



APR/MAY/JUN 2024

FROM THE HOMEFRONT

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER TO KEEP FAMILIES CONNECTED



IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 - Vermont Veterans Outreach/
Survivor Outreach Services
- 3 - Chaplain's Reflection/
Governor's Challenge
- 4 - Child and Youth Program
- 5 - Vermont Air National Guard/
Quarterly Question
- 6 - Mental Health/
Military and Family Readiness
- 7 - Military OneSource
- 8 - Personal Financial Counselor/
Seasonal Giveaway
- 9 - Transition Assistance Advisor/
Employer Support of the Guard
and Reserve
- 10 - KS&CB/Operation Homefront/
Contacts

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL? PHOTOS FROM A NATIONAL GUARD EVENT? A QUESTION YOU WANT ANSWERED?

SEND US A MESSAGE ON FACEBOOK (VTNGFAMILYPROGRAMS) AND YOU COULD BE FEATURED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

What's Inside?

Seasonal Giveaway!

Do you want to be a part of a drawing for a one-of-a-kind spring prize pack from Family Programs? See page 8 for details.

Dental Care Woes?

The Vermont Veterans Outreach has opened up a new program for Vermont Veterans in need of Dental Care. See page 2 for more information.

Two Decades Strong

Army National Guard Child and Youth Services celebrate 20 years of enriching the lives of our military community youth.

Spring Into Less Stress

On page 6, read helpful tips from our Mental Health Counselor, Charlene Caiano, on how you can improve your mood, build strong relationships, and create healthy habits for a less stressful spring.

Vermont Veterans Outreach

In mid-October 2023, Vermont Veterans Outreach (VVO) launched a dental program thanks to a \$100,000 grant received from Northeast Delta Dental. The purpose of the program is to provide up to \$750.00 of dental work to uninsured veterans who qualify for the program. Veterans must be seen at Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHC) that have a dental facility. We began the program with a grant awarded to Notch Tier (Franklin County) to provide oral health care to those veterans uninsured in Franklin County.

We are connecting with all FQHCs in Vermont in hopes that they will participate in the program (Orange & Windham Counties do not have established FQHCs).

To qualify for the program:

- ➔ Vermont resident for at least one year
- ➔ Discharge from service must be Honorable or General Under Honorable Conditions
- ➔ Does not have a 100% service-connected rating through the VA
- ➔ Veterans do not have dental insurance
- ➔ Cannot afford to pay out-of-pocket

Our new team members who will administer this new initiative are Michaela LaCoss and Allston (Joe) Gilmond. Michaela is a combat veteran who deployed with the Vermont Army National Guard in 2010 to Afghanistan. She will be a part-time employee. Joe is a US Navy Desert Storm veteran who has assisted veterans in a variety of capacities for more than 30 years. He will be a full-time employee. They are both members of Veterans of Foreign Wars and hold positions within their respective clubs.

For more information, contact the VT Military & Family Support Center at (888) 607-8773 or scan the QR code



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“Helping our veterans get the smile they deserve.”



Please join us for the Camp Johnson Memorial Day Celebration on 23 May 2024 at 1400. This event honors those who gave their lives in service to our country. Never forget the sacrifices of the Fallen and our Gold Star Families.





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Daniel 1:8, But Daniel resolved...

Daniel from the Bible is best known because King Darius threw him into the lion's den and he survived. How did Daniel develop such faith that he would rather be thrown into the lion's den rather than to obey the king? His determination begins with the fact that he resolved in his heart and mind that he would not compromise his faith. His commitment helped him through difficult times. Commitment quotes teach us that commitment is defined in a variety of ways:

- 1. Most people fail, not because of lack of desire, but, because of lack of commitment.***
- 2. Commitment is the foundation of great accomplishments.***
- 3. Commitment means staying loyal to what you said you were going to do long after the mood you set it in has left you.***
- 4. Mark Manson, "True love-that is deep, abiding love that is impervious to emotional whims or fancy-is a choice. It's a constant commitment to a person regardless of the present circumstances.***



The commitment quotes could continue, but I want to focus on the opening picture. "Love is unconditional commitment to an imperfect person..." Since we are all imperfect, we all need an unconditional commitment from our spouse or partner to go through the difficult times in life. If a person's commitment to sports lasted as long as they were winning or felt good, many people would not have become champions! Please contact your chaplain if you need help with your relationship. It's worth it!



VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge
to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF



**WE
NEED
YOUR
HELP!**

The Vermont Governor's Challenge team, Mission Connect Vermont, is looking for feedback on any issues/gaps in service that you believe are impacting military-connected suicides. This could include housing, mental health, employment, education, etc. To be part of the solution, please scan the QR code above and complete the survey.

Background: Suicide is a national public health concern that affects all Americans, including Service Members, Veterans, their Families (SMVF), and those who love them. In 2020, Vermont veterans died at a rate 36% higher than the U.S. (Vermont 43.0 vs. U.S. 31.7 per 100,000). In 2021, the rate of deaths by suicide by Vermont Veterans is 3.5 times higher than non-veterans (83.1 Veterans vs 23.7 non-Veterans per 100,000).



ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!

Time flies when together we're making a positive impact! We are thrilled to announce and celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Army National Guard - Child and Youth Program! This has been a journey filled with growth, learning, and countless memories.

These two decades have been a testament to the incredible resilience, curiosity, and potential within each child we've had the privilege to nurture. To everyone who has been a part of this incredible journey, thank you for your unwavering support, dedication, and enthusiasm. Join us in celebrating this milestone, and let's continue to inspire and uplift the next generation together!

Follow the Vermont Child & Youth Program on Facebook: www.facebook.com/VTNGCYP to learn more about upcoming local opportunities for your military youth.

WE WELCOME IN 2024 WITH NEW OPPORTUNITIES

As we dive into 2024, let's kick off the year with laughter and unforgettable family moments that can be fun memory-making opportunities for the whole family. Here are a few fun ideas for your family to enjoy together as we ring in the new year.

DIY Family Time Capsule

Gather the family to create a time capsule filled with memories and aspirations. Seal it and open it next New Year's Eve for a heartwarming reflection.



Family Game Night Extravaganza

Turn your living room into a hub of fun! Organize a mini-tournament with board and video games, fostering bonding, laughter, and hidden talents.

Outdoor Adventure Day

Embrace nature with a hike, picnic, or bike ride. Capture these moments with a family photo, encapsulating your 2024 adventures.



Create A Vision Board Together

Cut out pictures and symbols to represent family goals. Display your vision boards prominently at home, serving as a daily reminder of your collective journey in 2024.



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[www.facebook.com/
VTNGFamilyPrograms/](http://www.facebook.com/VTNGFamilyPrograms/)

For more information on
our services, check out the
Vermont National Guard
Family Programs website!
www.ngfamily.vt.gov/



The Key Volunteer Program is a great way for family members to get involved on base, help with events, deployments, supporting other families in need, and feel more connected to the base. If you have enjoyed any of the events, we have held on base, or have a family member deploying, reach out to find out how to begin volunteering with Family Readiness!

Vermont Military & Family Support Center

24/7 Toll Free Number: (888) 607-8773

QUARTERLY **Question**

Want to test your smarts?
Direct message your answer
to the following riddle to
VTNGFamilyPrograms on
Facebook and you could be
recognized in the next
newsletter.

What branch of the military do babies join?

Follow

**@vtfamilyprograms
on Instagram!**



Mental Health Counselor

Step into Spring by Being Less Stressed

Deep Breath while bringing your thoughts to the present.

Body Scan tense areas in your body from head to toe increasing physical/emotional awareness.

Explore the details of something indoors or outdoors.

Use Mindless Activities as a way to create a new experience by noticing every aspect of it.

Use Reflective Listening to focus on the meaning of what is being said

Use Your Senses by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling the environment around you.

Thinking Positively by creating a personal mantra or affirmation, and practice saying it several times a day.

Show Appreciation by becoming aware of unnoticed things.

Plan Mindful Moments by setting your watch to breathe, reflect, and dedicate your time to what's important.

Eat Mindfully by using all of your senses.

Take Your Time instead of multi-tasking.

Disconnect your devices and block off time in your calendar.

Pay Attention to how you treat others by treating them the way you want to be treated.

Make Stress Your Friend by changing a negative attitude to a positive attitude, which includes changing your body language and smiling more.

Practice Acceptance by accepting things as they are instead of what they should be.

Use Self-Reflection by identifying what you accomplished for that day without judging yourself.

Set Daily Goals by determining what you would like to achieve and what the end result will look like.

Commit-to-Commit by practicing one or more of the above exercises for 60 seconds (or more) anywhere at any time.



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Less Stress



just BREATHE

Military & Family Readiness



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As the snow begins to melt away, the days become longer, now is a great time to get outside and enjoy the warmer weather. Whether that is going for a hike, riding a bike, cleaning up the mess winter brought in your backyard, or just spending your days outside with those that you care about. The warmer weather brings so many opportunities, and Vermont Family Programs may be able to assist you and your family with the following resources.

America the Beautiful

Offers eligible service members and families lodging discounts and access to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas across the United States. For more information visit the National Park Service at www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm.

Blue Star Museums Program

A partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families provides free admission to more than 2,000 museums across the country from Armed Forces Day to Labor Day for Service Members and their families. To view a map of participating museums, visit: www.arts.gov/initiatives/blue-star-museums.

ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain

2024 memberships available for VTNG families. The pass provides access to the ECHO Center as well as over 200+ museums across the country. For current pass holders or new families requesting a free membership, please fill out the form at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/ECHO2024-VTNG

Regardless of how you chose to spend your time, make it time well spent. As always, if there is anything that Vermont Family Programs can assist with, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Military and Family Readiness Specialist or call the 24/7 Vermont Military & Family Support Center at (888) 607-8773.



MilLife Learning is for more than just military training. It offers free online courses for personal and professional growth. It's a lifelong learning hub that has something for everyone, including:

- Service members
- Spouses
- Survivors
- Families
- Leaders
- Service providers

With MilLife Learning you can:

- Learn at your own pace
- Enhance your life with ongoing learning opportunities
- Gain new skills
- Advance your career
- Stay current with training requirements

Some Examples of Available Courses

Personal Growth

With free, self-paced courses learn something new anytime. They help you build resilience, use your voice, and recognize others' service. They also assist with accessing resources and reducing financial stress.

- ➔ Special Operations Cognitive Agility Training. Learn practical exercises and strategies to improve your decision-making skills. Also, how to quickly adapt to changes and challenges of everyday life.
- ➔ EFMP: Advocacy Communication Tips. We all want to be heard and understood. This video offers communication tips and techniques you can practice daily. Learn how to express your thoughts and concerns in a respectful and productive manner.
- ➔ Developing Your Spending Plan. Are you setting money aside in your savings account each month? This will help you create a spending plan and achieve financial success. Check out our other finance courses.

Professional Advancement

MilLife Learning knows you're busy and that concise-engaging courses have greater impact. Check out these trainings.

- ➔ Operating in an Inclusive Culture. Learn how to create an inclusive culture through your MWR programs.
- ➔ Introduction to the Military Family Readiness Program. Learn what the three distinct training tracks cover. New service providers, leaders, unit volunteers or anyone interested in the MFRP can take this.

To Access: Create an account at <https://millifelearning.militaryonesource.mil/>, enroll in a course, and launch immediately or come back later to learn. MilLife Learning is available to you, 24/7.

Personal Financial Counselor

If you have recently received a tax refund, you may be wondering how to best utilize this extra money. To help you make an informed decision, let's explore four different ideas of what you could do with your tax refund.

1

How about starting or increasing your emergency fund? This is a good time to start saving for unexpected expenses that may arise in the future. If you do not have an emergency fund yet, it is advisable to start saving now. Experts recommend saving at least 6 to 8 month's worth of living expenses in an emergency fund. However, it can be overwhelming to save that amount at once. So, let's start with saving \$500 and then continuously adding to the account to build it up over time. The key to saving money consistently is to develop a habit of putting some money aside every month. To achieve this, I prefer having a fixed amount of money deducted from my paycheck and transferred to my savings account. It helps me stay on track and ensures that I save money every month. Moreover, I keep my emergency fund in a separate bank account from my checking account. This way, I'm less tempted to spend it since I don't see it regularly.

2

After starting an emergency fund, your second priority should be to pay off any outstanding debt. You can choose to focus on repaying the debt with the highest interest rate or the smallest balance; either way, any additional funds you can allocate toward paying off the debt will help you clear it faster and eventually save you more money in the long run.

3

Let's discuss spending some of your money. Have you delayed making any purchases or investments due to their cost? Do you require new winter tires, expensive dental treatment, or perhaps some home renovation projects that you've postponed? This is an ideal opportunity to complete some of those tasks that you've postponed due to the expense.

4

Finally, it's important to have a bit of fun with your tax refund. I always advise my clients to use a portion of it to treat themselves to something nice, like a weekend getaway or a fancy dinner. However, it's important not to go overboard. Remember, this money is a result of your hard work, so make sure that whatever you spend it on is going to benefit you in the long run.



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Help Us Grow!

The Vermont National Guard Family Programs wants to grow our connection with the military-affiliated community to keep you better informed. Follow the entry rules to the right and you could walk away with our Seasonal Giveaway prize pack.

Prize pack recipient will be announced on May 3, 2024 on the VTNGFamilyPrograms Facebook Page

1

Follow VTNGFamilyPrograms Facebook page

2

Send a direct message to the VTNGFamilyPrograms page on Facebook with your favorite spring activity.



Transition Assistance Advisor

NEED HELP FINDING EMPLOYMENT?



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Recruit military is a great resource to utilize. They are an online job board where they offer virtual job fairs which may offer the opportunity to have a same-day interview with a potential employer. They have a program that will not only build your civilian resume but also your federal resume. They have over 270,000 active job postings available. Please let your TAA know how they can assist in your employment journey. <https://recruitmilitary.com/>

RECRUIT MILITARY®

OBTT Build your Brand.
Refine your Resume.
Craft your Career.
OFF-BASE TRANSITION TRAINING

Off-Base Transitional Training (OBTT) offers many different webinars to get you ready for employment outside the military. These webinars are free to you and your spouse. Some of their webinars take a deep dive into USA Jobs which can be confusing at times and help with understanding the verbiage employers are looking for in a resume. They also webinars for interview skills, marketing yourself and other job search tactics, LinkedIn profiles, job fair strategies, and on-the-spot interviews, salary negotiations and so much more. Reach out to your TAA for assistance. www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/tap/off-base-transition-training

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve



Hi, everyone, while these are some of the “basics” related to ESGR, they are well worth repeating.

- Please invite your employer to request an Employer Statement of Support. They can find the request at: www.esgr.mil. Once we are alerted of their request for an “SoS”, we will get the document to them, by US Mail or in person. While this is a non-binding agreement, it helps an employer understand how they can help you, their “citizen-servicemembers,” and is the cornerstone of our ESGR Employer Outreach program.
- Invite your employer to training, whether it’s a drill weekend or a local Annual Training. Remember, very few of our employers have ever served before and they have little idea of what you do when you attend “training.”
- We always encourage our local service members (and spouses) to submit their employers for the Employer Patriot Award. This is a great way to say thanks for their support and is also the first level in a series of recognitions and awards. The Patriot Award is quick to request, and it can be shipped directly to our office for presentation later in person, or to the service member for presentation. The Patriot Award should not be confused with the Freedom Award, which is for significant support and can only be requested from October to December annually.
- While most of our employers in Vermont are mostly supportive of their military service members, we do occasionally have an issue with an employer’s misunderstanding of their rights and responsibilities. We ask that you contact our office at (802) 338-4187 to discuss the issue. Our trained ombudsmen are available within hours of your call. We will only contact your employer with your permission.

Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots

Tune in to our all-new Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots podcast airing the first Wednesday of the month at 7 PM on the Vermont National Guard Family Programs Facebook page

www.facebook.com/kitchenspoonsandcombatboots/

Upcoming topics to include:

- ➔ 4/3 - Month of the Military Child
- ➔ 5/1 - Mental Health Month
- ➔ 6/5 - Summer Vacation Planning



Family Programs has a couple of cribs from Operation Homefront's Star-Spangled Babies initiative. First Come, First Serve. If you would like one, please reach out to Danny McEnerney at daniel.j.mcenerney2.civ@army.mil.

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Military OneSource

TBD

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