



FROM THE HOMEFRONT

December 2019



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State Family Program Director



The holidays can be the most wonderful time of the year as it is a time for family, friends and traditions. However for some of us, it brings feelings of sadness, loss and a time of heightened vulnerability. Sometimes we want to just bypass November and December all together because it is a time of heavy emotional intensity.

Social media does not help-how often have we scrolled down through and seen happy pictures of our friends and acquaintances and invariably, compare our lives to what their lives “appear” to be? It is so human to compare ourselves with others and at the holidays, it adds to our vulnerability and sense of loss. Sometimes comparing our lives to others can make us feel bad about ourselves. I heard a great line recently: comparing your insides to someone else’s outsides.

Which leads me to something that may help counter these feelings of sadness and loss: self-care. During this busy and more vulnerable time, it is critical not to slack on self-care: exercise, diet, and sleep. Keeping to your normal routine or even punching it up a bit can be beneficial. My next suggestion will most likely be met with gasps from many: limit your time on social media to just 30 minutes PER DAY. I know the shock, the horror 😊 Research has shown that limiting time on social media can lead to better mental health for all of us.

Try not to set unrealistic expectations for yourself this holiday season- go gently and know what you can and cannot do. This next idea may seem far-fetched and difficult: express gratitude. If you can, every day be mindful of something you are grateful for. It could be as simple as the Grande, Iced, Sugar-Free, Vanilla Latte with Soy Milk drink you treat yourself to or as exceptional as the gratitude of a loved one who always stands by you. Expressing gratitude can help combat feelings of sadness and loss.

In fact, I am grateful to each and every one of you who takes the time to read our newsletter every month!

All the Best,

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Check us out on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/VTNGFamilyPrograms/>

Airman and Family Readiness Manager



Happy Holidays from your Airman and Family Readiness Office

We hope that you had a relaxing Thanksgiving with your family and friends. Thank you to those who took advantage of the Ft. Drum Commissary Sale in early November! The Vermont Sale is always successful, so taking advantage of it and shopping helps keep the sale coming. Next sale will be in May 2020.



Did you know that December 13th is the 383rd Anniversary of the National Guard? The National Guard is the oldest component of the United States Armed Forces and one of the nation's longest-enduring institutions. Yes, you are part of something that dates back to 1636! So happy birthday, National Guard! We salute you. To honor the National Guard birthday, here is a fun list of facts you may have not known.

1. A National Guard service member must swear to uphold both state and federal constitutions.
2. Founded in 1636, the National Guard is the oldest branch around – even older than our country! The Army was not formed until the Revolutionary War, but militias were used stateside to protect British colonies. Although they weren't called the National Guard until 1916.
3. The National Guard is the second biggest when it comes to enlisted service members, the Army is number one.
4. There are two branches connected to the National Guard, Army and Air Force.
5. The National Guard motto, "Always Ready, Always There" is not just catchy – it is true! Units were originally called Minutemen because they were quick to respond and always available when needed.
6. Guardsmen have fought in every major conflict since 1637, up until the most recent.
7. Since the National Guard answers to both state and federal governments, they can be activated by both the governor of the state or by the President of the United States. The Washington DC National Guard is only controlled by the President.
8. The only territory of the United States that does not have a National Guard unit is American Samoa.
9. Only two Presidents have served in the National Guard; President George W. Bush and Harry Truman.

Mary Mahoney ~ VTANG Airman and Family Readiness Manager ~ 802-652-8035

Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots

December 4th, 2019 at Noon – Do Your Holiday Like a Boss

Have you thought about the perfect gift for your friends and family? Are you stressing about the added costs this holiday season? Do you find that you are having a hard time appreciating the holiday spirit? Join the Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots Team on December 4th from 12:00PM to 1:00PM for the "Do Your Holiday Like a Boss" lunch & learn webinar. This virtual opportunity will focus on stress management techniques and budget saving tips. Tune in to find out ways to get the best bang out of your holiday buck, as it is never too late to start saving money!

For those who plan ahead:

- January 8 webinar ***date change*** - Market Yourself... Proactively!!! at Noon
- February 5 webinar – TBD
- March 4 webinar - Your Key to a Better Tax Return at Noon

Check us out online at:

http://www.ngfamily.vt.gov/ks_and_cb_page.html

Monthly Webinars

Wednesday, January 8
Market Yourself... Proactively

**JAN
8**

Wednesday, February 5
TBD

**FEB
5**

Wednesday, March 4
Your Key to a better Tax Return

**MAR
4**



To join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone:

Click on the link below!

<https://militaryonesource.zoom.us/j/3015674328>

(Please utilize the "chat box" to be heard)

To access audio, dial by phone: 1 (646) 876 9923

Meeting ID: 301 567 4328

Questions: Call Marcie Caulfield at 802-338-3164, Candice Bryan-Broe at 802-338-3652, Michaela LaCoss at 802-338-4317



10 Smart Tips for Military Families to Save on Holiday Spending

Holidays mean spending, but you've got the discipline to keep it reined in this season. Celebrating with your family doesn't have to lead to debt, and here's how to make it a great holiday and maintain financial control. Control your cash

Check out these ways to tame the holiday frenzy:

- Make (and stick to) a budget. Money can fly out of your wallet fast for gifts, special meals, decorations and travel. Plan ahead of time how much you're going to spend on each category, and then stay in that range.
- Take inventory. Don't rush out to buy wrapping paper before checking to see if there's a forgotten stash in your closet. The same is true for presents you may have hidden too well last year.
- Shop secondhand for decorations. Thrift stores and garage sales usually have loads of holiday decorations

as people upgrade, downsize or realize their decorations somehow multiplied when they weren't looking.

• Consider budget-friendly alternative gifts. Homemade gifts are a great option if you're crafty or a whiz in the kitchen, or even if you aren't either of those, but can follow online directions. Coupons for your "services," like babysitting, can also make good presents.

• Make your own holiday cards. You can save money by using e-cards to send greetings to your loved ones instead of traditional cards. Many websites offer free or inexpensive e-cards, some with options to add videos or slideshows.

• Plan holiday meals early. Knowing what you're going to cook well in advance lets you shop the sales for the non-perishable items you'll need. It also helps spread the higher food costs over a couple of paychecks instead of just one.

• Use your smart phone while shopping. Many retailers can send coupons right to your phone when you walk into their stores. You can also use your phone to compare prices to make sure you're getting the best deal.

• Consider traveling on the holiday itself. You could score a much cheaper airline ticket by flying on the holiday instead of in the days before. Plus, arriving on the big day conveniently gets you out of a lot of meal-prep duty.

• Search hotel rates and airfares online. Be flexible and take advantage of websites that compare airfares and hotels so you get the best deal. Many will also alert you to price drops and sometimes same-day holiday travel is cheaper.

There are a lot of ways to save money at the holidays. Check out other budget-friendly tips from Military OneSource, or take advantage of free financial counseling available in person, by phone or by video chat. For more information, call 800-342-9647.

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Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)



December 2019 Reminders from Vermont Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and the National Guard Employment Support Program

Freedom Award nomination season ends 31 December 2019!

Please get your nominations in not later than 31 December to be considered for selection as one of 15 finalists for 2020. The Freedom Award is the highest award that a civilian employer can receive. If you have submitted your boss for a Patriot Award previously, please go ahead and provide as much information as you can on the Freedom Award nomination. If you have never requested a Patriot Award for your employer, please contact our office at 802-338-4187 before nominating your boss for the Freedom Award, so we can help you in selecting the appropriate award.

Another Reminder - Notice to Your Employer – Please be sure to notify your employer of all of your drill and AT dates, and in particular, of the upcoming deployment, especially if you are a member of the 86 IBCT or you have knowledge of another deployment. And if you are a military spouse, don't hesitate to speak with your own supervisor to let them know that in a year or so, you will be taking care of business for the family, and may need some flexibility in your work schedule.

Need help finding a job? If you need to tune up your resume or don't even know where to start, contact Dave Wheel at dwheel@interactivegov.com or 802-272-5509. Be ready if you're looking for a job, or a better job! We have also recently created a Facebook page that will display an increasing variety of job opportunities. Go to: "Vermont Employment Support Program" and click on "Groups" and "Job Opportunities." The available opportunities will increase over time as employers become more knowledgeable of the site.

Vermont ESGR is always looking for new volunteers, especially from the "four corners" of Vermont (St. Albans, Lyndonville, Brattleboro and Bennington.) Most of our readers work a full-time job and then some, but you may know someone who would like to serve a few hours a month. Contact Linda Fowler, full-time Volunteer Support Technician (802-338-4187) or Jerry Manock, VT ESGR Vice Chair (802-355-6169) for more information.

Have an employment-related question, need help finding a job, or need more information about your job protections under Federal law? As always, call us with any employment-related question at 802-338-4187 or 802-338-4190



Thoughts From Our State Youth Coordinator

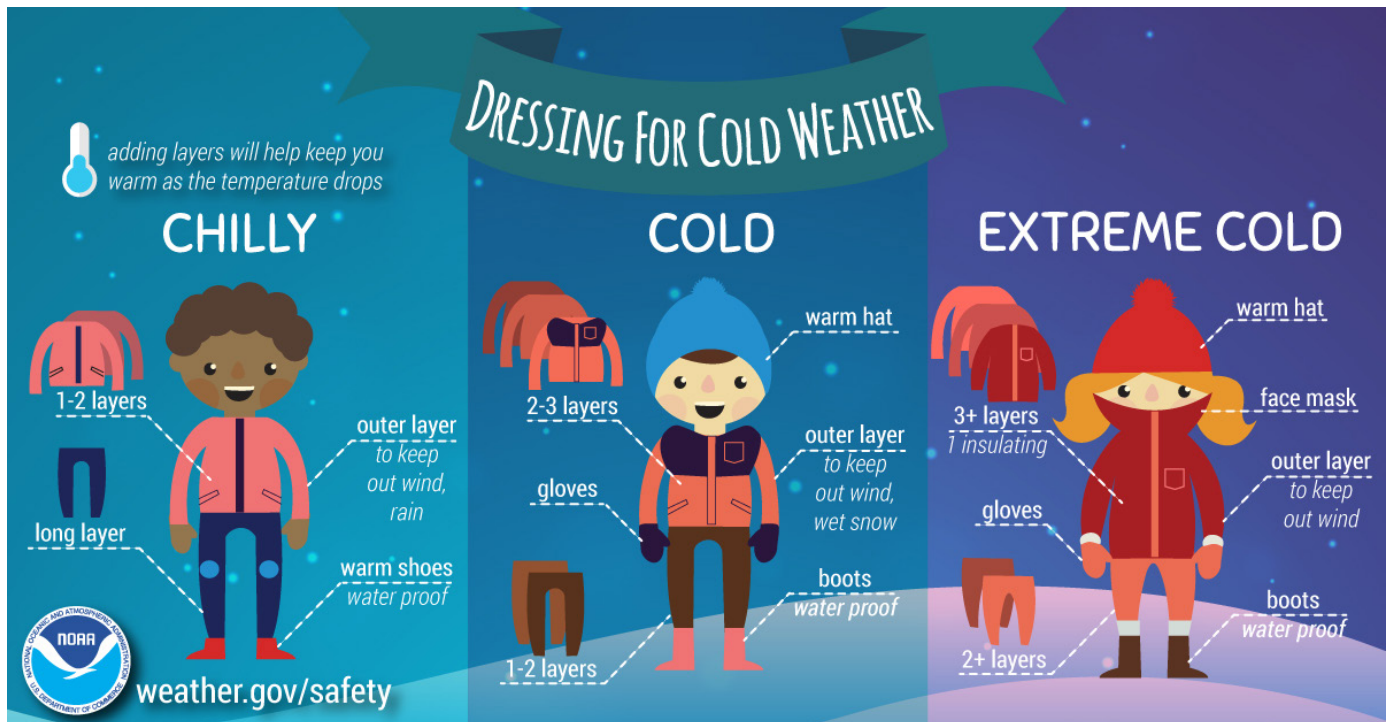


Winter is upon, in fact most of us have already experienced the joys of snow and single digit temperatures! I am hopeful that the 2019-2020 Winter will bring us lots of the fluffy white stuff called snow, creating increased opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities. Spending time outdoors throughout the winter months is critical to maintaining both physical & psychological health. Even if but for a short time the benefits will out-weigh the extra effort and clothing necessary.



We all know that Vermont is THE place to be for skiing, snowboarding and many other winter sports on the eastern seaboard. Many of our wonderful ski resorts offer Military Discounts (which are extended to spouses & dependents), here are just a few that do: Killington, Pico, Okemo, Bromley, Smuggler's Notch, Stratton, Sugarbush, Mount Snow and Bolton Valley. Plus, extra bonus alert Jay Peak Resort, Burke Mountain and Mad River Glen (SMs only) are FREE! (Check out their websites, or give them a call for more information). However, I am all too aware that the cost (even with a discount) and time commitment of the above mentioned winter sports can be a barrier. That is why my family and I regularly pursue more cost effective outdoor winter activities such as; Nordic Skiing, ice skating, sledding, building snow-people and snow forts, going for walks, ice fishing, snowshoeing, and more. Not only are they better for the bank, but easier to enjoy as a family unit.

As mentioned earlier additional clothing, and safety considerations are required to venture outside during the winter. It is critical that appropriate precautions be taken to protect yourself, family and friends. Here are just a few tips to help ensure you, your kiddos, and other family & friends are adequately prepared for playing outside during the winter:



1. Do not go alone. Establish a buddy system with one or more kiddos and have them look out for one another. Children younger than 8 years of age should always be supervised outside. Check every so often on older children who are playing outdoors for extended time periods.
2. Check often to see that she/he is warm and dry. Younger kids should take regular breaks and come inside for a warm drink.
3. Never send them outside in extreme weather conditions such as snowstorms.
4. Do not send your child outside to play if the temperature or the wind-chill is reported as -16oF or lower. At these temperatures, exposed skin will begin to freeze.
5. Help them choose play areas with a warm shelter nearby (e.g., near home or a friend's home).

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Download the "ARNG CYS" Mobile App for Apple & Android!



Check us out on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/VTNGCYP/>



Family Readiness Support Assistant



Season's Greetings from the FRSA Team!

It's the most wonderful time of the year to start planning your Unit Holiday Party! Unit Holiday Parties provide an opportunity for soldiers and their families to celebrate the holidays together!

Your Unit Family Readiness Group Leader and Commander will head the planning of the venue, activities, meal, etc. If you have suggestions reach out to your Units FRG Leader or the Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) Team to get connected! We would love your input! These Unit Holiday Parties are for you, so if you have an idea on something you think the families might like, speak up!



Need inspiration? Check out these suggestions! • Plan for a photographer to take pictures that can be emailed to the families or put in a unit scrapbook.

- Set up a craft day for the service members and their children. Find a large enough facility to hold the number of people willing to participate in the activity, and provide crayons, markers, poster board and any other necessary craft items - all depending on the amount of funds the FRG has in its account. There are tons of ideas for low cost arts/crafts/STEM activities on the internet. Remember, Military Kids Vermont (MKVT) may also be able to assist or offer supplies for your youth activities at the Unit Holiday Party!"
- If the unit is deployed, set up this activity prior to redeployment. The children and spouses can decorate welcome home signs for their soldiers.
- The Operation Homefront Holiday Toy Drive will be starting soon, if your Unit's FRG Leader or a member of the Command Team reaches out to the FRSA Team to let us know the date of your holiday party, we can arrange to have some toys dropped off at your armory for the kiddos – only if the commander chooses to do this!

Remember, every proposed family event and/or activity must be approved by the Unit Commander

For more information about Unit Holiday Parties, FRG Contact information or MKVT, please contact the FRSA team!

DON'T FORGET!



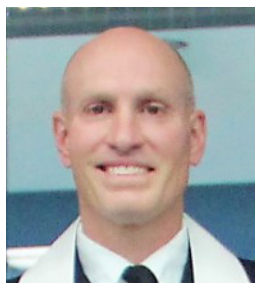
Record your volunteer hours & email them to candice.e.broe.ctr@mail.mil. Send them in by the last day of each month.

Check us out on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/FamilyReadinessVTARNG>



VTARNG State Chaplain



Chaplain's Reflection:

As Christmas approaches, many people enjoy watching a Hallmark movie and though we know the story ends happy, it's the twists and turns that intrigue us. How is the couple going to acknowledge that each has feelings for the other and then come together?

While acknowledging and expressing those feelings for someone can be difficult, we know that in order for the relationship to begin, one must take risks and begin to connect with the other person. The Romantic period or phase as some call it is filled with excitement and energy. It is difficult to focus on work or school and telephone calls can last for hours.

As time passes, the excitement and the need to spend every minute with the other person begins to wane and the relationship enters into the reality phase. Yes, we still love the person, but it is now a "committed love." In the Romantic phase, it is a "chemical love" because the body is producing different chemicals such as dopamine that affects one's ability to think clearly.

Christmas is a time when couples and families spend more time together and have the potential to demonstrate that they love each other. We often focus on gifts and while gifts are important; we also need to focus on quality time, communication, board games, and other activities that bring the family or couple together and without the use of some electronic device.

Solomon and his bride call each other my "beloved!" Beloved noun adjective

A beloved is a much adored, treasured, loved one used to define the one whom you affectionately love unconditionally; that in the strongest of devotion, being able to love without the purpose of intercourse, love without any limitations, in having belief in faithfully knowing and cherishing that you and your dearest have certainty in having an unquestioning sincere assurance of; entrusting, faithful, confident, devotion, dedicating, loyal, committing, affectionate, endearing, and truest of love in one another that is constant, unchanging, unconditional, unwaveringly. A love so sincerely special, true, and genuine that is beyond that of lust, the purest of love. (urbandictionary.com)

I encourage you to call your spouse your "beloved" and demonstrate it.

Merry Christmas and have a blessed New Year!

CH (LTC) Brett Charsky C: 315-481-0419
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MY BELOVED
IS MINE
AND I AM HIS.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:16

Citizen Soldier For Life - Career Readiness



Dear Vermont National Guard Members and Families,

Preparing your wardrobe when going on a job interview or meeting with leadership, is not just practicing what to say or going through one of our CSFL Mock Interviews. It's also about knowing what to wear that best represents you as a professional.



Before taking these suggestions, look into the culture of the company and what they do, as well as take into account the region where you live for regional dress cues. What works in a small factory Vermont will not work in a business setting in Silicon Valley. This is another example of why doing research on the employer is vital to the job hunting process.

It has become the norm even in professional business, that a traditional black suit is no longer the go-to for interviews. The only exception would be State or Federal Government work, or Fortune 500 Companies. The popularity of social media has exploded and so has being an individual. The days of the cookie-cutter interview look are quickly vanishing. Employers are expecting a little uniqueness out of you. This will go a long way in them remembering you as well! Adding a grey, brown, navy blue, or maroon accent piece such as a blazer or shirt can look professional, but show that you are not afraid to break the mold! After researching the company and understanding the culture of the area, try a few new looks on for yourself before automatically relying on the outfit that hasn't gotten you a job yet!

Until next time,
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Vermont Veterans Outreach



The MISSION Act gives Veterans greater access to health care in VA facilities and the community, expands benefits for caregivers, and improves VA's ability to recruit and retain the best medical providers.



Community Care Eligibility

You may be able to receive care from a provider in your local community if you meet specific criteria. Generally, Veterans must be enrolled in the VA to receive care, although some Veterans are not required to enroll to receive care. Eligibility further depends upon your individual health care needs or circumstances. It is important to remember that under the Veterans Community Care Program, in most instances VA must authorize your care before you receive it.

Under the MISSION Act, there are six different eligibility criteria for community care. Meeting any one of these criteria for the specific care you need means you are eligible to elect to receive that care either through the VA care or community provider in the VA's network.

- The specific care you need is not provided by the VA at any facility
- You reside in a U.S. state (AK, HI, or NH) or territory (Guam, America Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, or U.S. Virgin Islands) does not have a full-service VA Medical facility
- "Grandfathered" eligibility based on residence and the 40-mile eligibility criterion from the Choice program
- The specific care you need is not available within designated access standards
- You and your referring clinician decide it is your best medical interest to receive the specific care you need in the community
- VA has designated the VA medical service line delivering the specific care you need as not providing care that complies VA's standards for quality.

For further information visit- www.missionact.gov for more details.

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 Check us out on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/vtvfot/>

Personal Financial Services



The holiday season is upon us. Last year the average person spent \$885 per person on holiday gifts. You all have heard a lot about shopping sales, using coupon. So, let's talk about some different ideas for holiday savings.

We will start with the 4-gift rule, this was a new one to me and may be for some of you too. The rule of four gifts idea goes as follows; something you want, something you need, something to wear and something to read. It is a way to make sure that the gifts you are giving cover both needs and wants.

There is a wonderful trend of giving experiences and special homemade gifts. People love receiving their favorite foods or desserts, or how about a date night out for a family with children, or a handmade scarf. The extra time and thought put into creating a gift that is special to the recipient is always appreciated.

Here is an oldy but goody that is still around; some stores still do layaway! For those of you not well versed in layaway: you put items on layaway; they are held at the store for you; most stores have you make weekly payments, there can be a small service fee; when you pay the items off you then take them home. Some of the stores still offering this option are Walmart, Game Stop, Sears and Kmart offer layaway online. Just make sure that the items you want can be put on layaway. This is an option to use instead of charging things on your credit cards and making payments with interest.

As we gear up for Black Friday and Cyber Monday, just be mindful about your holiday spending, you don't want to end up paying off gifts all next year. Once you get through to the New Year maybe think about starting a Holiday saving account at your local bank or credit union, many offer weekly or monthly payments and they hold the money for you till before Thanksgiving, then you can save all next year and will have cash to spend next holiday season.

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Family Assistance Center



Holiday Traditions....What are yours? My family's traditions start right after Thanksgiving. As my husband and boys head out rifle hunting on the last weekend, my holiday baking begins with rum cakes and fudge. In the next weekend following my two boys will wander around on our property and find me the perfect Christmas tree. Sometimes it's a little Charlie Brown tree, but that's okay! All of the thought and love they put into their decision always makes it the perfect tree to me.



Have a happy 2019 holiday season with family and friends!!

Here are some family fun winter activities:

Snow Tubing in Vermont: Just a few listed- many more...

Alakazaam Tube Park, Magic Mountain, Londonderry, VT 802-824-5645

Grafton Ponds Outdoor Center, Grafton, VT 802-843-2400

Killington Tubing Park, Killington, VT 802-422-6201

Mount Snow, West Dover, VT 802-245-7669

Smugglers Notch Resort, Smugglers Notch, VT 800-419-4615

Ice Castles, NH

The experience is built using hundreds of thousands of icicles hand-placed by professional ice artists. The castles include breathtaking LED-lit sculptures, frozen thrones, ice-carved tunnels, slides, fountains and much more. Located in Lincoln, NH <https://icecastles.com/lincoln/>



"Though I've grown old, the bell still rings for me as it does for all who truly believe." —Chris Van Allsburg, the Polar Express

Rita Durgin

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Check us out on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/VTNGFAC/>



Retreat for Student Veterans

Are you a veteran studying at a 2 or 4-year college? If so, this Camp Resilience retreat may be just right for you. It will include workshops covering such topics as understanding how issues from military service can affect your studies, making the transition to college life, communication skills and developing good study habits. There will also be discussions on the adjustment to college post deployment and how veterans with PTSD, depression and other service related issues can succeed in their academic endeavors.

In addition to the workshops, the retreat will also include exciting and challenging sports activities like climbing at an indoor climbing, an introduction to scuba diving, snowshoeing and yoga.

Lodging, meals and activities are all provided at no cost to the participants, but they must arrange their own transportation to/from Gilford, NH.



WHO:	Veterans Returning to School
WHEN:	Jan 10 th – 12 th , 2020
WHERE:	The Gunstock Inn 580 Cherry Valley Rd Gilford, NH
APPLY:	http://www.camp-resilience.org/apply

For more information about Camp Resilience go to www.camp-resilience.org or www.facebook.com/CampResilience/

Send questions to info@camp-resilience.org or call (978) 219-4003.



News from the South Burlington Vet Center

On June 28, 2019 a formalized partnership between Vet Centers and the National Guard Bureau (NGB) was signed to provide counseling, outreach staff and other services to members during training or drill weekends. According to Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel Chief, National Guard Bureau “this partnership will increase our ability to offer access to services to our Guard Soldiers and Airmen and their families who live in remote locations. Ultimately, this partnership will positively impact the readiness of our force” Suicide prevention is a top priority for the National Guard which experienced the highest rate of suicide among military components in 2017. Since then, VA has seen a 38% increase in National Guard service members seeking Vet Center services. NGB is carefully examining the information to determine whether a direct correlation exists

between the reductions of suicide so far in 2019 and this type of strategic engagement.

The South Burlington Vet Center will be able to provide counseling, outreach staff and other services to members during training or drill weekends. Vet Center staff will provide counseling and referral to those who may be under stress and at risk for self-harm.

The South Burlington Vet Center is located at 19 Gregory Dr. Suite 201, South Burlington and we can be reached at (802) 862-1806

Joe Gilmond
Veterans Outreach Program Specialist
South Burlington Vet Center



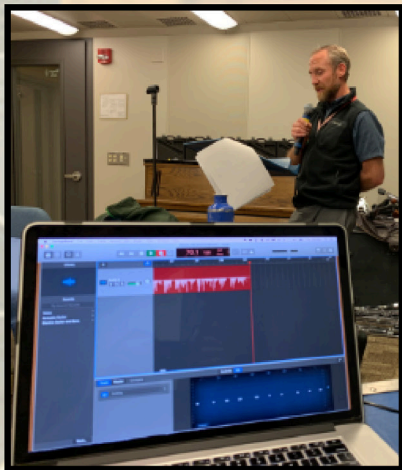
ATTENTION PLEASE
KS & CB will soon be adding two more episodes to their Second Time Around Multimedia Series



**NEW EPISODES
COMING SOON**

Positive Behavior Interventions & Strategies
Presenter: Brian Stoudnour

VTNG Family Programs Child & Youth Coordinator



Smart Strategies for Financially Savvy Youth
Presenter: Leslie Jones
Youth Financial Education Analyst

Go to: <https://www.ngfamily.vt.gov/Programs-Services/Kitchen-Spoons-Combat-Boots/>

Episodes to be posted by December 1st, 2019

Calendar of Events



DEC 4

KS&CB WEBINAR
Online



DEC 13 & 14

VSO HOLIDAY POPS
Barre, VT & Burlington, VT



DEC 15

OPERATION POLAR EXPRESS
Burlington, VT



DEC 25

CHRISTMAS DAY
Nationwide



**2020
JAN 1**

NEW YEARS DAY
Nationwide



JAN 8

KS&CB WEBINAR
Online

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CITIZEN SOLDIER FOR LIFE

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