



# FROM THE HOMEFRONT

A Quarterly Newsletter to Keep Families Connected  
JUL/AUG/SEP 2024

## THE BIGGEST EVENT OF THE SUMMER!

Join us on July 18th at Centennial Field to cheer on your Lake Monsters at the annual Military Appreciation Day.



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## SOOTHING SUGGESTIONS

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# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH

In April, two members of the Vermont Veterans Outreach Program departed for new adventures, Gene Hitchcock, our Veterans Administration Liaison in White River Junction, and Heather Lafont, the Outreach Specialist for the Northeast Kingdom in Newport.

Gene became an Outreach Specialist on June 1st, 2009, serving Windham and Windsor counties. He spent more than 7 years serving in that capacity. On the 1st of January 2017, Gene became the team's VA liaison and retired at the end of April. Gene will be working on his camp along with his wife and enjoying their grandchildren.



Heather became an Outreach Specialist on May 16th, 2017, serving Orleans, Essex, and Caledonia counties. She spent more than 7 years serving in that capacity. Heather was heavily involved in the creation of the Veterans Summit held at the former Lyndon State College in Lyndonville. Heather will continue to serve veterans working for the Veteran Benefits Administration.

We wish them both the very best and will miss them greatly!

We would also like to welcome a new team member, Jacob Wolf. Jacob started on May 13th and will be located in Newport. He is a 20-year US Air Force veteran and will be a great addition to the team.



**Welcome Aboard, Jake!**



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**(888) 607-8773**  
Available 24/7

## Back-to-School BRIGADE



Interested in free school supplies? Reach out to your local Military & Family Readiness Specialist or Veterans Outreach Specialist for more information. (888) 607-8773



# MILITARY & FAMILY READINESS

The long warm days of summer are here at last, and it is time to get out and enjoy it. Whether you are a person who enjoys navigating the trails for a hike, taking a boat out on the water (self-propelled or motorized), or someone who enjoys lounging beside your favorite aquatic destination, time spent outside is good for the soul. With that in mind, there are opportunities available for Service Members and their families to get out and enjoy these all too brief summer months.

To choose your next nature adventure, check out:

<https://www.vtstateparks.com/family-fun.html#thingsToDoDropdown>



For the rainy or super-hot days, service members and their families are also eligible for a free Echo Leahy Center annual pass that provides free access to 200+ museums across the country.

To request one, visit:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ECHO2024-VTNG>

Regardless of how you choose 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 call one of the Military and Family Readiness Specialists or the 24/7 line at **(888) 607-8773**.



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## HONORING THE TRUE MEANING OF MEMORIAL DAY

No one understands more than our soldiers and families that Memorial Day is not simply a day off from work or an opportunity for sales. It's a sacred day of remembrance, a time to pay tribute to the heroes who laid down their lives to safeguard the freedoms we hold dear while also enjoying the freedoms they fought for. Yet, while everyone is enjoying the barbecues and beach trips, it's important to pause and reflect on the true meaning of this day.

For those of us who serve Gold Star and military surviving families, Memorial Day carries an even deeper significance.

It's a day to stand alongside those who have experienced the profound loss of a loved one in service to our nation, offering support, empathy, and gratitude. We witness their enduring courage, selflessness, and unwavering love for those no longer with us. We also see the lasting impact of their absence, the void that can never be filled, and the grief they must learn to live with.

This past quarter, the Vermont National Guard held their annual ceremony serving as an opportunity to honor and remember America's fallen heroes and to recognize those Gold Star families who have lost loved ones in the VTNG.

## SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES

This event was held at the Fallen Heroes Memorial located at the entrance to Camp Johnson. This ceremony helps to recommit ourselves to upholding their legacy and our pledge to support the families, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten, and to strive to be worthy of the freedoms they fought to defend.





# CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTION

## Proverbs 14:4 *Where there is no oxen, the manger is clean*



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On April 10, our daughter Lexi had her senior night for track and field. We enjoyed walking out with her onto the track and having our picture taken. We brought a bouquet of flowers, and the school purchased a single rose for each senior. It was a bittersweet night for her and for us! Our two boys graduated and are now in college, and now Lexi is preparing to attend college and earn a pharmacy degree. We are excited for her and look forward to watching her mature into a young woman and work toward her goals!

The Proverbs contain short, contrasting statements that teach a person important lessons in life. This proverb deals with farming and while I never cleaned an oxen manger, I understand what it is contrasting. No one likes to clean the oxen stall or to water and feed the oxen! It's hard work and smelly. However, without oxen there is little food on the table because they do so much work on the farm. What's the point? Teenagers do not keep the house as clean as you want, but then they are gone, and the house is clean and quiet. Please focus on loving and encouraging your children, spouse, or significant other; rather than the mess! We all make messes!



Please contact your chaplain if you need help with your relationship. It's worth it!

## YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM

Hello! My name is 1LT Robert Dornfried, the Yellow Ribbon Program Coordinator for the Vermont Army National Guard. I am new to the position, but am eager to help soldiers and families navigate the deployment process by planning Yellow Ribbon events, as well as referring deploying, deployed, or re-deployed soldiers, including individual augmentees to neighboring states or units, to the proper staff member(s) or resources to assist with any inquiry related to deployment.

My primary duty is to ensure the proper implementation, stewardship, and coordination of the Yellow Ribbon Program, a National Guard Bureau initiative. Moreover, through forging

networks with various local, state, federal, and non-profit organizations, I relay information suitable for soldiers and families to access, as well as solicit feedback to improve the program as a whole.

Previously, I served as the Chemical Biological Radiation and Nuclear Assistance Support Element officer-in-charge, and serve as a drilling soldier with a Forward Support Company as a Logistics Officer.



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On the civilian side, I am a high school history teacher, having taught in Connecticut and Vermont. On the home front, I am married and currently have one child, with another on the way, as well as a family dog.

In my spare time, I enjoy watching sports and going on scenic drives throughout Vermont.

I look forward to working with you and the Vermont Army National Guard. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns, or general information. My job is to serve you!



# MENTAL HEALTH

## Peace and Quiet for Peace of Mind

1

### Physical - Let Go of the Stress:

- Exercise and/or self-care.
- Get at least 7 or more hours of "good" sleep.
- Try to take a nap for 30 minutes during the day.
- Practice breathing and/or muscle relaxation exercises.

2

### Mental - Clear Your Mind:

- Clear your mind by devoting several minutes to journaling.
- Try staying in the present by not thinking of the past or future.
- Listen to relaxing music or sounds.
- Set personal goals.

3

### Emotional - Process and Express:

- Build and identify emotional awareness.
- Talk to a therapist.
- Practice expressing emotions safely and in healthy ways.
- Acknowledge and share feelings with others.

4

### Spiritual - Contribute to Something Greater than Yourself:

- Meditate.
- Practice a spiritual belief or faith community.
- Volunteer.
- Practice gratitude.

5

### Social - Recharge Your Social Battery to Avoid Depletion:

- Go to lunch with a friend.
- Set better boundaries.
- Identify social needs.
- Have a good support system.

6

### Sensory - Give Yourself a Brain Break:

- Limit the number of screens.
- Close your eyes from time to time.
- Turn off electronics before bedtime.
- Schedule screen-free breaks.

7

### Creative - Be Inspired:

- Decorate, paint, dance, knit.
- Read a book, watch a movie/show.
- Go to a concert or a museum.
- Learn something new.



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## CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAM

In addition to the everyday stresses of school, like finishing homework on time and getting good grades, military children face unique challenges—having a parent deployed and moving frequently. Tutor.com helps military students stay on top of their homework and studying in between moves and when mom or dad may be away and not able to help.

### TUTOR.COM

For more information, visit  
[www.tutor.com/military](http://www.tutor.com/military)

- *Helps military students get help with homework, studying, projects, and papers*
- *Has tutors in 40 subjects*
- *Gives access for students at schools on and off installations*
- *Am I eligible?*





## 158TH AIRMAN & FAMILY READINESS NEWS

The Family Readiness Office is constantly looking for ways to improve our community on base and support families inside and outside of deployment windows. The best time to take advantage of meeting others is as soon as you feel up to it! Below are a few opportunities to take advantage of.

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Force Support Squadron  
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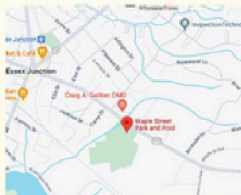


### Check out the following opportunities!

Drill Weekend Play  
Group and Parent  
Meet Up!

## LET'S PLAY!

Maple Street Park, Essex  
Junction, Vermont  
From 10:00AM-12:00PM



"Meet us by the swing sets!"

CONTACT ASHLEY THOMAS KEY  
VOLUNTEER  
FOR DETAILS!



[Athomas23989@gmail.com](mailto:Athomas23989@gmail.com)

- SUNDAY MAY 5th
- SUNDAY JUNE 2nd
- SUNDAY JULY 13th
- NO GROUP AUGUST
- SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 8th
- SUNDAY OCTOBER 6th



## VTANG FAMILY CPR COURSE

WITH INFANT CPR TRAINING

Classes are Thursdays, 5PM- 7PM  
VTANG Fire Department Classroom

21 MARCH  
11 JULY  
14 NOV

This class is **FREE** for service members, dependents,  
and significant other's.

CONTACT FAMILY READINESS TO REGISTER:

[158FW.FSF.FAMILYREADINESS@US.AF.MIL](mailto:158FW.FSF.FAMILYREADINESS@US.AF.MIL)



American  
Red Cross



VTANG  
GREEN MOUNTAIN BOYS

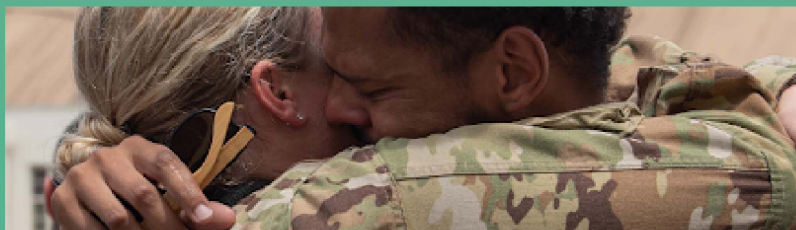


Vermont Military & Family Support Center

24/7 Toll Free Number: 1-888-607-8773



## OurRelationship Flexible Online Support for Military Couples



**Many couples** have times when their relationship could use some help. But not every couple needs the same kind of help, or in the same way. OurRelationship is a flexible, online, evidence-based tool that gives military couples the choice to work on their own or with a coach to strengthen their relationship. It is tailored to the military community and free for active-duty, National Guard, and reserve couples.

### Who can benefit from OurRelationship? Couples who...

- Are highly motivated and want to improve their relationship on their own.
- Have only a few areas in their relationship they would like to improve.
- Want to give their relationship a boost in a shorter time frame.
- Want a little additional support without the full commitment of working with a relationships therapist or counselor.
- May not feel comfortable with another person helping them strengthen their relationship.
- Need the flexibility of completing the program either separate from each other or outside of standard business hours due to temporary duty assignments, deployments, and other realities of military life.

<https://military.ourrelationship.com/>

## STATE SFRG



**The State Soldier and Family Readiness Group Leader is back!** After taking some time off and going away to school, Jessie Smith is back and ready to start working on new projects. She is currently working on a way to get more diapers and baby items made available, as well as trying to find ways to connect with communities and schools throughout Vermont. If you have any suggestions or ideas, reach out and share them with her. Volunteer opportunities are always available, if you want to be on the list, drop her an email with your contact information and which units/areas you want to support.



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## Vacation Plans



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When developing a travel budget, it's important to include a few key items; such as budgeting for accommodation, food, transportation, exciting activities, and souvenirs to bring back home. Many people value experiences more than material things, so make sure to allocate some extra funds in case of unforeseen expenses.

Vacation planning should also involve the whole family. It's good to gather everyone together and discuss where they would like to go and what activities they would like to do. Children should be given a chance to make choices and talk through how much different excursions will cost. It's important to let them know what the budget is and allow them to help pick out activities that fit within the budget. This is an excellent opportunity for children to learn about the cost of things and how to make choices based on a budget.

If going away for vacation is not financially feasible, you can still have a great time by planning a staycation. In fact, supporting local businesses is more important now than ever. Take some time to explore your local area and try out new restaurants or visit small shops in town. You may be surprised to discover places you haven't been to before. Who knows, you might even find that your town has the world's largest ball of string right in your backyard!

## LEGAL ASSISTANCE

There are many benefits to service. One of the benefits to serving in the Vermont National Guard is free access to important legal services from fellow Servicemembers who are licensed attorneys. Legal assistance attorneys provide help to Servicemembers and other eligible individuals both during the week and on drill weekends. We are based out of the State Judge Advocate's office in the Green Mountain Armory on Camp Johnson in Colchester.

How can this benefit you? There are many ways. For one, scams have been on the rise in recent years and Vermont Army National Guard legal assistance attorneys can give advice if you become the victim of identity theft or are accused of owing a debt that you don't think you should owe. We can help with other issues involving banking, credit cards, and insurance too.

One of the most common legal services we provide is drafting and executing wills. A will is an important legal document that directs who should receive your assets after your death, who should be in charge of getting this done (the executor), and who should take care of any young children if no parent is left (the guardian). It is different from a "living will" which directs what should happen before you die. Since Servicemembers are expected to have a will in place prior to deployments, there are long lines for wills at SRP. Give us a call at (802) 338-3082 to get one done early.

**CPT Daniel A. Timm**  
(802) 338-3351



# TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISOR

Susan Demers shares how the **DOD SkillBridge** program allows service members to gain civilian work experience through specific industry pieces of training, apprenticeships, and internships for the last 180 days of service. DOD SkillBridge connects service members with industry partners in real-world job experiences. This program provides invaluable opportunities to learn and work with the civilian career areas. For the industry partners, DOD SkillBridge gives them the opportunity to access the world's highly trained and motivated workforce at zero cost.



For more information, reach out to your local Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisor or visit: <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/>

Service members who choose to participate in the DOD SkillBridge program will continue to receive their military pay and benefits while the industry partners provide the training and work experience. This will help ease the transition from active-duty military to civilian employment. Service members are guaranteed up to 180 days to focus on training full-time with the approved partners after they have received the approval and authorization from their chain of command. The approved industry partners provide the training and skills that help the service member transition to civilian employment.

## ESGR

### Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

ESGR aims to inform and educate service members and their civilian employers about their rights and responsibilities governed by USERRA. ESGR does not enforce USERRA but instead serves as a neutral, free resource for employers and service members. Contact us with any concerns or questions.

### Employer Awards & Banquet

Vermont ESGR hosts an annual awards banquet to celebrate employers who have shown outstanding support. The next banquet will be held on Friday, September 6, 2024, and attendees will be those employers who have been selected for the ESGR Patriot or higher award. Show your supervisor/manager that you appreciate their support by taking a few minutes to nominate them. Visit: <https://www.esgr.mil/Service-Members-Family/Nominate-your-Employer> and click on the "nominate here" link to get started.

Did you know that the spouse of a Reservist or Guardsman can also nominate their boss for the Patriot Award? Though not required by law, many employers voluntarily assist Guard and Reserve spouses, who often share the challenges of military service. Childcare, managing the household, and work schedules often must be adjusted when one spouse leaves to serve our country.

### BossLift

Vermont Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) scheduled a BossLift event on June 11, 2024. These events are designed to bring together employers and members of the National Guard to foster understanding, create opportunities, and build relationships. A BossLift is a unique experience through which ESGR expresses gratitude to employers for supporting their employees. We most often select supportive employers who have received an ESGR award for these events.



If you have any questions regarding USERRA, or any other aspect of ESGR, please contact Patrick Anderson, ESGR Volunteer Support Technician at (802) 338-4187 or [panderson@interactivegov.com](mailto:panderson@interactivegov.com)

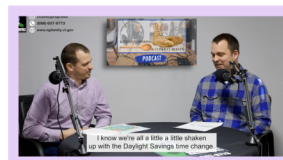




Tune in to our all-new Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots podcast airing the first Wednesday of the month at 7 PM on the Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots Facebook Page.

#### Upcoming topics to include:

- » 7/3 - VA Home Loans
- » 8/7 - Back to School
- » 9/4 - Managing Your Military Career



[www.facebook.com/kitchenspoonsandcombatboots/](https://www.facebook.com/kitchenspoonsandcombatboots/)

Did you miss a past episode? You can view all KS&CB episodes and materials at the URL above.

## QUARTERLY QUESTION

I crawl on the land with a thunderous might, in battles, I lead a formidable fight. What am I?

Think you know the answer? Send it as a direct message to VTNGFamilyPrograms on Facebook.



## VERMONT REMEMBERS RUN

September 8, 2024

More Information & Pre-Registration

<https://runsignup.com/Race/VT/Colchester/VermontRemembers>

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#### Military OneSource Consultant

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#### Lead Child and Youth Program Coordinator

TBD

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#### Survivor Outreach Services

TBD

#### Army Chaplain

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#### Army Director of Psychological Health

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