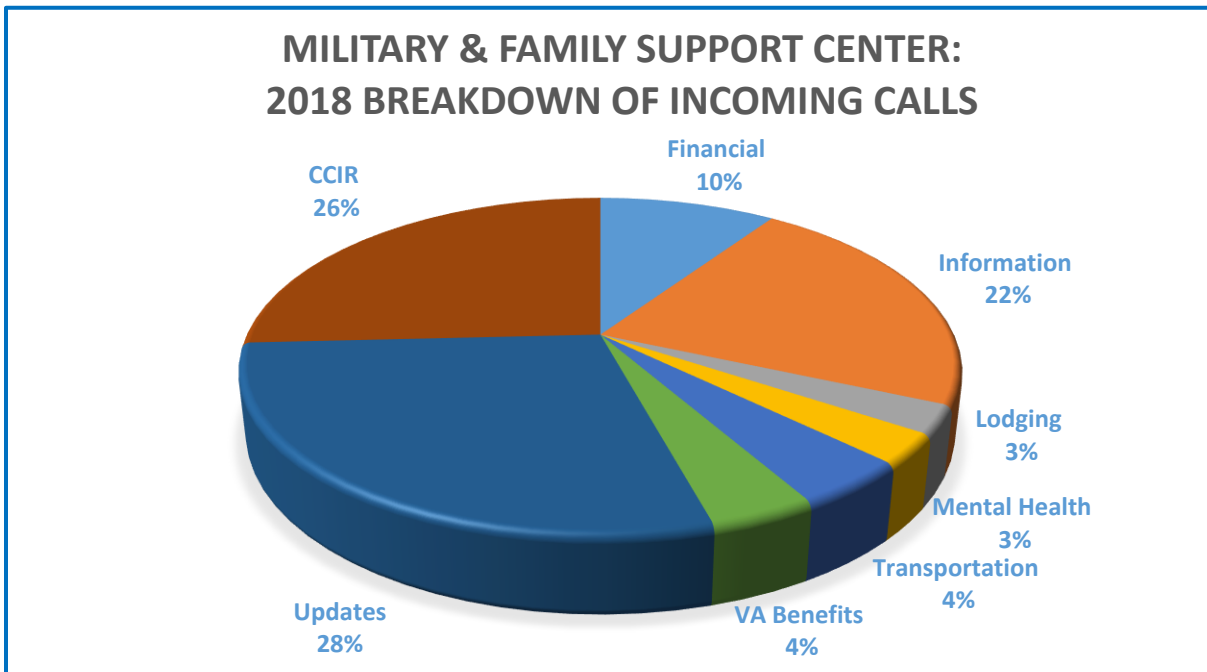
# MILITARY AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER



For fiscal year 2018, the call center launched a new initiative to gauge the level of customer service received by our callers through surveying them after contact with the call center. Callers are contacted via phone to ask a series of questions including: were their needs met, did the call specialist listen and understand why they were calling, and overall experience with the call center. The survey is concluded by asking should they know any veterans/Service Members to be sure to let them know about our service.

Looking to the future, the call center will continue to measure and address any issues with the customer service surveys to provide the best service possible.

Below is the “rollup” of categories of calls for fiscal year 2018. The category CCIR stands for Commander’s Critical Information Requirement. Our call center works closely with the military side of the house and reports on any incidents involving “death, serious injury, or attempted self-harm of a Vermont National Guard member”. The other category that requires explanation is updates. Follow-up and resolution of every call is required, so if there is any new information regarding a call, the call center will send update reports until there has been a final resolution reached. These two categories made up 54% of the income calls followed by requests for information at 22%.



# FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTERS

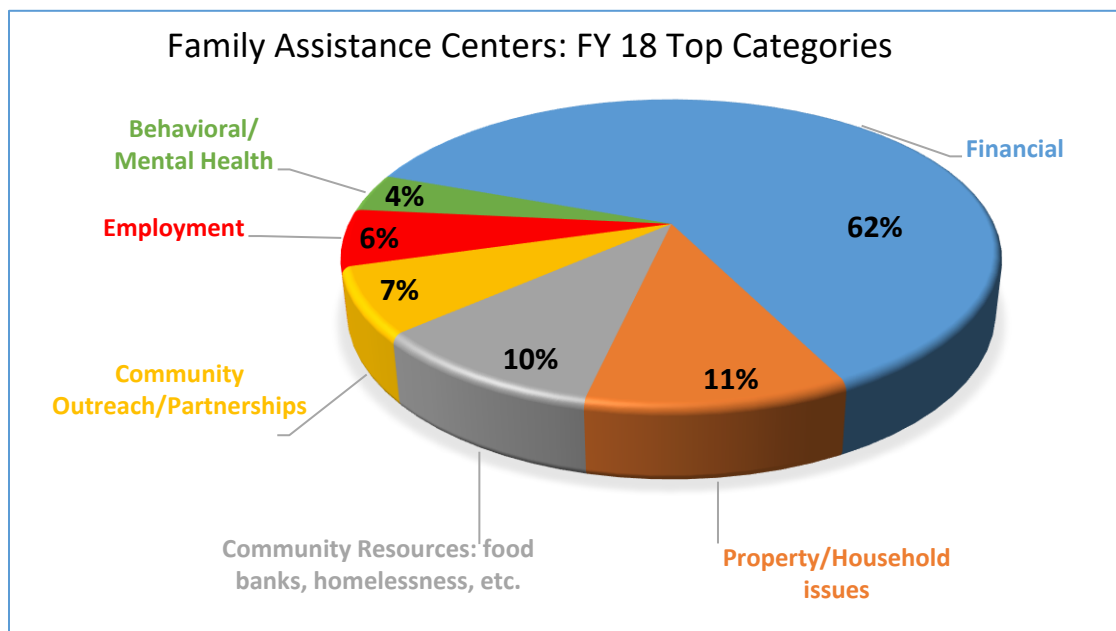


Sherri Prouty  
Family Assistance Center Coordinator

## Mission:

*Family Assistance Centers (FAC) provides resource referral and support assistance to veterans, service members, and their families of all military branches. Whether you are a new recruit or enjoying your retirement from the military, our FAC specialists are here to support you.*

As shown below, 62% of all cases for FY18 were for financial resources. The financial needs of our services members and their families far exceeds the resources available in our communities. When clients call or walk into our offices, they are in need of immediate assistance. Our Family Assistance Center Specialists network and utilize many of our community partners to assist. The program works to educate our military families to help change behaviors that will lead them to financial independence and personal growth.



Our Family Assistance Centers are located around the state in six Vermont Army National Guard armories and provide invaluable resource and referral services to all of our veterans, service members, and their families and in our communities.

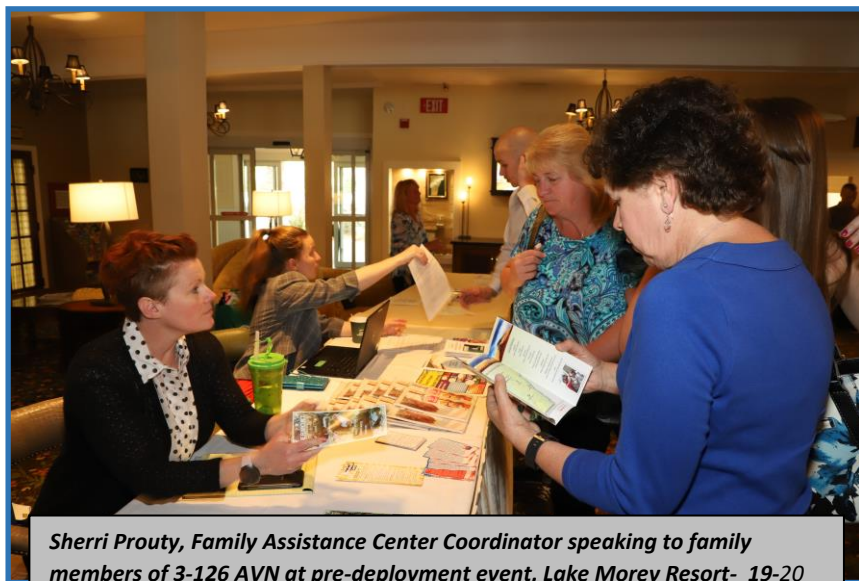
# FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTERS



Looking forward, the Family Assistance Center (FAC) program will build on their strong community bonds to better assist and refer our veterans, service members, and their families for any life issues they may have. We cannot do it alone- the FAC team knows the importance of collaboration between the military and civilian community.



*Wendy Krapowicz, Family Assistance Center Specialist speaking with members of 3-126 AVN at pre-deployment event- Lake Morey Resort, 19-20 May 2018*



*Sherri Prouty, Family Assistance Center Coordinator speaking to family members of 3-126 AVN at pre-deployment event, Lake Morey Resort- 19-20 May 2018*

# CITIZEN SOLDIER FOR LIFE

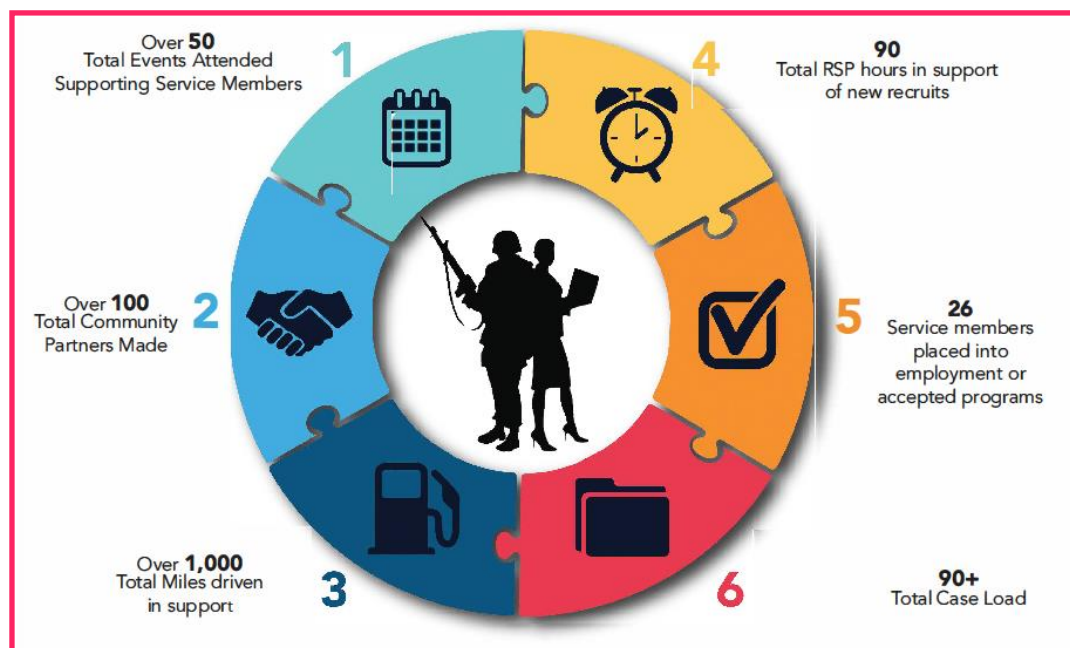


## Mission:

*Citizen Soldier for Life Career Counseling is a new initiative to provide relevant and timely workforce training, education information, employment opportunities to soldiers transitioning from active duty to National Guard or civilian life.*

A new program was introduced to Vermont for fiscal year 2018 and has had a tremendously positive impact on the career readiness of veterans, service members and their families. The Citizen Soldier For Life (CSFL) Career Readiness Counselors assist individual service members- from the moment they start as a Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) newbie to retirement and beyond. The program provides them with the fundamental skills necessary to obtain and sustain a fulfilling civilian career throughout their military career. Our Career Readiness Counselors also aim to improve the overall financial literacy of the force through education and training. In Vermont, the Career Readiness Counselor works closely with the Personal Financial Counselor to ensure these needs are being met from basic budgeting and planning for a career change, to retirement planning and much more.

In its inaugural year, the CSFL program has been able to effectively connect with our service members (and their dependents) to access employment, education, and financial resources to become more resilient and ready to serve when called upon. As the graph below demonstrates, a great deal of outreach and activities are necessary when embarking on a new service being offered. Building a solid foundation increases the longevity of a program and the graph below details this program's success in its first year.

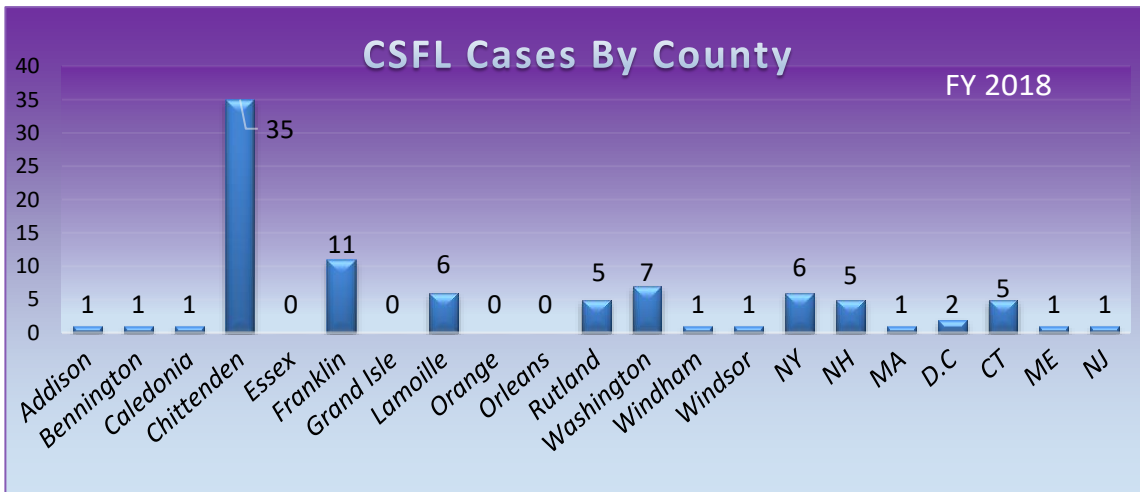


# CITIZEN SOLDIER FOR LIFE



The CSFL Program is much more than a service, it is access to a new job with better pay or better hours. CSFL makes it possible for our service members and families to experience a livable wage and understand their education options to build the future that they want, while serving their country.

The below chart shows the coverage our counselor has been able to affect in a very short period of time. Currently we have one counselor who is based in Chittenden County which is reflective in the number of cases for this county.

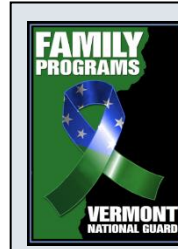


The road ahead for this program will be finding ways to reach service members and dependents in the more rural corners of Vermont. To that end, the Career Readiness Counselor will be in attendance during unit drills all around the state to educate leadership, training and readiness non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and service members about the value of the CSFL program. CSFL will be rolling out more remote-friendly resources for self-guided job seekers living all across the state. Finally, CSFL is preparing an employer training that will be provided to employers that support our service members. This training will educate, empower and emphasize the benefits that a payroll filled with service members and veterans will have for a company.



*Nick Thomas, CSFL Career Counselor connecting with representatives from VT Department of Transportation, VDOL Job Fair.*

# PERSONAL FINANCIAL COUNSELOR



Susan Kelley-Outten  
Personal Financial Counselor

## **Mission:**

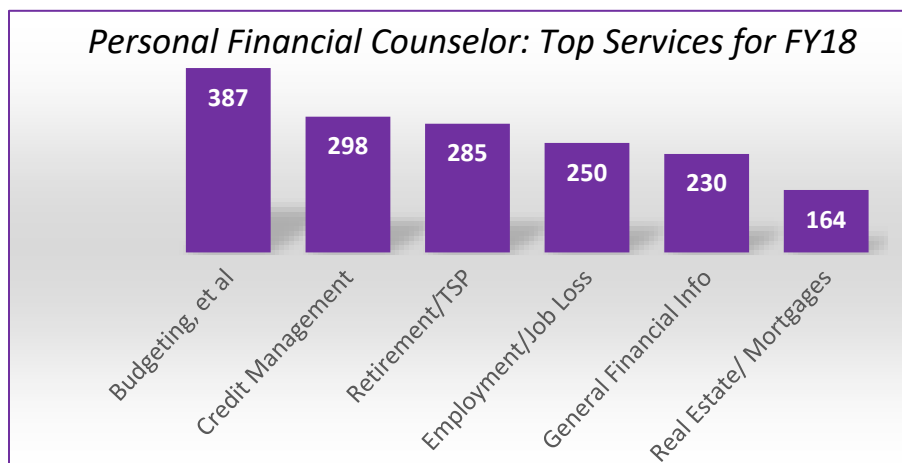
***The Personal Financial Counselor (PFC) assists our veterans, service members and their families to become more financially independent. Some of the services Vermont's PFC can help with include budgeting, credit management, debt reduction and retirement planning.***

*A service member worked with the PFC over a period of months to pay down debt and learn about the investment options in the TSP. When the service member decided on her investment strategy, she smiled broadly as she clicked the button to make her elections. She told the PFC that she would be the first person in her family to have savings for retirement.*

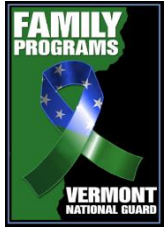
*A retired veteran was finding managing his finances difficult after a divorce. His spouse had been in charge of the bill paying and he did not know all the accounts they had or how all the bills got paid. Over the course of several months, working with the PFC, the veteran, gained control of his financial situation. Although the financial picture remains challenging, he changed many of his spending habits and began to focus more on the spending time and creating experiences with his children and less on the material things that are outside his new budget.*

*The spouse of a deployed service member spent several sessions with the PFC, working on developing a budget that would work for the family. In addition, the service member participated in the Savings Deposit Program that he learned about in a pre-deployment financial briefing. The spouse reported that they are now on track financially and feel so much more in control of their spending and saving. They are also developing a post deployment budget now to be sure that they do not overspend when the service member returns from deployment.*

In FY18, service members were required to make a decision to stay with the current military (Legacy High 3) retirement system or opt into the new "Blended Retirement System (BRS)". Many service members asked for assistance in understanding the details of the new plan, running projections on the official BRS calculator, and weighing the strengths of each option. Interestingly, many service members who decided to remain in the Legacy plan, were motivated to learn more about the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), the investment options, asset allocations, and how they can use the funds in the TSP during retirement.



# PERSONAL FINANCIAL COUNSELOR



The graph on the previous page highlights the top six reasons our clients sought assistance from our PFC. Underemployment in the state of Vermont as well as the high cost of transportation, home heating, and housing continue to challenge service member and veterans and many sought help with budgeting, debt, and credit management.

Finally, the financial impact of divorce led many to seek the services of the PFC. For some, it was creating a budget and being responsible for paying bills for the first time, for others it was dealing with previously unknown debt, and trying to manage a household on one income. One of the primary reasons veterans and service members work with the PFC is that they are motivated to increase the financial wellbeing for themselves and their families.

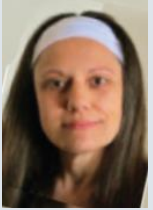
A Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) study worked with consumers across the country to come up with a definition of Financial Wellbeing. While financial wellbeing is highly individual, four main elements were identified:

- *Control over day-to-day, month-to-month finances.*
- *Capacity to absorb a financial shock.*
- *On track to meet financial goals.*
- *Financial freedom to make choices that increase the enjoyment of life.*



As we look to 2019, our plans include an emphasis on these four elements of financial wellbeing. Through one on one counseling, briefings, webinars, newsletter and website content, we will provide just-in-time resources, education, and support for our service members and veterans. Our clients will be able to access the topics relevant and of interest to them whenever they choose.

# MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING



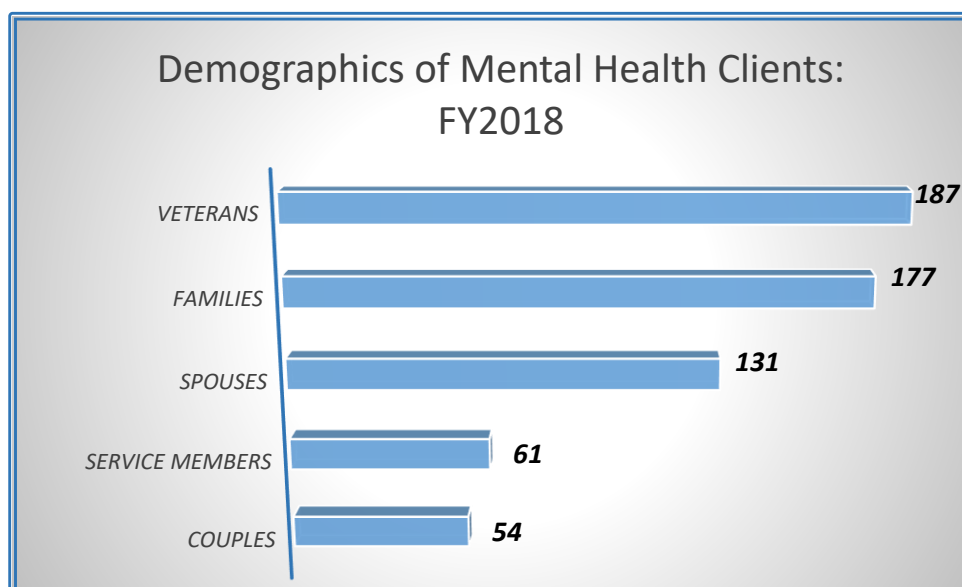
Charlene Caiano  
Mental Health Counselor

## Mission:

*The Mental Health Counselor is licensed and provides non-medical, solution-focused counseling which is private and confidential. Some areas of assistance include family counseling, deployment issues, and marital/couple relationship issues.*

Family Programs has been offering full time mental health counseling since just before fiscal year 2017. The continuity of this program has led to a sense of trust that our veterans, service members and families can rely on this service for their on-going mental health needs. The longevity of this program has allowed our counselor to build a solid clientele with a reputation of confidentiality and privacy. Feeling safe is paramount when seeking mental health services; the vulnerability that our veterans, service members and families feel is respected by our counselor.

The stability of this program has led to a sharp increase over the previous fiscal year in the number of families, spouses and couples seeking services in FY18 as shown in the chart below. The importance of our ancillary programs such as the mental health services we provide cannot be overstated.

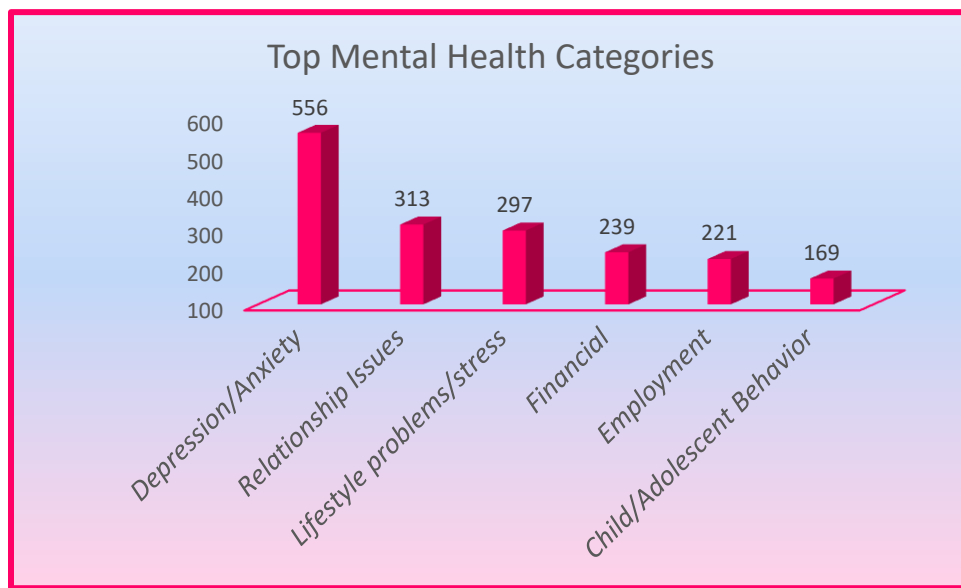




# MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

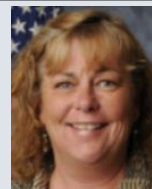


Our military families seek mental health services for a variety of reasons. The graph below details the top categorical reasons for services and validates the commonality felt among our families. There are life stressors that are unique to a life in the military; add to those issues found in everyday life, and we can see how critical continuous mental health services are to the overall health of the Vermont National Guard force.



To the community, the military culture can be something of a mystery. The very nature of the military structure lends to a sense of being closed off to the rest of the world. As a result, a very small percentage of the ubiquitous "community" understands the military, military culture, and military life. Looking ahead, the Family Programs Mental Health Services will be focusing on doing more outreach to schools and communities to educate them on what life is like for the veterans, service members and families living alongside them. Outreach efforts will be to the four corners of Vermont; our rural communities have a substantial military population. Our military population works in these communities, their children and grandchildren go to school in these communities and our goal is to create an awareness that we all live, work, and play together as Vermonters.

# AIRMAN AND FAMILY READINESS



Mary Mahoney  
Airman and Family Readiness Manager

## **Mission:**

***The Vermont Air National Guard Airman and Family Readiness Program provides full time year around support to all Airmen and their families. We are here to provide assistance in all areas so that our members can concentrate on their mission, knowing that their families are taken care of.***

For the Vermont Air National Guard, FY 18 was dominated by the construction and preparation for the departure of our F-16 jets and the arrival of our F-35 jets. We had approximately 20 airmen go away for training stateside for their roles when the F-35s arrive so as a result, there were smaller deployments overseas.

We worked very closely with the Vermont Army National Guard's Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) to prepare more than 50 airmen for separation or retirement from the Air National Guard. Our TAA assisted our airmen with their transition from military life to civilian life. There is a great deal of processing that needs to be done when leaving the military, benefits to be reviewed, etc.

For several years our office has been a member of the Integrated Delivery System (IDS) team. This committee works on identifying challenges our airmen and their families face and discuss ways to meet those challenges. The IDS committee has developed an action plan that has recommendations to improve the environment. This action plan will be reviewed by our Command leadership for implementation.

Every year, our office organizes a 2-day commissary sale in the Spring and the Fall. With our partners at Fort Drum, we are able to bring a very large variety of items for our military members, their families and retirees to purchase. Many of our members look forward to this sale as we do not have a commissary within 200 miles of Vermont. This is a very important service we offer our military families.



***As we say farewell to our F-16s, we remember that our F-16s were there in Manhattan on the morning of September 11, 2001. The F-16s service to this state and nation has been exemplary.***

# CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAM



Brian Stoudnour  
Lead Child & Youth Coordinator

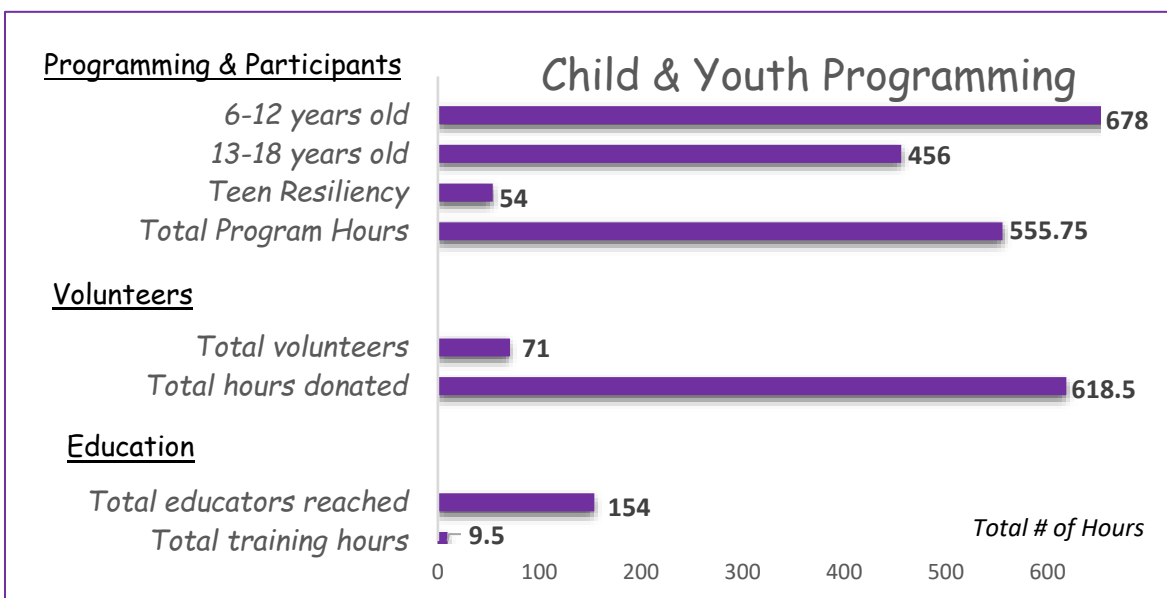
**Mission:**

***The Child and Youth Program (CYP) provides a supportive environment for children and youth through activities and events specifically designed to encourage personal growth, strength of character, resilience and moral development in peacetime, and through all cycles of deployment.***

The Vermont Army National Guard Child & Youth Program (CYP) was able to provide robust, relevant and challenging programming in FY18. Part of the programming included invaluable week long “day camps” during the school breaks in February and April. Part of the program in February afforded the participants the opportunity to create and produce original songs. Each youth was given a disk with their song(s) on it to share with their families.

Vermont has 0.2379 military dependents per square mile. Knowing that and understanding societal support of military service is waning. We chose to focus on providing our teens with tools enabling them to maintain their identity as a proud Military Teen. Our teens participated in our Teen Resiliency training that focused on: Strengths of Character, Self-Regulation, Optimism, Mental Agility and Self Awareness.

Our core of volunteers provide an invaluable service to the Child & Youth Program. Our volunteers were a critical component of our Educator and Community Outreach Briefings & Events, Military Appreciation Events, and Unit Family Days throughout Vermont. Their dedicated efforts have had a force multiplying effect in our attempt to engage new military youth & families, as well as inform our community about the added challenges of being a military dependent. The below chart notes we had 71 volunteers who donated over 600 hours of service to our program.



# CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAM



“Educating the Educator” briefings were brought to the forefront in FY18. This is due to the Vermont Army National Guard’s Deployment Cycle being more active and the need to inform state educators about the special challenges and emotions our military dependents are faced with during a deployment. This campaign has led to training at schools and with the Vermont Regional Prevention Partnerships.

Expansion to areas in Southern Vermont was a focal point during this past year, after receiving feedback from youth & families. In November of this past year we were granted office space, for two days a week, in the VTNG White River Junction Armory. These efforts have been rewarded with new military dependents participating in our programs, as well as the development with new Community Partners. We intend to continue the strengthening of our program in Southern Vermont.

The Vermont Army National Guard-Child & Youth Program (CYP) is very unique & diverse. In that it holds true to Army National Guard-Child & Youth Services-Goals and Mission, as well as having the flexibility to determine what those are at the state level. Due to increases in training requirements, and deployment potential the focus with our youth is on:

- Increasing positive connections with military peers
- Increase resilience and overall deployment preparedness and readiness
- Increase access to programming and services

Our efforts at the state level are also aimed at our community at large. This is being accomplished by educating, informing, & establishing new community partners with education and community resources. This is critical to improve the understanding and support of our geographically dispersed military youth.

At the national level we are diligently working towards having a unified, streamlined and standardized Registration and Data Collection System. This system would provide the ability, on an individual basis, to have a wrapping narrative which speaks to the skills developed during programs & events. Along with the means of reporting the unique opportunities our program provides military dependent youth.



*A Vermont military youth receives an official letter excusing her from school courtesy of Governor Phil Scott- Month of the Military Child event at the Statehouse-3 April 2018*

# FAMILY READINESS SUPPORT ASSISTANTS



Candice Bryan-Broe  
Senior Family Readiness Support Assistant

## Mission:

***The Family Readiness Support program empowers commanders in their duty to deliver a “Total Army Family Program”. This ensures soldiers and their families are informed, educated and made ready for the unique demands of military life before, during and after deployment.***

Our Family Readiness Support Team (FRSA) provides support to the Family Readiness program through three major core efforts: Program Management, Family Support Services, and Training Services. These services are a vital link between the unit Commanders, families assigned to the unit, and community resources available to Soldiers and their families.

During fiscal year 2018, the Vermont Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) team provided support to more than 2400 Vermont Army National Guard soldiers and 31 Family Readiness Groups (FRG) as well as presided over the efforts of 120 volunteers. The FRSA team assisted with 21 unit family events that focused on promoting resiliency and improving morale.

A critical component of the FRSA program is its volunteers. Recruiting and retaining volunteers is inherently complex and difficult. Everyone’s time is valuable, and in today’s fast-paced world, everyone’s available free time is shrinking. In addition, it is generally the same people who volunteer which can lead to volunteer “burnout”. Despite these challenges, the Vermont FRSA team had over 500 hours logged by volunteers in fiscal year 2018. These consisted of 39 statutory volunteers (those who are appointed by commanders and have specific roles and responsibilities). As well as 81 gratuitous volunteers (not appointed, no job descriptions).

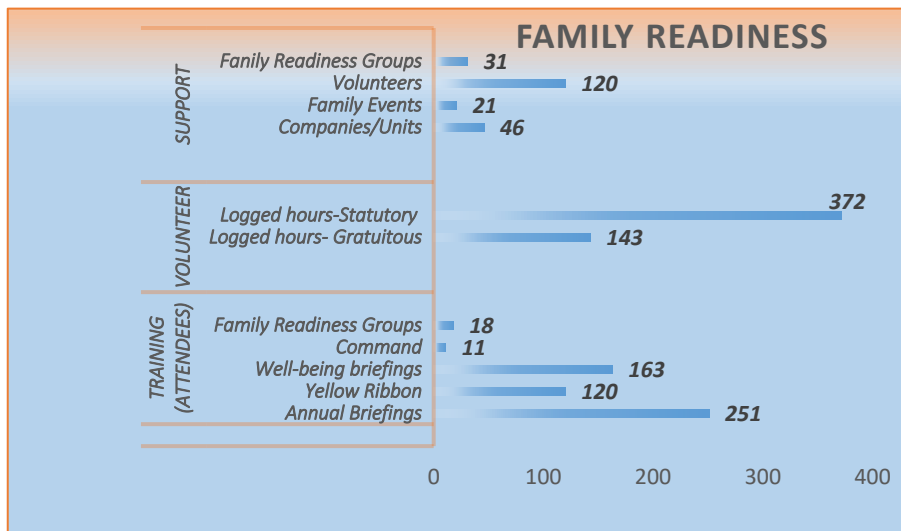


***Michaela Lacoss, FRSA and friend, Lake Monsters Military Appreciation Night-18 July 2018, Centennial Field***

# FAMILY READINESS SUPPORT ASSISTANTS



In addition to providing support and guidance to volunteers, the FRSA team also provides extensive trainings to commanders, FRG leaders and volunteers. All of these efforts culminated in the training of 373 service members, families and volunteers during fiscal year 2018. The below graph gives a visual representation of all the efforts of this team to ensure family readiness and ultimately mission readiness for the Vermont Army National Guard soldiers.



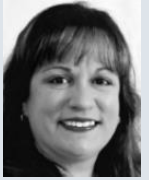
The FRSA team developed a newsletter that goes out to more than 600 families in their network. They also continued to hold Kitchen Spoons and Combat Boots “meet and greet” events so that families in the more remote, rural areas can meet their FRSA team in person.

Looking ahead, the team will be focusing on volunteer recruiting and retaining efforts as well as marketing the FRG program- which goes hand in hand with recruitment and retention. These efforts are hampered by how disperse Vermont Army National Guard units are as well as the fact Vermont is designated 65% rural. Delivering the required Annual Information Briefs (AIBs) to all the units requires a more user friendly and accessible medium. One method of changing how this brief is delivered will be recording it so that commanders can access it from our Family Programs website. The team will be exploring more effective ways to communicate with remote units.



3-126 AVN send-off event- 14 June 2018, AASF

# MILITARY ONESOURCE



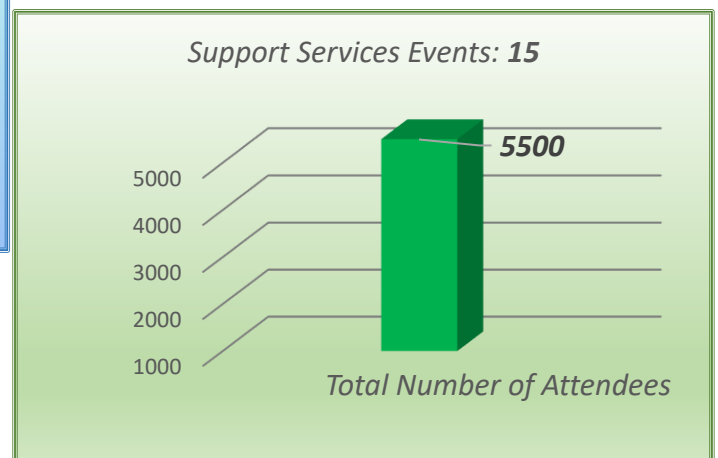
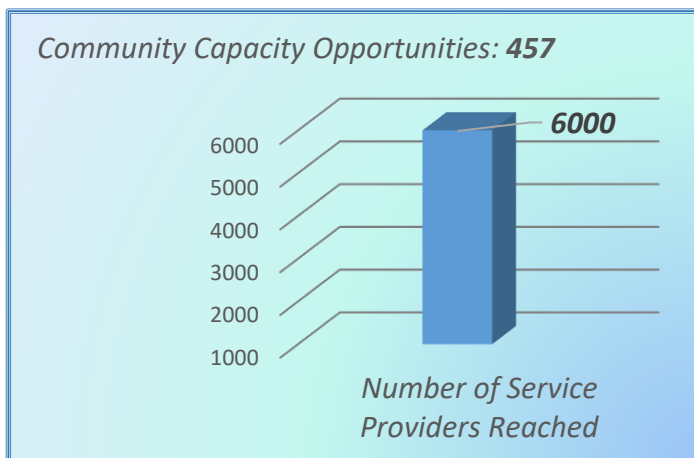
Marcie Caulfield  
Vermont Military OneSource Consultant

## Mission:

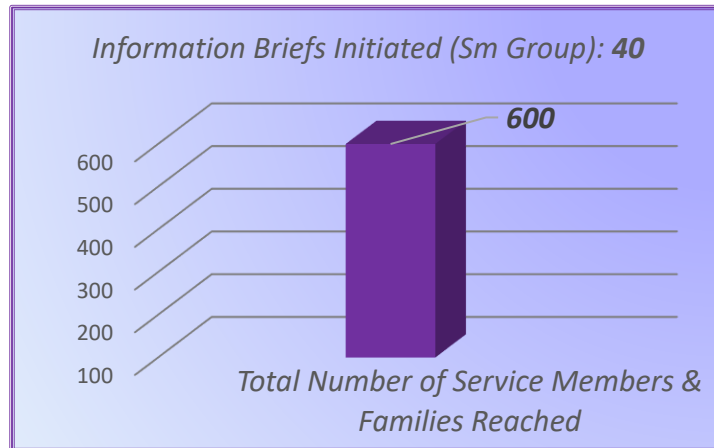
***Military OneSource is funded by the Department of Defense, is a 24/7 call center and website that serves active duty, National Guard and Reserve Component members and their families from the point of entry into military service up to one year post separation or retirement.***

There are very few programs that are as diverse as Military OneSource. When you visit their website at: [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil), you will see a variety of subjects displayed with credible, pertinent resources for each topic. Military OneSource continues to be one of the most relevant programs offered and truly is our clients' one source for their best MilLife.

The charts below summarize the far-reaching efforts of the Military OneSource program. For example, during fiscal year 2018, the Vermont Military OneSource state consultant participated in 457 community capacity opportunities reaching over 6,000 service providers and supported 15 events with approximately 5,500 attendees.



Additionally, the consultant initiated over 40 small group information sessions that directly reached approximately 600 service and family members. The consultant also initiated relationships with and identified 20 new community, state, and national resources to aid with the current military population and shared the information with state contacts.



These efforts were in support of state goals which focused on increasing awareness of financial education resources; increasing access to employment and career programs, services, resources and job fairs to aid with unemployment/underemployment; and promoting resiliency tools to the Vermont military community.



# SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES

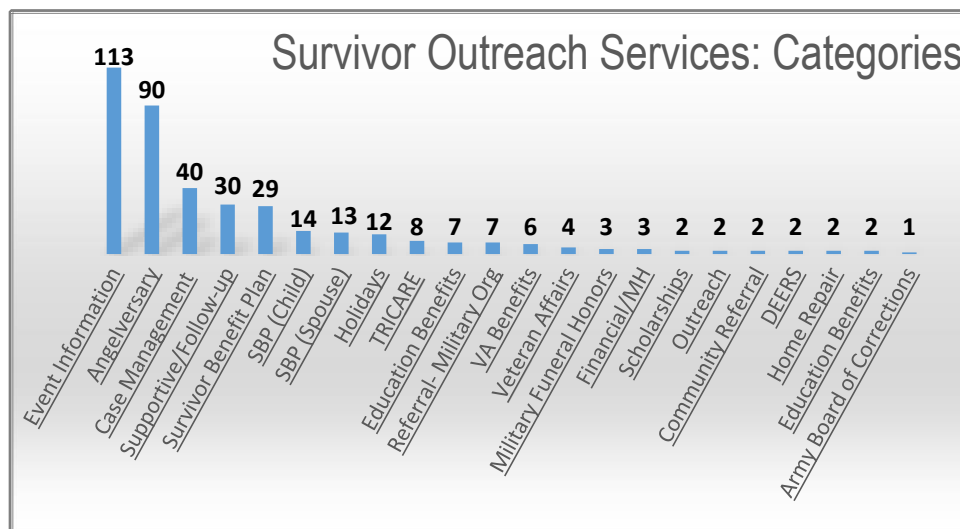


Tammie Conner

Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator

**Mission:**

*The Survivor Outreach Services provides our Gold Star Families and Families of the Fallen with the most current information on benefits, entitlements, and access to long-term financial and emotional support, supportive counseling and information and referral services.*



In fiscal year 2018, 392 Gold Star and families of the fallen survivors were assisted in a variety of ways as noted on the above graph. Our Vermont Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator (SOSC) aided survivors from all branches including Army, Marines, Navy, Airforce and Coast Guard. The Survivor Outreach Services program was highlighted during events and trainings FY 18 that had more than 2000 participants.

In addition to assisting our Gold Star families and families of the fallen, the coordinator also met with Vermont National Guard leadership, social services, military agencies and private groups or individuals within Vermont and neighboring states to recruit and maintain a list of community resources. This invaluable program coordinator also delivered briefings to the community and leadership; and provided a multitude of resources to Survivor Families.

# SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES



Undoubtedly one of the highlights of FY18 for our Gold Star Families was the trip taken in July 2018 to Fenway Park to see the Red Sox play. This trip was an incredible success because of the number of families who participated and the comradery that was so evident between these families. The Vermont Survivors Outreach Services program sees the value of keeping these families connected to each other as well as the VTNG Family Programs. Given the profound loss these families have endured normally will keep them isolated and “away” from any reminders. The Vermont SOSOC has worked tirelessly to develop a network between all of our Gold Star Families, Families of the Fallen and the services Family Programs’ provides.



*Memorial Day Remembrance, Fallen Heroes Memorial- 24 May 2018, Camp Johnson*



*Marion Gray placing mementos at SGT William Normandy's plaque, Memorial Day Remembrance, Fallen Heroes Memorial- 24 May 2018, Camp Johnson*

***“Never Forgotten...Never Alone”***

# TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISOR

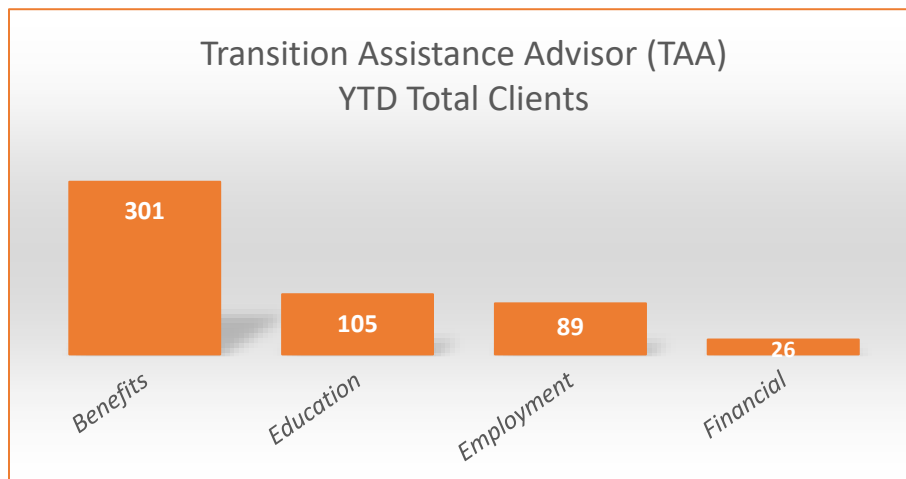


Ron Labounty  
Transition Assistance Advisor

## Mission:

*This program provides the tools for service members to navigate the VA system of benefits and utilize other resources in the community in order to make a smooth transition from active duty to the National Guard or civilian life.*

Transitioning back from deployment, getting ready to retire from the military, or coping with a service related injury can be difficult. The Transition Assistance Advisors assist our Veterans, Service Members and Families from all Branches of Service and all Eras from WWII to Present.



The Vermont's Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA), assisted service members from all branches of service and their families with a host of services. Those included pursuing eligible VA and State benefits, employment and career transitions, education, financial and much more. In 2018, the TAA briefed more than 1600 service members, veterans and families about eligible services-as individuals or in group meetings. In addition, the TAA was able to outreach to more than 600 service members and families at the various Vermont Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon events held throughout the year.

# TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISOR



***Ron Labounty, TAA connecting with a representative from Casella Construction at a VDOL job fair held at American Legion Post #99***

This program works very closely with the Service Officers located within the Office of Veterans Affairs, VA Medical Center Staff and Vet Centers to ensure our service members were getting the proper care and benefits they have earned. The TAA visited the Office of Veterans Affairs several times a month to advocate on behalf of service members when issues with the VA benefits would occur.

For the future, the plan is to take the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to the next level for the Army National Guard. The TAP program is currently being utilized regularly at the Air National Guard and the plan is to mirror that success on the Army side. Another goal is to streamline the “Out processing briefings” process at the Vermont Air National Guard.

# MILITARY FAMILY COMMUNITY NETWORK



Miriam Boyle  
Military Family Community Network Facilitator

**Mission:**

***MFCN was established in 2005 as a collaboration between the leadership of the Vermont National Guard (VTNG) and the Center for PTSD in White River Junction, Vermont. From this collaboration came a network of family program staff, military service organizations, community partners, and stakeholders. The purpose of this multi-faceted network is to create awareness of issues among our veterans, service members and their families and to identify resources to affect positive outcomes for our military families.***

The topics covered during fiscal year 2018 included resources for the mind, body and spirit, identifying community financial resources, veterans and VA benefits. The meeting themes were quite diverse and included so many community partners who share our desire to help our veterans, service members and their families connect with resources that would assist them.

A highlight from the “Taking care of the mind, body, and spirit” meeting was introducing the brain optimization concept by Bryn Perkins with Brain Balancing of Vermont. Bryn explained how during the Brainwave Optimization process, the brain is training to re-establish and form new neural pathways and to “reset”. This therapy has become invaluable in helping service members with trauma either from combat or everyday life. One doctor associated with the VTARNG stated this therapy “was saving lives!” At the same meeting, we were visited by Gordon and his therapy dog, Sophie. Sophie provides much needed emotional support to our veterans at the Medical Center in White River Junction.



***Handler Gordon Perkinson and his therapy dog Sophie, MFCN meeting, Northfield***

# MILITARY FAMILY COMMUNITY NETWORK

Financial needs continues to be the number one issue felt among our Family Programs clients. At our July meeting, the topic was “Identifying Community Financial Resources”. Resources including the State of Vermont, Vermont Catholic Charities and the Vermont Veterans Fund were reviewed by the individual agencies/subject matter experts. The participants, who work directly with our clients, walked away with knowledge of more resources they could pass along.



*Irene Manion, Coordinator, Financial Emergency Relief Program; Vermont Catholic Charities- 11 July 2018, Northfield*

It is time to take this entity to the next level: looking ahead, “MFCN” will be participating in various events for the purpose of recruiting more partners to join the network. To make this outreach more effective, the MFCN logo will be revamped, marketing banners, tablecloths, and updated brochures will be created to display at these events.

In addition, we have expanded the “networking” period that happens at every meeting. The feedback on the surveys was overwhelmingly to increase the time in which participants can connect, exchange business cards, etc. This part of the meetings has proven to be invaluable and advantageous to the MFCN members.

# KITCHEN SPOONS & COMBAT BOOTS



Marcie Caulfield and Candice Bryan-Broe,  
Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots Facilitators

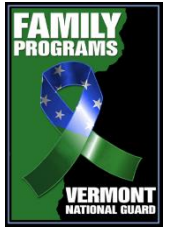
## **Mission:**

***A webinar series that features a variety of topics that are designed to educate the military community on the available resources and services. These webinars allow Family Programs to connect to geographically dispersed individuals affiliated with the military community.***

The Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots (KSCB) team celebrated five years of servicing the military community with webinars and workshops in 2018. These opportunities provide the most updated information to help balance military life on the home front, during one's military service, and everything in between. During FY18, KSCB offered 20 educational opportunities with a total of 137 attendees and 12 special guest speakers. The content shared information on tax preparation, connecting with military youth, veteran benefits, building resiliency, social networking and VA home loans. These topics were selected based on recent feedback from surveys, polls, and input from community team outreach. In 2019, KSCB will be collaborating with the Family Programs Media Specialist and 40<sup>th</sup> Army Band to record the "Second Time Around" multimedia productions. This will allow listeners access to the educational webinars on the Family Programs website to view at their leisure.

# CONCLUSION

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Hopefully the take-away from this Annual Report will be that Vermont National Guard’s Family Programs is dedicated to taking care of our veterans, service members and their families. We are the custodians of the invaluable programs detailed in this report. As you read through this report, you saw how creative and innovative the staff was to meet the needs of our clients.

Family Programs is made up of veterans, spouses and family members of military members, licensed professionals and subject matter experts. There is a wealth of experience and expertise within Family Programs and our greatest strength is in our diversity.

Another facet of this report was the benchmarks each program detailed in their graphs and charts. While at the end of the day, it is always about the families we assist, the metrics noted gave depth to the hard work this team conducted day in and day out. It is important that we document our progress in a variety of ways so that you, our stakeholders, can better understand how we meet our mission.

Electronic access to our annual reports, monthly newsletters and much more can be found at our Family Programs website:

[www.ngfamily.vt.gov](http://www.ngfamily.vt.gov)

All of us here at Family Programs appreciate your time and support of what we do. Please do not hesitate to let us know what you think by following the “How are we doing” link to our survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VT-FP>



Family Programs website: [www.ngfamily.vt.gov](http://www.ngfamily.vt.gov)

