

VERMONT NATIONAL GUARD FAMILY PROGRAMS

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



- Vermont Veterans Outreach
- Military & Family Readiness Centers
- Personal Financial Services
- Mental Health Counseling
- VT Air National Guard
- Child & Youth Program
- Military OneSource
- Survivor Outreach Services
- Transition Assistance Advisor
- Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots



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Thank you for helping me with my father's records, you have been a comfort to me during a transitional time period. I hope to be able to remain in contact with your organization going forward.

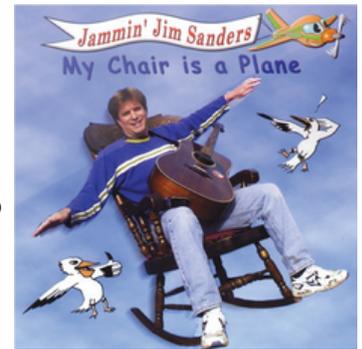


In remembrance of Jim...

A light went out at Family Programs with the passing of our friend and colleague, Jim Sanders. Jim became our Media Specialist in 2016 and left an indelible mark on all of us. Jim was an incredible photographer and graphic designer, as well as a talented videographer.

Jim videotaped hundreds of hours of our Child & Youth events as well as hundreds of hours recording our Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots webinars. Jim created all of our marketing materials which included flyers, brochures, pull-up banners, desktop banners, and so forth. Jim took great pride in his work and showed a great deal of enthusiasm in everything he did.

Jim was a kind soul and would lend a helping hand whenever needed. He was a gifted musician as well; Jim was very proud of the album he produced called “Jammin’ Jim Sanders, My Chair is a Plane”. Songs like Bounce & Boogie, The Boo Boo Song showed Jim’s empathy and love for children. Jim was able to pick up the acoustic guitar in high school and learned how to play it by ear. Jim was able to make friends wherever he went and always saw the bright side of things.



Jim had a zest for life and believed in living each day to the fullest. He spent his time off with his family who misses him very much. They would go hiking, boating, or just hang out with friends and family. That is when Jim was happiest—surrounded by his loved ones and making sure everyone was having a good time.

Jim also served 18 years in the Vermont Army National Guard and rose to the rank of Master Sergeant (MSG) He deployed with the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) in 2010 to Afghanistan. Jim believed in taking care of his soldiers and was a skilled leader. Jim’s last “weekend” position was as the Joint Forces Headquarters Religious Affairs Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge or NCOIC. Jim would often say that working with our State Chaplain Brett Charsky was the most fulfilling position he held. In this position, Jim was able to actively help soldiers and their families directly through such programs as Strong Bonds. For Jim, family was everything and in this position, he could be a part of assisting families to become more resilient and strong.

At Family Programs, we are striving to honor Jim by emulating him— living each day to the fullest, treating others with kindness and respect, and above all, remembering that family is everything.

“The connections we make in the course of life—maybe that’s what heaven is”
Fred Rogers

Message to Stakeholders

the year
everything
changed



The fiscal year 2020 will be remembered mainly as the year that everything changed. The first half of the year was business as usual, with planning for our annual Child & Youth Camps, Yellow Ribbon events, Month of the Military Child, etc. Our events and meetings were canceled by the middle of March 2020 due to the COVID19 pandemic.

Next was a transformation into action by the Vermont National Guard (VTNG) and within Family Programs. The VTNG members quickly built a surge hospital at the Champlain Valley Exposition within days for the overflow of COVID19 patients. We won't soon forget members of the 40th Army Band playing for the patients.

Our VTNG members also set up sites around the state where families facing food insecurity could come and pick up food to sustain them.



We dedicated this issue of our Annual Report to the men and women of the Vermont National Guard who did not hesitate to answer the call of need from their fellow Vermonters. We salute their dedication and courage.

VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH

In March 2020, the world around us shifted in the wake of the global pandemic. In spite of the significant restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the VT Veterans Outreach Program was able to continue building on its excellent working relationship with the Veterans Administration. The VA's decision to limit in-person appointments and allow a significant number of their employees to telework meant that the majority of our interactions with VA staff members were conducted via phone calls, email, or through virtual meeting platforms like Zoom or MS Teams.



Our mission was still the same—the Vermont Veterans Outreach Team (VVOT) continued to see veterans in their homes utilizing all necessary precautions/guidance from the CDC and the State of Vermont. VVOT's in-person outreach events diminished as our last large gathering was the Veterans Summit held at the University of Vermont on March 7th, 2020. During 2020, VVOT continued to attend virtual meetings including VA's Outreach Committee, Director's Coffee with Veteran Service Office (VSO), VT Veterans Committee on Veteran Homelessness, quarterly meetings with Maine, NH, and VT including the Directors of the VA medical centers as well community partners meeting (community action, hunger-free, etc.). We also participated in all of the VA virtual Town Hall Meetings. In addition, we continued to work closely with the VA Patient Advocates Office, Eligibility Office, Justice Outreach Coordinators, and the Healthcare for Homeless Vets program. We developed new relationships with VA staff members working in the Business Office and the Office for Community Care.

We assisted the VA's Outreach Committee in developing a training program and reference material for VA personnel who volunteer to attend outreach events, and our VAMC Liaison wrote the chapter on Military Culture for their volunteer handbook. We also worked with the VA's Senior Research Librarian and Outreach Committee Chair to coordinate support for a test program at the new South Burlington Library to provide computer workstations for Veterans to use for VA telehealth appointments.

Finally, we coordinated with the VA, VT National Guard, and the American Legion/VFW to develop a joint program to facilitate Veterans signing up for the national Burn Pit and Environmental Hazards registries. For this seasoned, hard-working, and dedicated team, it truly was business as usual. The VVOT's training and experiences kicked in to meet the new challenges presented by the COVID-19 restrictions as demonstrated by the Success Stories below:

Army Combat Veteran – Purple Heart Recipient:

This case was re-opened when the Primary Care Physician at the Newport Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) contacted me. The Combat Veteran was being treated for bone cancer and was in need of a lift reclining chair to sit in. Because the VA is unable to assist with this, I contacted a local furniture store (Family Furniture) and spoke with the owner. The owner agreed to sell a mechanical lift recliner at cost and waive the taxes if a non-profit organization was involved. I applied for financial assistance with War Veterans Assistance Group and Ruck Up and the chair was delivered to the veteran's home within two weeks. He was so grateful for the chair that the VNA Nurse called me and asked me to reassure the veteran that the chair was his and that he did not have to pay for it.

VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH

Army Korean War Veteran:

A representative from Senator Bernie Sanders' office reached out to us because she was contacted by a 100% disabled veteran, who was currently home-bound in Barre and recently had open heart surgery and was awaiting eye surgery. He stated that his mailbox was completely covered in snow, so he was not been able to receive his mail for weeks as he is not able to shovel it out. He had tried reaching out to various places for assistance with no success. . I immediately drove out to the veterans' home to assess the situation. When I got to his residence I noticed that his mailbox was not covered in snow, but actually very clear and accessible. I called the veteran and asked if he was aware that his mailbox was fine. He told me that someone must have shoveled it out. He also told me that he was now receiving his mail. We quickly updated Bernie Sanders' office of the situation. Crisis averted.

USA Combat Veteran Vietnam '68-'70:

A local family member entrusted this Vermont Veteran Outreach specialist to assist their combat veteran (CV) with several issues. The Combat Veteran served in the Vietnam era and was looking for benefits for which he may be eligible. Together, we went to the Veterans Health Administration to complete his Compensation claim and get additional medical assistance. The CV was not currently enrolled in the Veterans Medical Center and needed to be connected with a Primary Care Provider. The CV had cancer and was beginning the treatment process of care. Next, we connected the CV with a VAMC CBOC care manager as well as the eye care department through the Veterans Administration Medical Center for a new eye prescription. Lastly, we assisted the CV with registering for the Vietnam-era Agent Orange registry. The CV received the eligibility notification and completed his cancer treatment process. The veteran's compensation was granted at 100% for the period of care, and is now in remission! This is a special case, as this CV was my high school math teacher- I never knew that he was in Vietnam. The CV was also recommended for the Vermont State Distinguished Service medals.

USA Veteran '71-'73:

Veteran lives in Whiting, VT, next to a community partner that Vermont Veterans Outreach (VVO) works closely with. In my work with this particular community partner, I observed this veteran participate in the list of chores that need to be completed daily on a farm. The veteran did not say much and pretty much kept to himself. Even after our introduction to one another, the veteran was still "distant" and let me know that he did not need any assistance.

Over time, little by little, this veteran opened up and started to talk to me. The purpose of Vermont Veterans Outreach and the resources it can provide to Vermont veterans had been explained to him in the past. The veteran was reluctant and acted as though he had not earned any benefits! It took a couple of conversations with this veteran, before he realized that he had in fact, earned benefits and could sign up for and utilize the VA Healthcare. The veteran completed a VA Form 10-10EZ and was found eligible to join VA Healthcare. He has been receiving excellent healthcare from the VA ever since.

All veterans are not the same, therefore the approaches used in an effort to try and help our Vermont veterans, should not be the same. This USA veteran is a perfect example of just how different veterans are. This particular veteran needed to have things reiterated to help enforce the idea that the VA is a good thing. He needed to be able to trust the VA. Finally, after many conversations and patience, the USA veteran came around and accepted the VA as an entity that exists to help our veterans!



VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH

USA Veteran '53-'56:

A family member of this USA veteran, who had been deceased for 20+ years, contacted VVO to request proper military honors for her father. The veteran has a plot and a headstone at a local cemetery, but his ashes were never laid to rest.

Conducting funerals during the COVID-19 pandemic came with new rules and regulations from the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs (VOVA), which assisted with this process. One change that happened was that VOVA's cemetery representative could not assist in this process due to the current pandemic situation. Despite the absence of VOVA's physical presence, they were able to provide helpful information. Additionally, VVO contacted VTNG Funeral Director at Camp Johnson, and he connected with the family of the veteran to work out the logistics and a date. A recommendation to procure a US Flag for burial was made to the family—they brought the veteran's DD Form 214 to the local US Post Office and received the flag.

On August 12, 2020, the ashes of this Addison County, Vermont, USA Veteran were laid to rest in his rightful place. Collaboration between VVO, VOVA, Bristol, VT's Greenwood Cemetery Caretaker— as well as the Bristol, VT Town Clerk made this funeral held in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic possible. Most importantly, the wish of a VT military family was granted.

“
The VVO team is not only a resource but an asset to our veteran community. The team is professional, prompt, responsive and dedicated to the mission of helping veterans and families. It's truly a pleasure to work next to such a great group here in Vermont
”



USA / Combat Veteran WWII '44-'46:

A family member contacted a VVOT specialist to assist in getting their father (98yrs old at the time) into the Veterans Administration Medical system. The specialist met with the family and the Combat Veteran who was residing at the local Assisted Living Facility. The Combat Veteran is a WWII Silver Star Purple Heart recipient survivor and sharp as a whip! The specialist and CV completed an application of Eligibility. CV completed a Letter of Intent to file a claim with the Veterans Benefits Administration with a Vermont Veterans Office of Affairs Veterans Service Officer (VOVA VSO). VVOT met with family members to discuss the options for their WWII, PH, Bronze Star medal recipient Veteran who is still very sound of mind. CV signed all paperwork and VVOT member had a very nice meeting with the Veteran. With the pandemic, processes slowed down in the claim department and the family requested additional assistance from the congressional party with Senator Leahy's office.

VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH

The CV now 99 years of age, a WWII vet, and at 99 has certain limits and restrictions in what he is able to do. He also has had part of a lung removed which makes him even more of a COVID risk. He has been living with this wound for 76 years and has been able to adapt to the problems created by that wound.

As is noted in his records which have been found and referenced in the 526EZ support documents, some located by other VA staff, he has been treated at other VA facilities but not for this wound after the war (as far as we know). The Rutland VA CBOC recommended the CV apply for a disability rating once learning he had never applied for disability despite being a wounded veteran and experiencing significant muscle loss in his lower extremities. The CV received notification of his awarded disabilities and a past year's compensation.

The VVOT specialist was invited to the weekend of August 7 and 8, 2021 for a birthday celebration for this Combat Veteran's 100th birthday at the home where he resides in assisted living.



“
The VVO saved my life by replacing my broken/no top teeth of which I broke. They literally made me smile again.
”

USMC / Combat Veteran Vietnam '60-'66:

A spouse of a CV contacted us for assistance with the CV mental health condition – Dementia. The spouse contacted VVOT through a mutual family friend – Son. The spouse was looking for assistance to place the CV at the VT Veterans Home (VVH) located in Bennington Vermont. VVOT connected with the Admissions Director, Intake officer, and media specialist to see where they were on the waiting list and how the process was moving along. The spouse called us saying, “Thanks so much for all your help. Sadly they called today to say they are not taking dementia patients because they don't believe they will understand the quarantine process. This is so sad because no matter where they go they will have to go through this, then end up someplace they are not happy. So much for taking care of our veterans. I do understand, but it breaks my heart”. COVID 19 was extremely challenging this year for families of our older veterans trying to get their loved ones into safe care assisted living facilities. Strangely enough, this case moved along very rapidly once all things in the care environment settled down and we understood the procedure better. The family was able to finally get their veteran into the VVH and continues to receive great care.

VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH

Army Vietnam War Era Veteran:

This veteran was a self-employed contractor, who was currently recovering from hip surgery. Along with being out of work due to recovery and now with the Coronavirus shutdown, he was struggling with some of his finances. We helped him apply for financial assistance with the Blue Star Mothers (BSM) to help with his car payment. The Blue Star Mothers approved his request and the Veteran believed with this financial support, it would help him to get back on track with his expenses and hopefully through these challenging times.

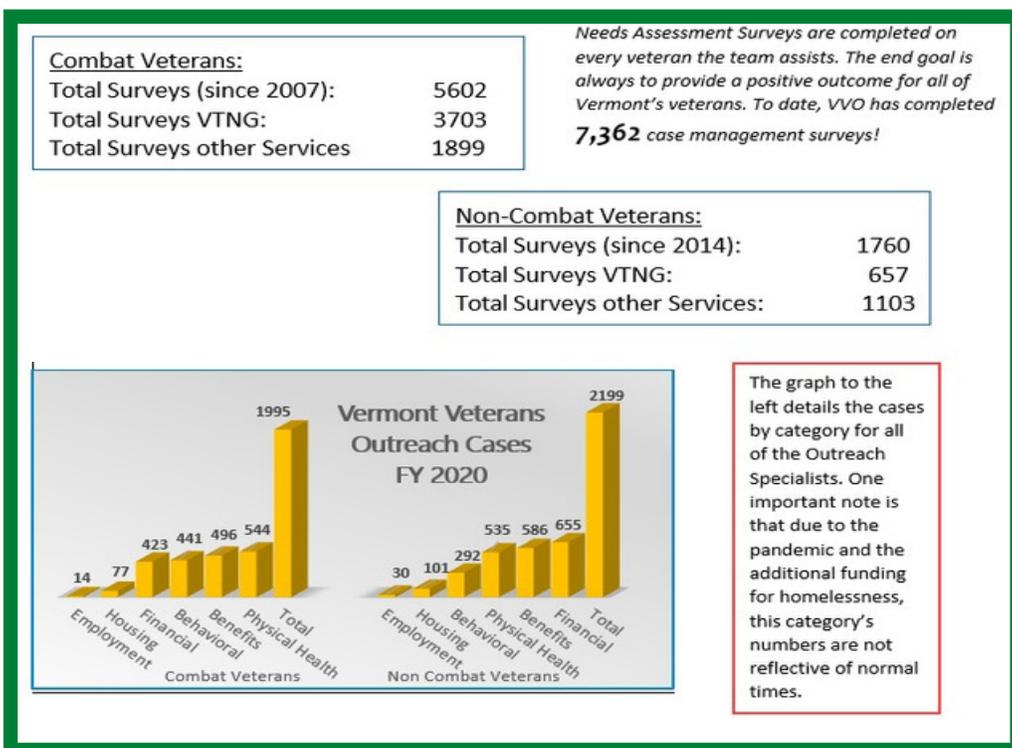
Air Force Vietnam Era Veteran:

This veteran was a retired musician that due to the COVID Pandemic, had not been able to find work. He was currently trying to find financial support to help with his car repairs. With his recent government stimulus payment and his savings account, the veteran was able to pay for all but \$755.48 of the total car repair. We reached out to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association requesting \$555.48 which was approved and along with \$200 from the Blue Star Mothers Association for the remaining balance to get his car repaired.

USN Combat Veteran 1944-1946

I was contacted by Supportive Services of Veterans and Families (SSVF) about a US Navy World War II veteran and his spouse experiencing homelessness due to the COVID Pandemic. The Veteran and his spouse had attempted to reside in one of the long-term suites in the area which quickly burned through the entirety of their savings. SSVF began the process of enrolling them in their program while I sent off requests for records of service from the National Archives as all their files were stuck in storage on the Canadian side of the border. Concurrently, I began reaching out to community partners such as the VFW, Warrior Soar, and Age Well in an effort to gain immediate support for the couple. In the midst of all this, I began working with the VA to resolve the recent denial of a VA Veteran's Pension. As I write this the Veteran and his spouse remain in temporary housing while they wait for their names to move up on the SSVF list for something permanent. The difference now is they are not paying out of pocket, the VA Pension has been approved and funds are being received, and, perhaps most importantly, the network of support is established to care for their needs as they continue their process to stability.

The robust Vermont Veterans Outreach database continues to pay dividends by providing relevant data on our combat and non-combat veterans.

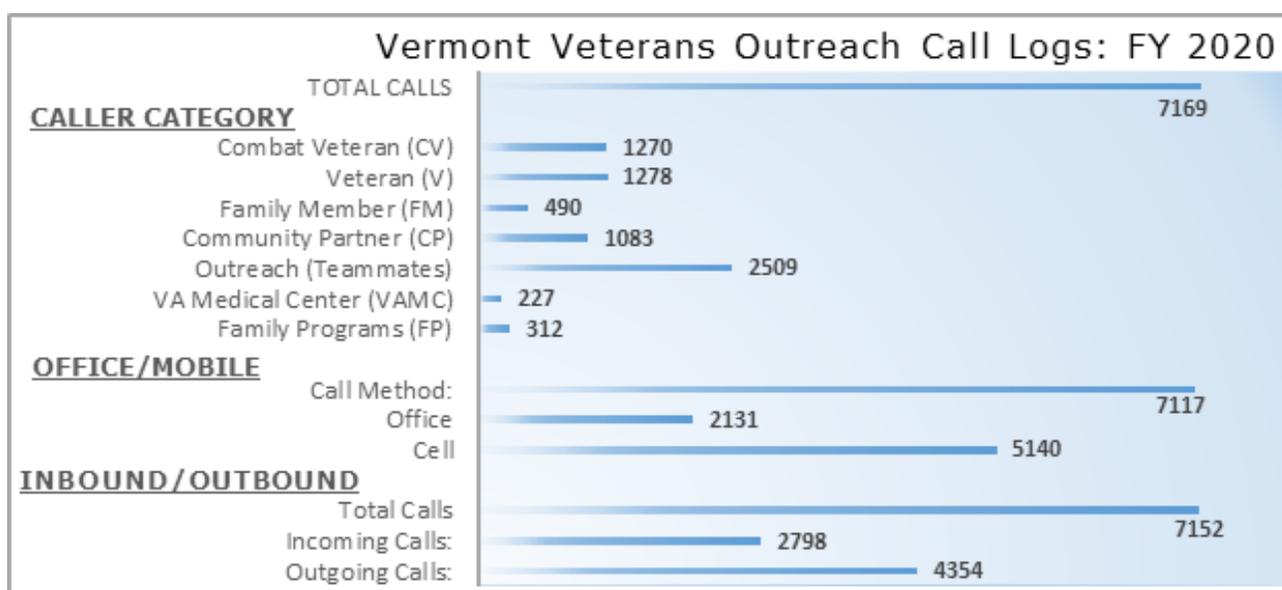


MILITARY & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

24/7 - 888-607-8773

FY 2020 saw many changes at Family Programs. One change came at the tail end of FY2020: the absorption of the Military & Family Support Center by the Vermont Veterans Outreach Program. The call center began in 2008 and has been invaluable to the Vermont National Guard, our veterans, service members and their families. The calls coming through the 24/7 phone line-888-607-8773-ran the gamut of issues from financial, behavioral health, VA benefits and general information.

Over the years the number of calls coming through the Call Center decline while concurrently, the Vermont Veterans Outreach (VVO) specialists incoming and outgoing calls increased. For several years the VVO has been tracking their incoming and outgoing calls as detailed in the year end FY20 graph below:



VVO specialists have long been embedded in the villages, towns and cities of Vermont. If a community partner has a question or concern regarding a veteran they are working with, they know who to call. Our Outreach Specialists are out in their communities meeting with veterans as well as community partners and various VAMC department staff advocating for their clients. They are not limited to a specific “brick and mortar” location and can often be found “sliding their feet under the kitchen table” at a WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Gulf War, Afghanistan/Iraq veteran’s residence listening and assisting.

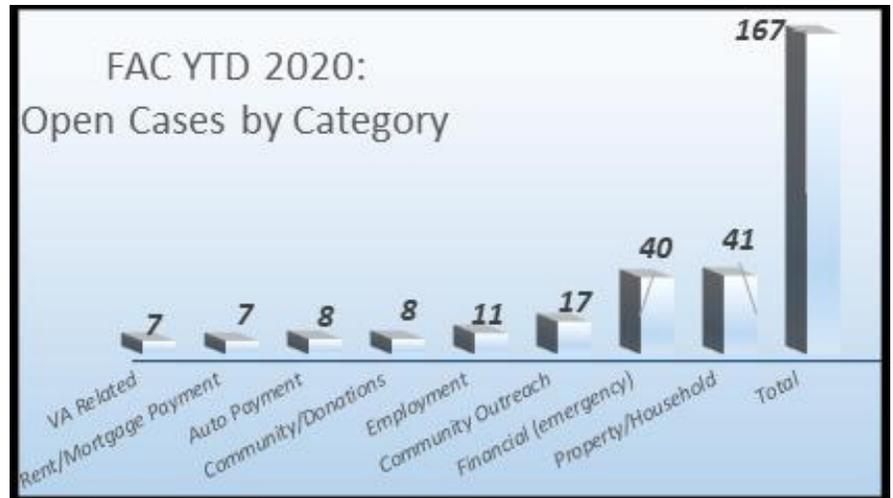
Leadership knew they did not want to disable the 24/7 call center phone line as it has been utilized for over 12 years, however it became clear from a fiscal perspective and return on investment that a change was needed. Having the VVO absorb the “call center” was the perfect solution. VVO was able to hire more staff to help man the phone line and the “merge” happened on 21 September, 2020 seamlessly. An added benefit of this merge allowed VVO to streamline calls coming in and the timeline of resolution of the callers’ issues/concerns completed more quickly. Starting for the FY21 Annual Report, we will be sharing the statistics of calls and categories coming through 888-607-8773 number managed by the Vermont Veterans Outreach Program.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTERS (FAC)

In late 2019, the decision was made by National Guard Bureau not to renew the Family Assistance Center (FAC) and the Citizen Soldier for Life (CSFL) contracts along with the Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA- see page 12). These programs would be replaced by one program that would be a combination of all the functions of the above contracts and would eliminate duplication of efforts. This change ultimately benefited our veterans, service members, and their families greatly as they could contact one person for all of their needs.

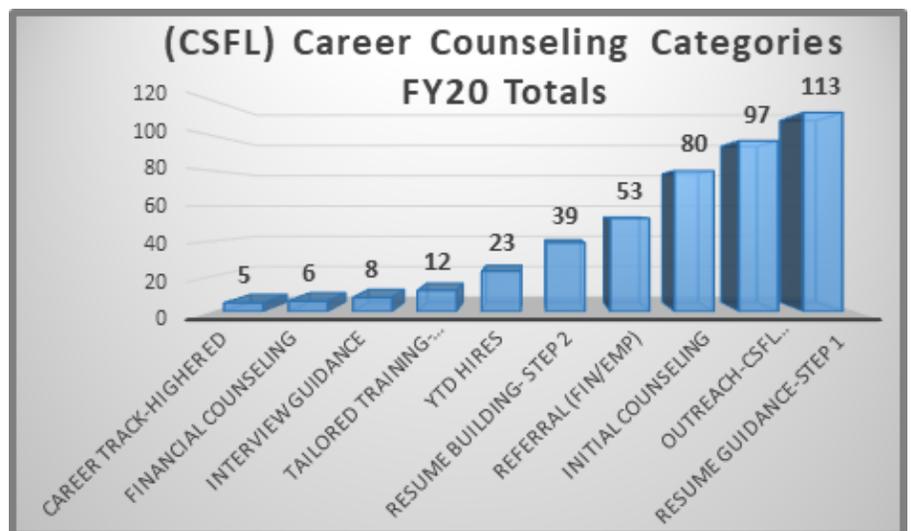
It was very hard to say goodbye to these programs' staff as they had provided services for many years. They provided an invaluable service for where we were as a state's force structure. However, like most things in life-the landscape in which we work was changing. It was critical to align our resources with streamlined services that met the ever-changing needs of our families.

For the first six months of FY2020, our FACs assisted clients with property/household issues: relocation assistance, utilities and vehicle issues being the top 3 issues. Followed closely by financial assistance. For several years financial resources and referrals has been the top category of which the FACs assisted.



CITIZEN SOLDIER FOR LIFE (CSFL)

The CSFL program fulfilled its mission of assisting our veterans, service members, dependents, and retirees with all of their employment/career issues. Asking for assistance with finding a job or trying to elevate to a better position is not easy-it can be very humbling. Our CSFL staff understood this and treated each client with sensitivity and empathy. Our CSFL's metrics top category was a first draft of resume writing which would help the client think about how to quantify their skills. This position also required a great deal of outreach: to employers, hiring events, job fairs, and so forth. This built awareness of what services we provided and a resource for community partners working with veterans and service members. We are most grateful for all the hard work of our contractors and their dedication to our military families.



FAMILY READINESS SUPPORT ASSISTANT



Michaela LaCoss



Candice Bryan - Broe ;
Family Readiness Support Assistants



Our Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) Program continued to provide unwavering dedication to the stability of our Soldier & Family Readiness Groups (SFRG) until the program ended in the 3rd quarter of 2020. The continued care of our SFRG volunteers and command leadership was transferred to our new Military and Family Readiness Program. The tireless work of our FRSA team in FY20 is reflected in 3 categories:

Support, Training and Volunteer Management



SUPPORT

**46 COMPANIES/
DETACHMENTS**



2714 SOLDIERS



5 FAMILY EVENTS



FAMILY READINESS SUPPORT ASSISTANT

TRAINING



PROVIDED 59 WELL-BEING TRAININGS TO 163 ATTENDEES!

PROVIDED 9 FAMILY READINESS ANNUAL BRIEFS TO 989 SERVICE MEMBERS & FAMILY MEMBERS!



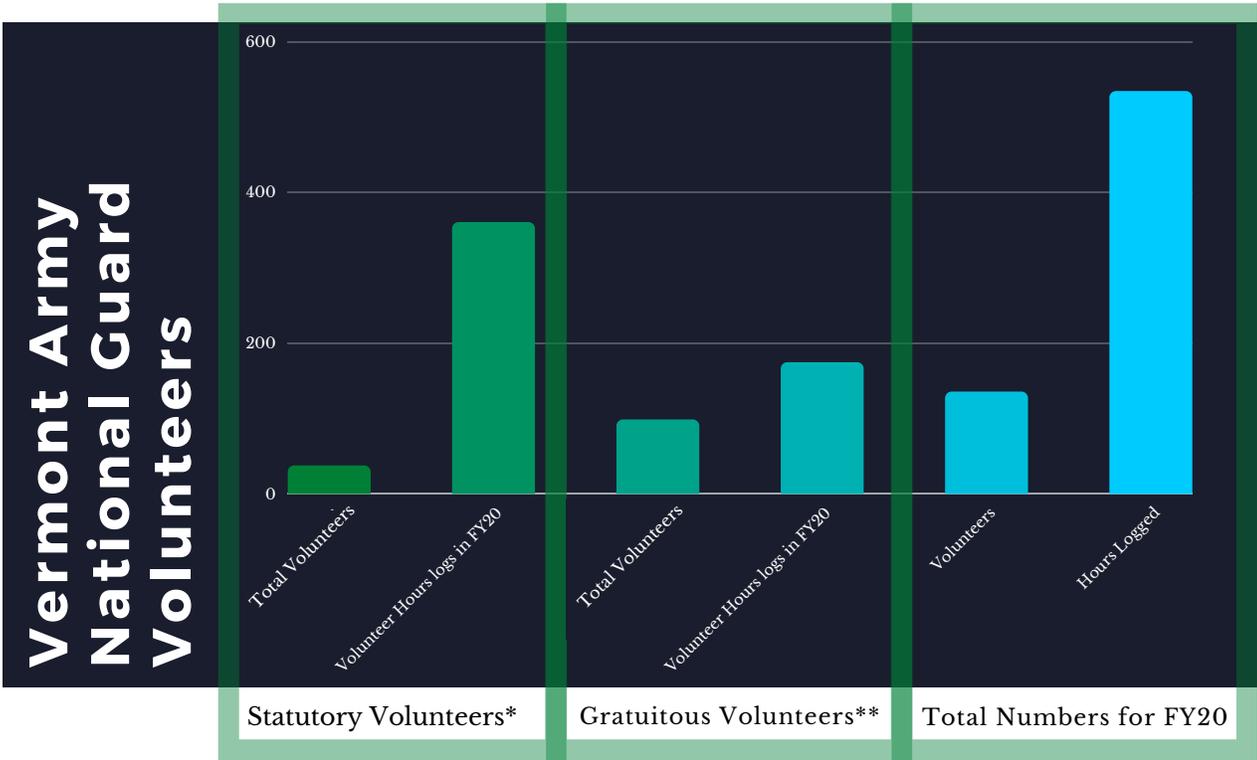
1240

TOTAL NUMBER OF SERVICE MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS TRAINED IN FY2020!

FAMILY READINESS SUPPORT ASSISTANT

Volunteer Management

Volunteer Management includes recruiting, tracking, engaging, and most importantly, retaining our volunteers. Even though our volunteers are not staff, they have the most impact on our organization’s success. Our volunteers do it because they believe in our mission; our volunteers are passionate about taking care of our service members and their families. Our band of volunteers can be counted on to answer the call in good times and bad. We have been humbled by the sheer number of volunteers we have been able to count on over the years. They are, without a doubt, the very best volunteers in the nation!



* These volunteers have an appointment memo signed by Commander, and have official roles and responsibilities.

**These volunteers do not have appointment memos or formal job description. Does not serve in an official capacity.

With the onset of the pandemic, our FRSA team seamlessly shifted to a more virtual environment to communicate with our volunteers. They provided a more robust Social Media presence via Facebook & YouTube. Their curriculum shifted to focus on more COVID-19-related matters. Most importantly during this time, the VTNG activated over 300 soldiers to support COVID testing, food distribution, and hospital overflow emergency sites. This caused anxiety and stress for our families at home wondering what their loved one was doing and if they were safe. Our FRSA team assisted the families with updates, resources, and support to help the families cope while their soldier was performing critical services during such a difficult time for our state.

MILITARY & FAMILY READINESS CENTER

With change comes great opportunities for growth.

In FY20, we said goodbye to three national programs across the country: Family Assistance Center (FAC), Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA), and Citizen Soldier for Life (CSFL). The goal was to combine all of the functions of these programs into a single, all-encompassing service known as the Military and Family Readiness Program. Streamlining these programs allowed us to eliminate duplication and better serve our veterans, service members, and their families.

“
I am very grateful this service exists. The Family Assistance Center specialist supported my effort to get a homeless former VT National Guardsman into a temp housing facility.”



pictured from left to right: Andrew Richard (lead), Patrick Knapp, John Mingo, Nick Thomas, *not pictured* Bambi Patch, Herman Moore

Our Military and Family Readiness Program became fully functional in August of 2020. The team immediately set to work building support networks, advising unit commanders, and most importantly, assisting those we serve. Our Military and Family Readiness Specialists (MFRS) have extensive knowledge of military culture, and each has unique experiences interacting with military communities. Their cumulative previous military experience spans several active and reserve services: VT Army National Guard, VT Air National Guard, active duty Army, an active duty Marine Corps, and reserve Marine Corps. With a cadre of trainers, our specialists, in short order, learned how best to assist those we serve.

MILITARY & FAMILY READINESS CENTER



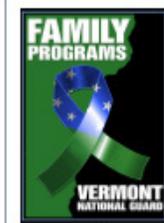
At the time of the team's inception, the VT Army National Guard was in the midst of preparations for several large deployments to various overseas locations in support of ongoing operations. For this reason, the first priority of the newly-formed MFRS team was to build relationships with the command teams throughout the state. This allowed our military leadership to know who they could turn to with troop & family welfare concerns during the deployment cycle. Our specialists also made important contacts with various resource providers in the local community such as childcare coordinators, government aid organizations, and fellow social workers. Almost immediately, the MFRS team received calls for help from the military community. In the short period before the end of the fiscal year, the MFRS team assisted in several urgent cases which included a mental health crisis, a livable housing concern, and a student loan payment concern.

Though the VT Army National Guard comprises the largest population of clients, the MFRS team also provides support to all actively serving military personnel and their families in Vermont. In particular, this applies especially to the detachment of Navy sailors based in White River, the U.S. Coast Guard Station in Burlington, ROTC instructors at Vermont colleges and universities, and active duty and reserve recruiters throughout the state.

As the MFRS team grows its network of support and expands its relationships with soldiers, families, and communities, they will enhance the already high level of support and service to the Vermont military community.

Personal Financial Counseling (PFC)

The Department of Defense describes Personal Financial Counselors as financial experts who provide service members and their families the training and education they need in order to achieve financial goals and address financial challenges. The VTNG Personal Financial Counselor (PFC) does this and so much more. “Counselor”



Megan Sather
Personal Financial Counselor

comes into play each and every time our PFC meets with a service member or family; offering assistance without judgment. Discussing our financial situations is very personal and makes us feel vulnerable. Achieving Financial Readiness is difficult and once we have it takes a great deal of work to maintain it.

The VTNG PFC started the fiscal year 2020 with a robust number of presentations/briefs/financial education that reached an audience of more than 1600. As with all the other programs, a shift happened in March 2020 when everyone went into lockdown due to COVID 19.

Our PFC shifted to presenting a multitude of virtual financial education webinars on topics that included: Protecting your Credit During COVID19, Home Buyer Primer, Saving & Investing, Raising Financially Fit Kids and so much more!

13 webinars from April to September in fact!



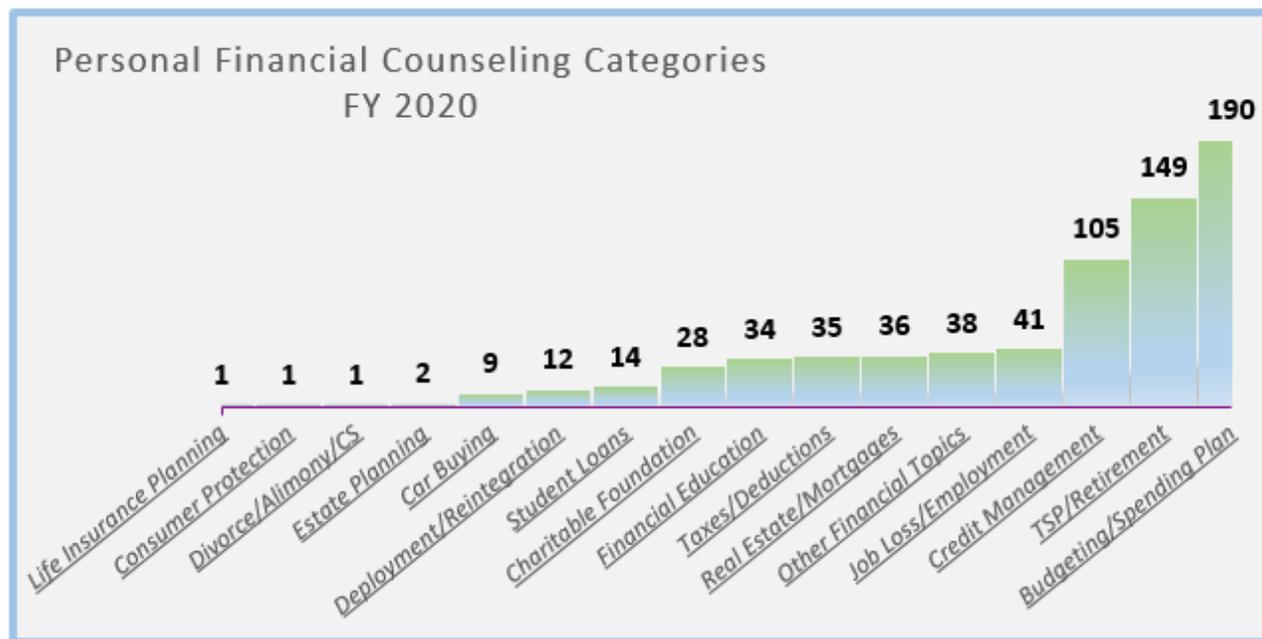
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Financial Success Stories:

The top three categories for services for FY 2020 were Budgeting, et. al, TSP/Retirement, and Credit Management as evident in the below success stories:

Budgeting et. al

I helped a client go through his bank statements line by line for three months to help create an accurate budget so his account would stop going into overdraft. He now feels very confident with accurate numbers to live by to keep a positive balance in his account each month.



TSP/Retirement:

I talked with a spouse who recently lost her husband. She wanted to make sure her retirement plan was on track with the decrease in her income. We talked about all the different income streams she will have in retirement. She will pull all those numbers together meet again to put them all into a retirement calculator to see where she stands. She was feeling overwhelmed but able to talk through her options; she felt more in control of her future.

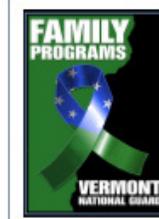
Credit Management:

The client wants to buy a house but doesn't have any credit; we came up with a plan to establish credit and made an appointment to meet in a few months to do a budget with the new mortgage payment. He feels like he has a plan now and can start moving forward toward his dream.

Budgeting, Credit Management, Home Buying:

I met with a client multiple times to start planning to buy a house in a year. We discussed credit and how to raise his credit score and budgeting. He wanted to start saving for buying a home but wasn't sure where to begin, so we created a budget based on his monthly spending. Then, he could see where he was willing to cut expenses to start saving. He said he now feels like this is a goal he can achieve with the plan we created.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING - (MHC)

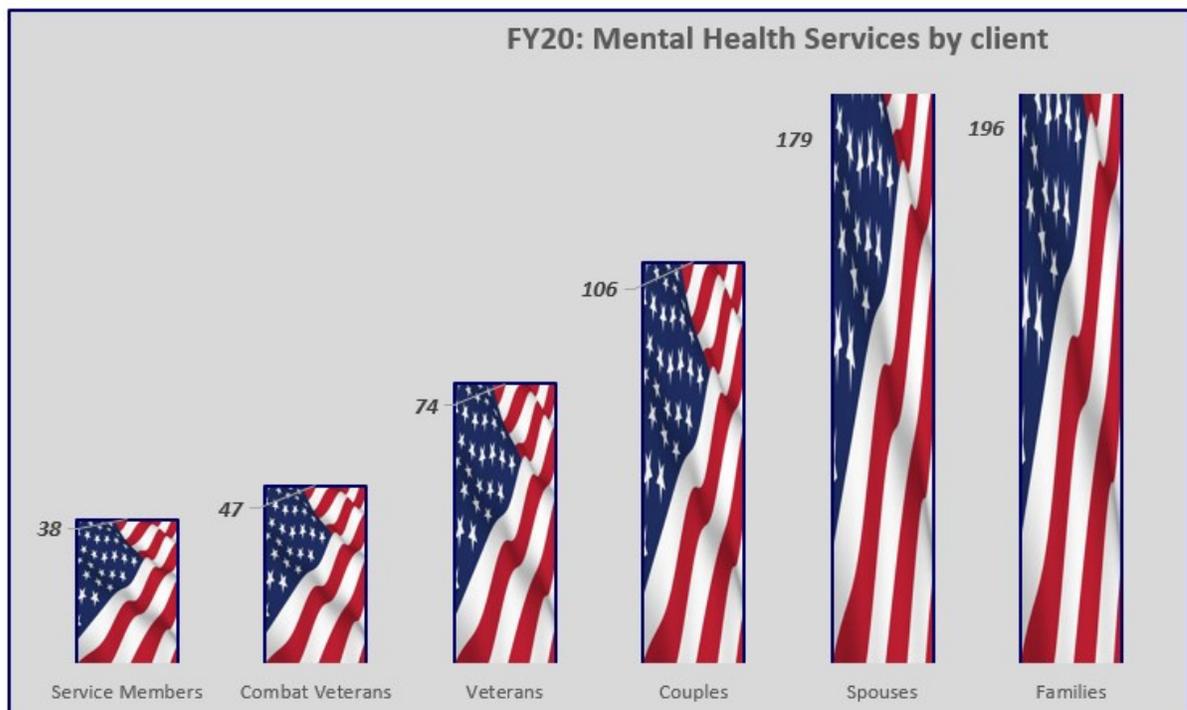


Charlene Caiano
Mental Health Counselor

A PERFECT STORM...

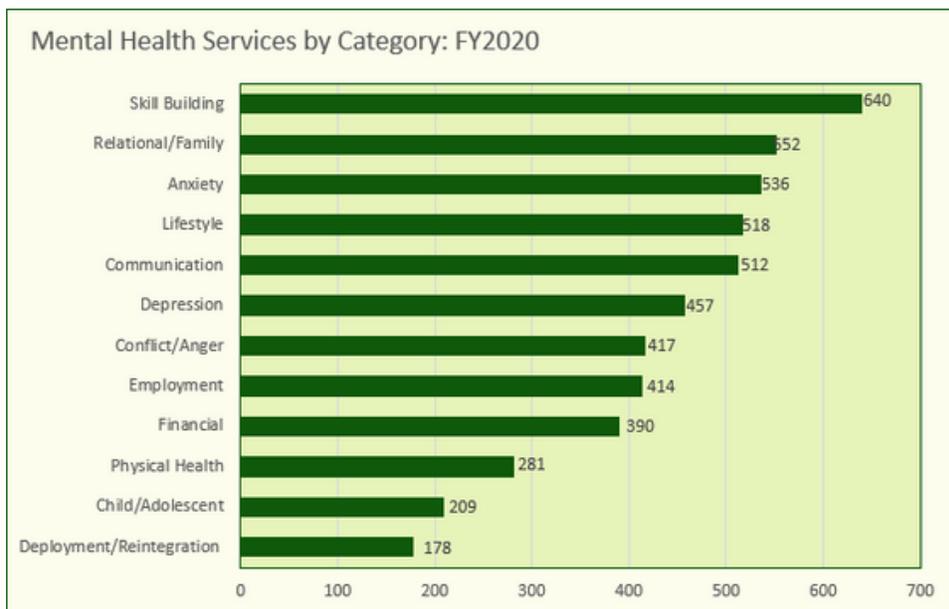
At the beginning of FY 20 (October 1, 2019) our families were grappling with the notification of upcoming deployments slated for FY21. While that may have seemed far in the future, it wasn't for our families. They started to feel the stress of knowing their soldier would be gone for approximately one year. They wanted to know everything at once—where were they going, how dangerous would it be, and how will I cope without her/him. Realities started to sink in like who will plow the driveway? What if I can't pick up the kids from daycare? All of these thoughts were going through the minds of our families. As well as how do I prepare my children for their soldier—Mom or Dad—being gone for a year? The children's thoughts included who will read me stories? Who will play catch with me or check my homework? While this is life in the military, it is a great deal for ANY family in which to cope.

Our families only had a few months to try to work through the emotions, concerns, and fears of their soldier leaving before everything changed. All of the sudden, they were all in lockdown together, some losing their civilian jobs due to the pandemic, many needing to transition their children to learning online rather than in person. All of them together in one place, 24/7...A perfect storm indeed.



When we compared the clients our Mental Health Counselor (MHC) saw from FY 2019 to 2020, we had startling increases in the Families and Couples categories. We saw a 32% increase in the number of families and a 48% increase in the number of couples counseled by our MHC. Due to being together so much, some couples separated, divorced or slept in separate bedrooms. The service members/veteran categories

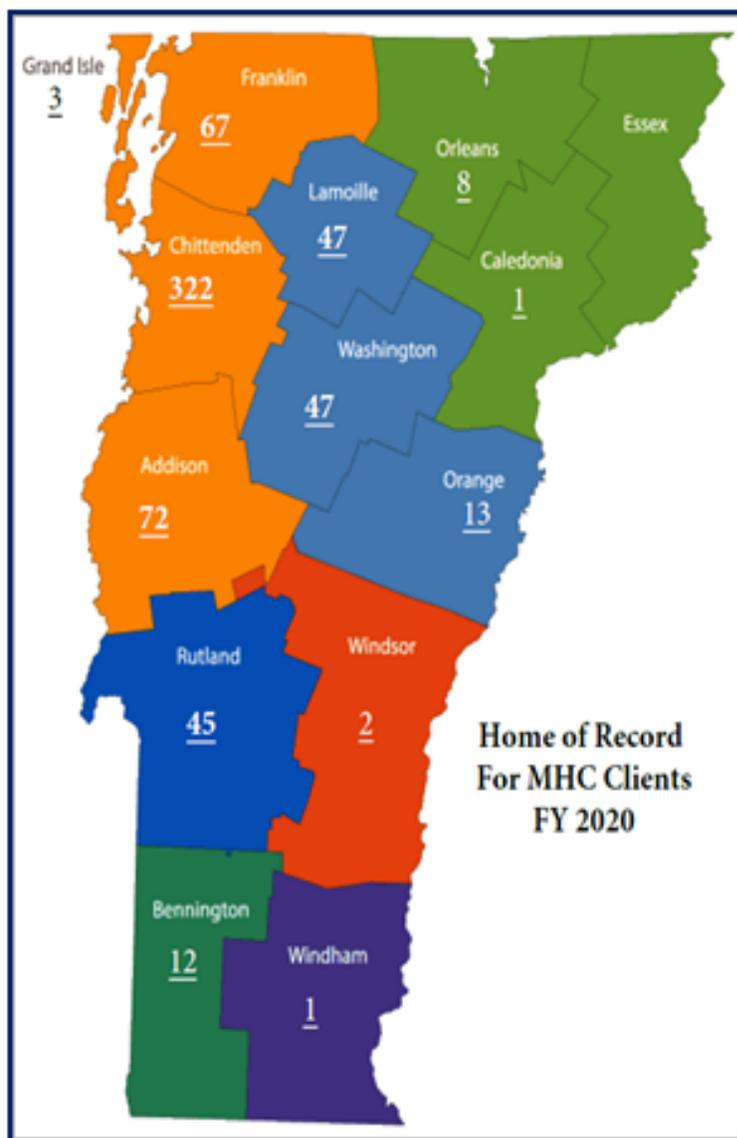
remained the same; due to their military training, many are very resilient and tend to downplay issues or concerns. It was more the spouses—especially those who would be experiencing deployments for the first time— that took advantage of the MHC services we provide.



All of the service categories increased greatly with a 38% increase from 2019 to 2020 in the relational/family category. Another category of interest is Lifestyle; this would include behaviors that lead to more substance abuse and drinking, weight gain, marital conflicts, and so forth. There was a 29% increase from 2019 to 2020 in this category due to the pandemic—on top of the upcoming deployments.

To the right is the Home of Record map of clients for our Mental Health Counselor for FY20.

Counties located west of the Green Mountains from Chittenden to Bennington saw a significant increase in cases from FY19. For example, there was a 33% increase in clients residing in Rutland County and a 26% for Addison County residents. Bennington County went from one client in FY19 to 12 clients for FY20. Chittenden County showed a modest increase at 15%. In addition, there is a correlation between these numbers and the units facing deployments in FY21.



AIR GUARD FAMILY READINESS OFFICE

The fiscal year for the Vermont Air National Guard began with their Airman Appreciation Day officially celebrating the arrival of our F-35 jets! Approximately 2500 people attended which included service members, retirees and their families. A great deal of work went into planning this event and it was a great success thanks to their many volunteers, VT State Guard, and multiple resources from the VTNG Family Programs Office.

We had 75 Airmen leave for a six month deployment to several overseas locations. We aid with the out processing procedures to make sure the Airmen have completed all the tasks necessary such as TRICARE, banking, power of attorney, etc. Completing these tasks ensures there will not be any surprises or issues while they are gone. Our Family Readiness Office also assisted 30 Air Guard members who were either separating or retiring from military service with transition assistance.

At the other end of the spectrum, we assist new recruits when they are getting ready to ship off to Basic Training.



Mary Mahoney
Airmen & Family Readiness Manager

We assisted 81 Airmen with their out processing, again, to make sure they don't have any surprises while at basic training or other schools. Once the young men and women raise their right hand to take the oath, they become eligible for all the benefits of being part of the Vermont Air National Guard including services from the Family Readiness Office.

Every year we do the holiday "wrap-around" for our families who may be struggling to make the holidays special. We do not want any family to go without, especially at the holidays. We work with community partners and generous donors to provide meals as well as presents for children. The pandemic has been most difficult for our children, so we want to be sure they are taken care of at the holidays.

AIR GUARD YELLOW RIBBON

With the onset of Covid-19, came the challenge of determining the best way to provide pre-deployment information to approximately 75 deploying Airmen. Ultimately, the Yellow Ribbon Coordinator was able to plan 3 small, in-person, non-funded, pre-deployment Yellow Ribbon briefs on base between August & October 2020. These events were held in small groups with social distancing, and wearing masks. The briefs provided were in-person as well as virtual resource presentations.

At the height of Covid-19, the wellness team assisted with making calls to members and their families to connect with them and to assist with any issues. In addition, we compiled and sent out resources that were available for our families. Attention is now turned to planning post-deployment Yellow Ribbon events for when our deployed Airmen return.



Kelli Langlois
Yellow Ribbon Support Specialist

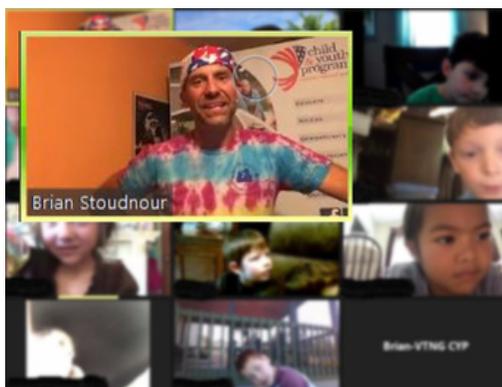
CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAM

With the onset of the global pandemic new ways of reaching, engaging, and training in Resilience and beyond, while still connecting Vermont's Military Kids had to be quickly realized. Here are two (2) of the many ways in which we succeeded in delivering those opportunities:



1

Virtual Camp experiences with our “Not-A-Box: Camp-In-A-Box!” on 20-23 April 2020, we held our first Virtual Camp experience, followed by three (3) more camps in the coming months. Each camper received ALL supplies necessary to participate in all of the training sessions.



2

Through a monthly digital subscription service, youth and their families were provided bonding tools, positive youth development, personal growth activities, self-care offerings, cultural learning opportunities, nature, and outdoor-based experiences, as well as physical movement challenges. This enabled families to unite as a home unit to further prepare for extended periods of separation. This did not come on the back of Vermont alone. It came through the collaborative efforts of the ARNG-CYS programs of CT, MA, ME, NH, NV, RI, and VT. These rapidly became a source of engagement for the military youth and families of Vermont, and across the United States!



MILITARY ONESOURCE



Marcie Caulfield
Military OneSource State Consultant

Military OneSource, a Department of Defense funded program, is an invaluable part of Family Programs. Military OneSource supports Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve members from the moment of enlistment through 365 days after separation. Additionally, this program supports separated Coast Guard members for 365 days after separation, survivors, and military academy cadets.

The resources and services provided by Military OneSource is comprehensive. They cover a variety of topics from financial counseling and tax filing assistance, to special needs support and wounded warrior resources. Military OneSource also provides resources for our spouses in the form of career and education opportunities. Another asset available is non-medical counseling to assist our families through relationship challenges, job, and deployment stressors. This is just the tip of the iceberg of what Military OneSource offers—if you visit www.MilitaryOneSource.mil or call them at 800-342-9647, 24/7—you will experience how this DoD program provides resources and support for EVERY stage of our service members/families military life. Military OneSource is our families’ one source for their best MilLife.

INITIATED 61 SMALL GROUP INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR 560 SERVICE & FAMILY MEMBERS

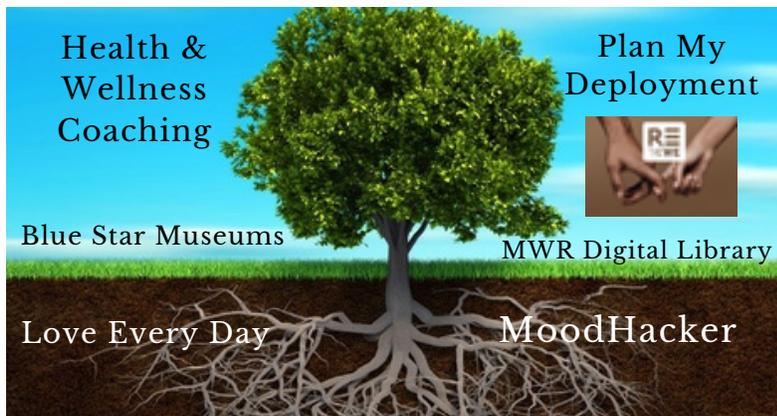
PARTICIPATED IN MORE THAN 450 COMMUNITY CAPACITY OPPORTUNITIES; REACHING 1670 SERVICE PROVIDERS

INITIATED 17 NEW COMMUNITY, STATE CONTACTS

SUPPORTED 12 EVENTS; REACHING 1480 ATTENDEES

Above is a sample of the depth of coordination of Vermont’s Military OneSource state consultant’s efforts for the fiscal year 2020. The numbers above represent the many initiatives reached to include employment and financial education readiness, building resiliency and improving communication, relationship counseling, and stress reduction.

With the onslaught of COVID-19, Military OneSource tailored its efforts to continue supporting the Vermont military community, military, and service providers by offering virtual support to service and family members. In spite of the challenges presented by the pandemic, support was provided to the Army National Guard Soldier Readiness Process, Pre-Deployment Yellow Ribbon, Franklin-Grand Isle Community Partnership, Project Vision, the Navy Operations Support Center White River Junction, Army Reserves, and Coast Guard Station Burlington. With so many resources and services already offered virtually, the Military OneSource became one of the programs our families could not do without. This diverse program assisted us in providing the services our families needed during this historical time.



SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES

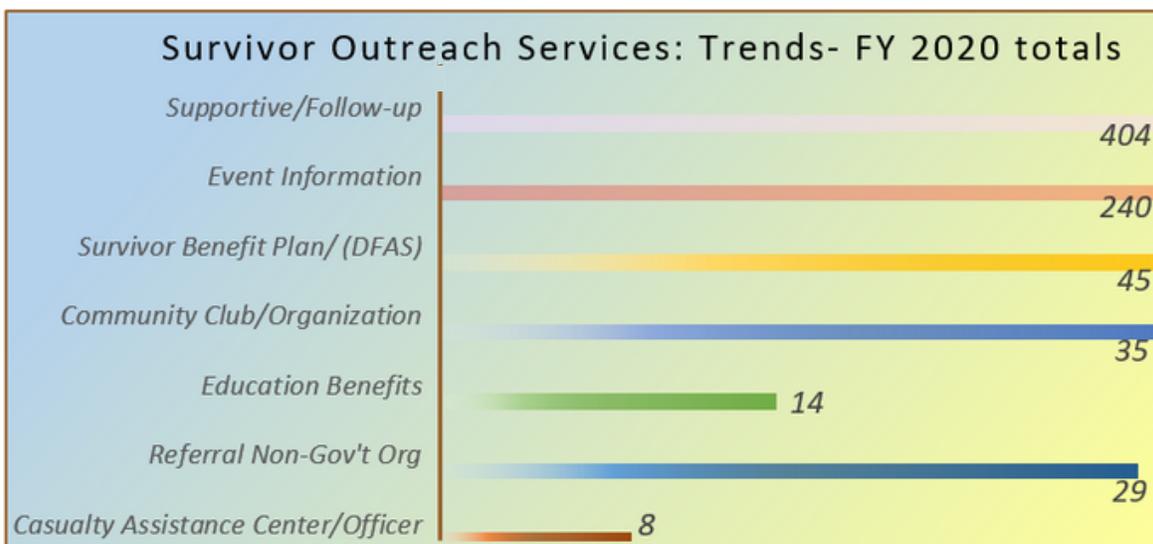


Tammie Conner
Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator

Our Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) Coordinator provides oversight and services to our Vermont Gold Star Families as well as the Families of the Fallen. The coordinator keeps our SOS families up-to-date on the benefits and services they are eligible for. Our SOS families stay in touch through outreach, events, and social media. They are a part of the Vermont Family Programs for as long as they would like. We owe our Gold Star families a debt that cannot ever be repaid—the loss of their loved one in battle. It is our absolute duty to assist them when needed; provide an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on, and our time whenever our families need it.

When the pandemic hit, all of our programs needed to find a new and different way to connect with our families. Our SOS Coordinator started to hold monthly Parents of the Fallen Support Group meetings. These were held in person when safely possible—virtually when necessary. These gave the parents of our fallen troops the opportunity to ask questions, share their feelings and build connections with other families experiencing the same loss. In addition, there was a Survivor Online meeting every Thursday during the pandemic; this was a collaboration between SOS and Military OneSource.

The holidays are bittersweet for our SOS families— the coordinator always does a pie-making event for any of the families who would like to participate. It happens the week of Thanksgiving. The kitchen at Family



Programs is filled with the smell of apples and pumpkins. The pies are donated to the Essex Junction VFW, Post 6689.

All of the above can be seen in the trends report that is completed by our coordinator. The top category is supportive/follow-up at 404. Those are families contacted, participating in different events, and following up on questions or concerns about benefits. This is the most important category affiliated with this program—never forgotten, never alone—this taken very seriously by Family Programs as we must take care of our families who suffered losses of a spouse, child, parent, or sibling.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISOR



Transitions for military members can be complex and disconcerting. Our Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) endeavors to provide our service members and veterans with invaluable peer-to-peer support to simplify the process for our military members to focus on what will be their next adventure.

Our TAA focuses a great deal on benefits as detailed in the graph below. Benefits include state, education, disability, physical and mental health wellbeing. We want to ensure our service members understand all the benefits they have earned from their service.

The transition from active duty to national guard/reserve to civilian life contains many decisions and even more paperwork. Our TAA goes over every document with our service members so they can make well-informed choices on where they go from here. The skills and knowledge our service members take with them after their military service can be translated into many, many career choices. Often times our service members don't realize how exceptional they are and what an amazing CV (Curriculum vitae) they can build. The TAA can assist with an array of local and federal employment resources to assist our service members with their next careers. If the service member plans to retire completely, the TAA assists with financial resources to ensure the service member is set up financially. That is why researching all the benefits (state and federal) the service member has earned is so important.

A transition to civilian life may also include opportunities to go back to school or pursue a new trade. Our TAA works with the VTNG Education Officer to again, make sure the service member knows all the benefits- in this case education- of which they can take advantage.

It is hard to understand the compromises and sacrifices our men and women make in order to serve their country unless you have served yourself-it is a lot. Therefore, it is our job in Family Programs to make sure the service member and by extension, their families are taken care of at every stage of their lives. We are here to serve.



MILITARY FAMILY COMMUNITY NETWORK



The second Military Family Community Network (MFCN) meeting for FY2020 was also the last “in-person” meeting until July 2021. By March 21, 2020, all Family Program staff were teleworking to comply with Vermont's Governor, Phil Scott's order.



The 29 January 2020 meeting was an important one as we were addressing the potential upcoming deployments. We had special guests: Major General Gregory Knight, The Adjutant General for the Vermont National Guard, Dr.

Brett Rusch, MD, Executive Director, Veterans Affairs at White River Junction, VT as well as COL Dana Tourangeau, GI, Director of Personnel for the Vermont Army National Guard. Topics that were covered included collaboration between the VTNG and the VAMC at White River Junction and the VTARNG receiving a notification of Sourcing which is the first official step to mobilizing our units. Dr. Rusch and MG Knight addressed the stressors that our soldiers and their families would experience before, during and after their deployments. The need to have frank discussions about mental health and suicide were also addressed. Plans were being made to conduct many “Town Hall” events live on Facebook to keep families informed and engaged. We did conduct a virtual MFCN meeting on 22 July 2020. More than 75 people joined us online to discuss how we thought our veterans, service members and their families were holding up during the pandemic. We discussed gaps in service such as prolonged shut offs of power, health appointments with VA healthcare staff and financial assistance. There was no doubt that everyone and every agency was giving 110% to meet the needs of their clients during this challenging year. What was missed greatly during this time was the “networking” time that is given at every MFCN “in person” meeting. Attendees have a chance to connect with colleagues and new contacts, exchange business cards and contact information. MFCN is an important network that was first established in 2005 and has been through many changes—but its mission has not changed: to identify the issues facing our veterans, service members and their families and provide resources to our network to effect positive outcomes for our families.

KITCHEN SPOONS & COMBAT BOOTS

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the KS&CB team for a professional presentation - VA Benefits...sponsored by VT Veterans Outreach Team, Military OneSource and Family Programs last evening. Very well presented. Outstanding job.

Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots was just a spark of an idea in 2013 when our Military OneSource State Consultant approached our Family Readiness Support Assistant team with this initiative that other states had successfully implemented. The idea was to offer monthly webinars on topics that were relevant to our military families, as well as provide better understanding for our community stakeholders regarding the uniqueness of life in the military. We would pick a day and time that would be most convenient for parents, spouses, dependents, or single service members to attend and learn more about a specific topic such as veterans benefits, deployment support, youth resiliency, and much more! The online, interactive format was new for Family Programs to implement—we never imagined this series would fill a greater need seven years later.

One state called their webinar series “Mamas’ in Pajamas,” another state “Military FX–Let’s Chat.” Since Vermont is the land of Ben & Jerry’s, Champ, and covered bridges, we wanted to put our individual stamp on the name representing our audience: Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots. The concept was not gender-specific in nature—National Guard families are made up of people who wield kitchens spoons as well as wear combat boots. The population who make up Vermont National Guard Family are on the Homefront as well as the front lines.



Marcie Caulfield, Candice Bryan-Broe & Michaela LaCoss
Program Facilitators

The first part of FY20 was business as usual. We continued to offer monthly webinars on the first Wednesday of the month, starting at 7:00 pm. As well as a “lunch and learn” series for those service members or families who could tune in at lunchtime. In March 2020, all of Family Programs needed to shift overnight. Thankfully, KS&CB had the foundation already established and started to transition to topics more COVID-19 specific. The team also supported the Military Kids Vermont partner camp when it went virtual

Educated 18 Youth about Kitchen & Food Safety

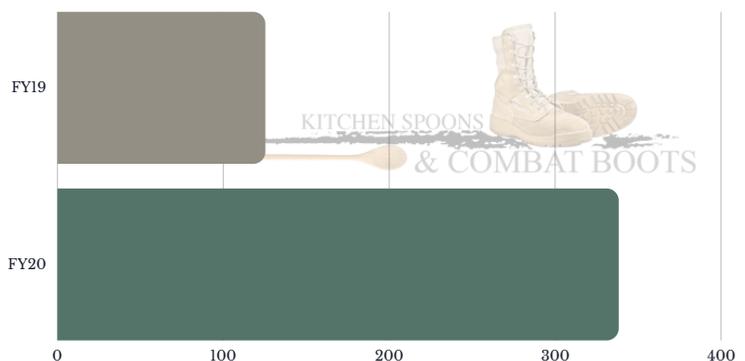
CHECK OUT THE COOKIE MAKING VIDEO MICHAELA, MARCIE AND CANDICE MADE FOR THIS YOUTH CAMP!
[YOUTU.BE/YJJVL3UAG3Q](https://youtu.be/YJJVL3UAG3Q)



The challenges included coordinating these sessions with staff 100% teleworking and finding an alternative way to record the “Second Time Around” (STA) multi-media educational series during the pandemic. By using the record audio feature within PowerPoint, video recordings from smart devices, multi-media applications, Google Drive, and the assistance from the Family Programs Media Specialist, STA continued to be a user-friendly, educational resource.

Increasing Views

For FY20, KS&CB held 16 virtual & in-person events with approximately 338 attendees. A 271% increase from FY19!



YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM (YRRP)

For FY2020, we only had one Yellow Ribbon event: our Det2 Cyber Infrastructure Team (CIT) 136th CSC returned home. It was a post-deployment and it was slated to happen in the spring of 2020. Even though it was a small group (under 20), we were unable to do this event in person. This was the first time we were faced with conducting a Yellow Ribbon virtually...

Because of COVID19, it would not be the last time...

The first challenge we had was the technology—what platform would we use? How would we provide valuable content while making sure the process was secure based on DoD requirements? Once we determined that, we needed to have the “subject matter experts” create a presentation that could be conducted digitally online. For some, this was the first time ever creating an mp4 or other digital copy of their normal in-person brief. Again, how do we make sure the different presentations did not have any viruses, hiccups, etc.?

It was fortunate that it was a small group because at that time, many platforms had a limit to how many people could be on a call. We could not have known how important it was to develop a virtual product as we didn't think COVID19 would still be preventing us from conducting Yellow Ribbon events in person come fall of 2020 and winter of 2021.

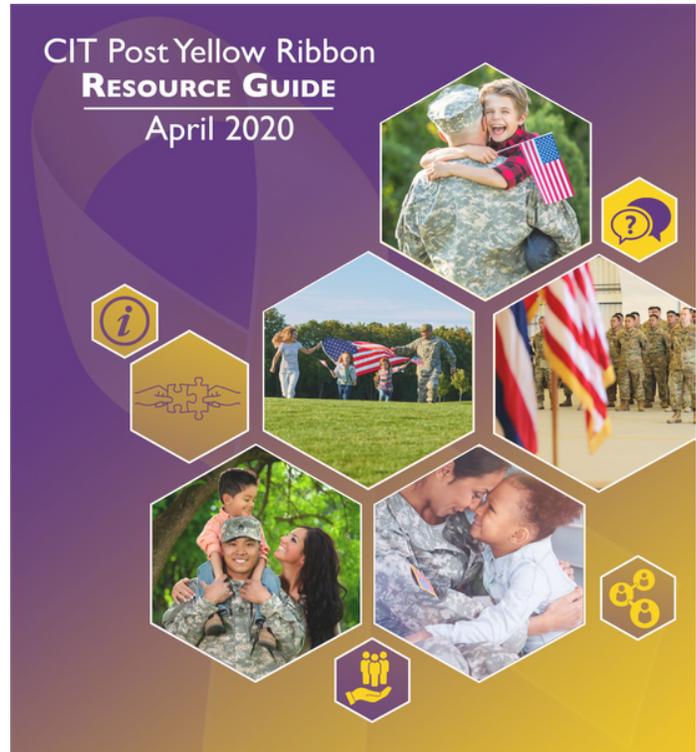
Also as part of this process, we created for the first time a Resource Guide to send to participants electronically. These had all the pertinent resources hyperlinks as well as contact information including emails for all of the presenters and resources. Having established this document helped us greatly going forward.

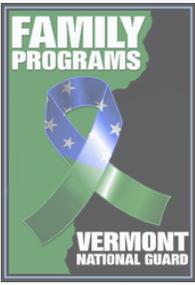
In the final analysis, we persevered and provided a product to our returning unit that hopefully was relevant and informative. Below are comments from our After Action Report (survey):

Great job by the Family Programs team to convert to an online/virtual venue! No doubt this lowered the expense of the event, albeit with the acknowledged loss of in-person contact and camaraderie which would have had their own value under normal circumstances.

Loved having the videos beforehand and being able to access them later.

The team rose to the challenge when asked to change the format to accommodate COVID issues and returnees' chaotic schedules. They did a fantastic job in the midst of a complex time.





VERMONT NATIONAL GUARD FAMILY PROGRAMS



PRESENTS

THE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Survey Monkey 2020 Results

Family Programs achieved a 94% "very professional" rating in FY2020 for our "How are we doing" surveys.

Family Programs achieved an 88% "extremely knowledgeable" rating in FY2020 for our "How are we doing" surveys.

Family Programs achieved an 89% "extremely satisfied" rating in FY2020 for our "How are we doing" surveys.

85% of respondents said they were "very likely" to contact Family Programs for issues in the future.

65% of surveys completed came from the "referrals-military agency, community/non-profit agency, etc."

VETERANS | SOLDIER | FAMILY | COMMUNITY

VERMONT VETERAN OUTREACH **MILITARY & FAMILY READINESS CENTERS**
FINANCIAL SERVICES **CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAM** SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISOR **MILITARY ONESOURCE** AIR NATIONAL GUARD
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES YELLOW RIBBON



ALL BRANCHES OF THE ARMED FORCES & UNIFORMED SERVICES