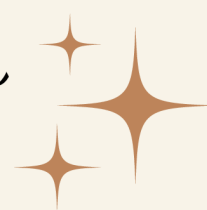




# From The Homefront

A Quarterly Newsletter to Keep Families Connected

Oct/Nov/Dec 2024



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## MEET THE TEAM!

We've added several new team members specially trained to assist you and your family.

24/7 VT Military & Family Support Center  
**(888) 607-8773**

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

## STAY CONNECTED

Don't miss out on event announcements, giveaways, photo albums, and more



VTNGFamilyPrograms



vtfamilyprograms



# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH



Jake Wolf joined Vermont Veteran Outreach in May of 2024. As an Air Force Retiree with a background in law and as a Native Vermonter from the Northeast Kingdom (NEK), he comes equipped with the foundational knowledge to assist Vermont Veterans through the myriad of challenges they face present day. Jake has been able to assist veterans with their VA benefit claims, financial assistance, and housing needs post-flood, as well as with many other hardships and needs. The rural and austere nature of the NEK presents its own set of trials and tribulations, for which Jake aids veterans in navigating these hardships with the assistance of the Vermont Veteran Outreach (VVO) Team, the VA, and local partner agencies. Jake and the VVO Team continue to Fly, Fight, [and] Win.



Connect with Jake, Michael, and the **24/7 VT Military & Family Support Center** by calling (888) 607-8773

My name is Michael Harton, a proud Vermont native now calling Franklin County home. Family is my foundation, shaping who I am and what I value most. After serving four years of active duty in the U.S. Air Force and two years in the Vermont Air National Guard, I've gained a deep appreciation for the bonds forged in service. Now, with Vermont Veterans Outreach, I'm channeling that passion into something bigger—connecting with local veterans, sharing our stories, and making sure every veteran knows they're part of a community that has their back. My mission is to remind veterans that we're in this together, with a shared history and a commitment to support one another.



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Want to see more from your Vermont Veterans Outreach Team?  
Follow them on Facebook >>>  
[www.facebook.com/vtvfot](https://www.facebook.com/vtvfot)



**Vermont Veterans Outreach Specialist**  
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## SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES



**Hello!** My name is Collin O'Reilly, and I am the Vermont Survivor Outreach Services State Coordinator. I am new to the position but am excited to get to know the survivors I will be serving. My job is to support surviving families by providing information and referral services to different resources that are at the survivor's disposal. As well as help with any issues and aid in their resolution. I am available by telephone and email 24/7 and can meet survivors wherever best meets their needs. I look forward to hosting events for survivors to be able to gather together and take part in various activities.

I was born and raised in Vermont before enlisting in the Marine Corps where I spent four years. After finishing my contract, I returned home where I went back to school at the University of Vermont. Having been apart from the military community for the time I spent at UVM, it brings me great pleasure to be back in the community and to be able to support the surviving family members of our fallen soldiers.



**Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator**  
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# CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTION

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*  
Galatians 5:22-23



When her children were younger, a mother planted the family's first garden. It had green beans, potatoes, tomatoes, and carrots. After about a month, the kids kept pulling up the carrots because they were so excited to eat them. That year, the family wasn't able to see a large harvest of carrots because they weren't given enough time to grow and develop. Even though the carrots tasted good, the mother looked at how tiny they were and thought to herself, all this work for that?

Likewise, sometimes Soldiers and Airmen look at their own level of spiritual maturity and think, all this work for that? The Apostle Paul wrote to his fellow believers to tell them that God was at work in them, producing fruit that would transform their lives. This is good news for those desiring to grow. Who wouldn't want to be more loving towards their spouse or patient with their kids? But like the carrots mentioned above, this growth takes time. Theologian Derek Tidball writes, "We need patience with ourselves and with others to allow the crop to ripen." Sometimes people get down on themselves because they aren't as mature as they'd wish. Everyone needs the time (and grace) to grow. Don't give up on that spiritual fruit just because the only thing visible are tiny carrots right now. Ask God to keep maturing and strengthening the character and values desired daily, and eventually, God will produce a great harvest.

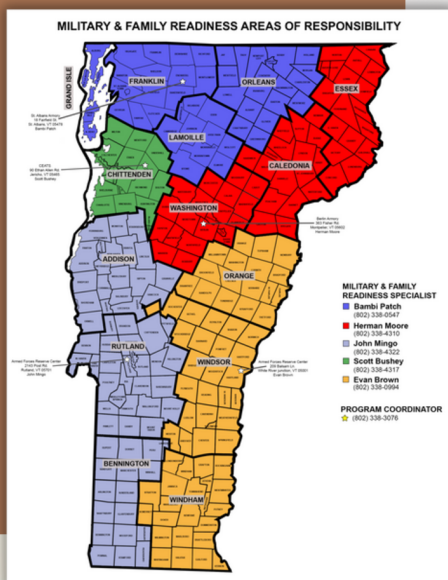


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## MILITARY & FAMILY READINESS

As we begin FY 25, with an organizational focus and an increased operational tempo on the horizon, some service members may find that the extra attention at work can lead to our family readiness not being a primary concern. While completing all required military tasks is vital, another critical task is to ensure that our families feel supported by the organization since they are just as much a part of it as our service members.

Whether you are in your first year in the Guard, the fifth, or your twentieth, this time of year is very important for deepening your connection with your family. 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.



In order to stay "in the know," be on the lookout for any upcoming family days or military appreciation events across the state. These opportunities give command a chance to connect with the families of their service members but also allow for the families to connect with one another, creating a foundation that will provide support throughout all of life's challenges. That said, Family Programs is here to assist in any way possible. Whether that is activities for kids to do at home or an event for them to have fun, resources are available!

**Military & Family Readiness Specialist**  
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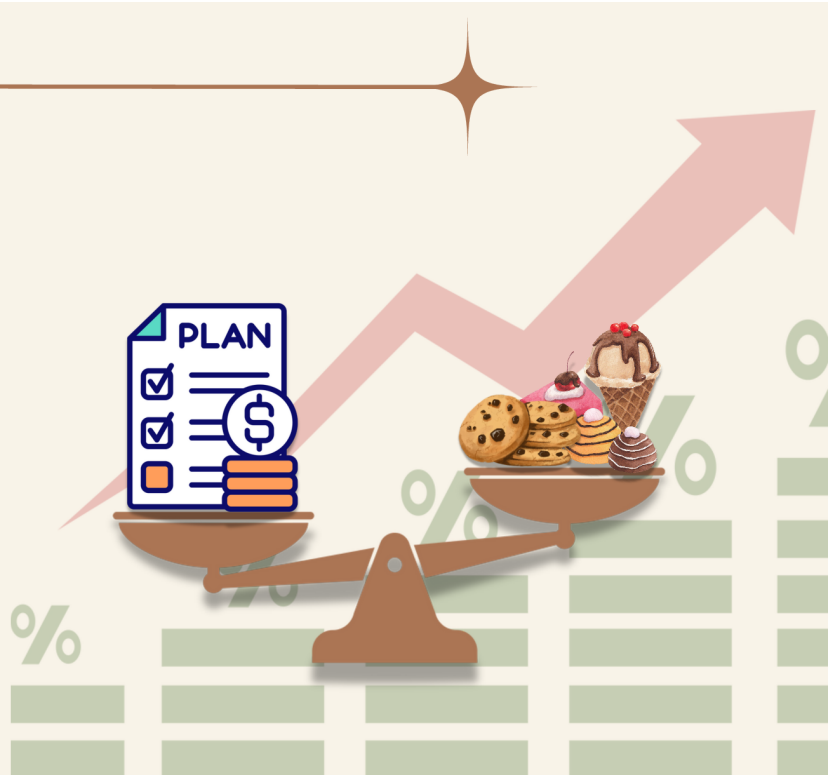
As we are approaching the holiday season this year, it is easier than ever to take advantage of the Military OneSource resources to help you live your best MilLife.

While family gatherings, gift shopping, and social activities can be fun, they also might leave you feeling overwhelmed. Let Military OneSource help you keep the joy in your Holidays!

We don't expect you to pass on all the desserts. Military OneSource Health and Wellness Coaches are here to assist you to ensure you don't let the hectic holiday schedule and party foods derail your health, nutrition, and fitness goals.

These days everyone is talking about money and inflation. In times of economic uncertainty, the holidays might be more stressful than usual. Consider these tips listed above for staying in control of your finances during the holidays.

If you're experiencing a deployment or separation, you may be wondering how you're going to make it all work and seem like a normal holiday. Try making some new and creative traditions with these ideas from Military OneSource.



For additional support from Military OneSource, visit [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil) or call the 24/7 phone line (800) 342-9647.

## PERSONAL FINANCIAL COUNSELOR

### HERE ARE SOME DIFFERENT IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY GIVING

1

#### The 4-Gift Rule:

- Something you want
- Something you need
- Something to wear
- Something to read

This is a way to make sure that the gifts you are giving cover both needs and wants.

3

#### MAKE A HOLIDAY SPENDING LIST

This year may look different than past years, so consider what your family will be doing during the holidays. Make a list of everyone you plan to buy gifts for, including any new additions. Take note of any extra expenses such as gift wrapping, postage, and holiday food and drinks.

2

#### GIVING EXPERIENCES AND SPECIAL HOMEMADE GIFTS

People love receiving their favorite foods or desserts. How about a date night out for a family with children, or a handmade scarf? The extra time and thought are always appreciated.

4

#### OPEN A HOLIDAY SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Many offer weekly or monthly deposits, allowing you to save throughout the year for the next holiday season.

The holiday season is upon us. Last year the average person spent \$1,652 per person on holiday gifts. This year your holidays may look very different, so let's start planning.

**Personal Financial Counselor**  
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## TWO QUESTIONS RARELY ASKED

1. What is a Testamentary Trust?
2. How does it relate to Service Members Group Life Insurance (SGLI)?

Many soldiers in the Vermont National Guard opt for the \$500,000 in Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) coverage. This is a tremendous job benefit, and I see it advertised above the gas pumps outside Camp Johnson. In the worst of situations, the money can be a lifeline. But what if death arrives and the policy pays out? Can the beneficiaries handle that kind of money? What if they are minors or young adults? Will they spend it on drugs or other destructive choices?

One option is to postpone the payout until they reach a certain age by creating a testamentary trust in a will. With a testamentary trust, one can create a "bucket" to receive the life insurance funds. The policy is then amended with the insurance company to name this trust as the policy beneficiary. Another person, the trustee, watches the bucket and the cash inside it until the child reaches a more mature age, and then hands them the bucket.

This may all sound complicated. We are here to help. The JAG Office at Camp Johnson can sit down with soldiers and discuss what makes sense for their individual estate planning needs. Our phone number is (802) 338-3082. We can schedule appointments either during the workweek or on JFHQ drill weekends. The preceding is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship.



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## BEHAVIOR HEALTH SERVICES

Did you know that there are a variety of ways to communicate? Having the ability to be diverse with your communication skillset will make you more approachable as people tend to open up to good listeners.

### Different Types of Communication

#### VERBAL

- Choose words carefully
- Listen more and talk less
- Pay attention to the sound/tone of your voice
- Speak clearly
- Control the pace and rhythm of your speech

#### NON-VERBAL

- 90% of communication is nonverbal
- Make sure your non-verbal and verbal communication match so that you will not be misunderstood
- Bear in mind people make assumptions based on nonverbal communication
- Be aware of your body language, facial expressions, eye contact, posture and gestures

#### GUIDELINES TO COMMUNICATION

- Use "I" statements by taking responsibility for how you are feeling
- Avoid generalizations (always, never, everyone)
- Avoid being judgmental instead describe a behavior or situation
- Feedback needs to be specific and tentative rather than general and absolute.
- Be informative, not bossy
- Don't make assumptions by thinking others know how you feel
- Use whole-body listening

#### GOOD LISTENERS

- Pay attention and use good eye contact
- Think about how the other person feels
- Are patient and empathetic
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Avoid making judgments
- Mirror the other person's body language but not mimic
- Ask for clarification and be specific
- Uses open-ended questions
- Point out key concepts
- Decrease distractions and don't interrupt
- Uses good eye-contact
- Reflect back on what you think they said in order to get a clearer understanding

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## HAPPY FALL!

The seasons are starting to change, and this is a good reminder that a great many things have changed for the Soldier & Family Readiness Group (SFRG) program recently as well. Due to changes at the national level, civilian volunteers are no longer a required part of the SFRG program. While having a solid group of civilian volunteers is highly suggested, the Commander is now the SFRG leader and responsible for the unit's Family Readiness. Communication between the unit and our military families is an integral part of our mission success.

Creating a network of mutual support and understanding can go a long way toward the resilience of our families and our soldiers. The Vermont National Guard is busy doing great things, and it's only going to get busier.



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### WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN YOUR UNIT'S SFRG PROGRAM?

Get in touch with your Commander and find out what they are looking for help with. If you don't have a specific unit that you want to support, we are always looking for volunteers at Family Programs to help with the various military appreciation events throughout the year. Get in touch and you'll be put on the roster. Enjoy the fall and all the delicious food this season brings!



## SUMMER LOOK BACK



The past several months have been **PACKED** with incredible events and activities for our military families.

Want to see more?  
Check out  
[VTNGFamilyPrograms](#)  
on Facebook to view more albums.



# YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

As we approach a new fiscal year and training year, it marks a good juncture to reassess and check important pre-deployment items. As members of the Army National Guard, our slogan is "Always Ready, Always There!" In addition to unit readiness in terms of personnel, equipment, and training, it should also constitute administratively, in which case the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program has various helpful tips to ensure you and your families are prepared to hold down the fort on the home front.

For all service members and their families, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is available to advise and assist with all deployment-related administrative items, from legal readiness to educational benefits. Depending on your pre-existing military service, including deployment(s), you may have additional eligibility factors to consider when checking your benefits.

To begin, families can take advantage of various legal services provided by the JAG office, including wills and powers of attorney. Financially, our Vermont Army National Guard Financial Counselor can provide detailed budgetary plans to ensure your finances are in order, and you are being protected from various scams and identity theft. If you have additional questions about your taxes, military pay, retirement plan, or consumer protection, the Personal Financial Counselor can 100% assist.

On the healthcare front, it is important to ensure everyone in your family is properly enrolled within the medical plan you prefer, and to always re-assess various options available to you. Whether you're enrolled with your civilian employer or utilize the military TRICARE Reserve Select or PRIME plan, there is also the localized version of Martin's Point(Only AGR), a partnered DoD business, that is worth looking into.

For families with children, utilizing our Child and Youth Services is an excellent way to keep children and families involved and connected to our often geographically dispersed units, and build a network throughout our state. Various programs, camps, and discounts are available to you and your children simply by being a member of the Vermont National Guard.

Getting the most out of your Vermont National Guard entitlements and resources is one of the Yellow Ribbon Program's primary functions and plenty more benefits can be found on the VTNG Family Programs website by visiting: <https://www.ngfamily.vt.gov/>

As always, we at Family Programs are eager to assist you prepare physically, mentally, and administratively.

## Program Coordinator

1LT Robert Dornfried

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## VERMONT AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Hello! My name is Tammy Langlois and I am the newest member of the Family Readiness Team! To give you a bit of my background, prior to taking this position I retired from the Vermont Air National Guard having served 34 years to include 15 years Active Guard Reserve and prior service in the active-duty Navy and Naval Reserve.

Before my full-time Active Guard Reserve status, I served as a Drill Status Guardsman and worked in several Human Service industries in the civilian sector including the Baird Center and the Department for Children and Families. I earned both my Associate's Degree through the Community College of the Air Force and my Bachelor's Degree through Johnson State College.

Over the past 30 years, I have served on several boards and committees including the Cambridge Fire Department Auxiliary, Fletcher and Franklin West Supervisory Union School Boards, and the Friends of Fletcher Elementary committee (the local Parent/Teacher Organization). I have also served as a Justice of the Peace in the town of Fletcher. In 2016, I earned my real estate license and have been fortunate to support homebuyers in the Franklin and Lamoille counties. My husband, Chris, and I have raised three beautiful daughters and still reside in Fletcher.

I look forward to serving Airmen and their families in my new role.





The Operation Homefront Holiday Toy Drive, in partnership with Dollar Tree, is here to support and bring joy to military-affiliated households during the holiday season. Each year, this heartwarming initiative ensures that military families receive toys, brightening their holidays and creating lasting memories.

If you are a military family and would like to benefit from this special holiday drive, now is the time to reach out. By contacting your local Military & Family Readiness Specialist, Vermont Veterans Outreach Specialist, or by calling 888-607-8773, you can request toys for your unit and/or your children and make the holiday season even more special.

Don't miss this opportunity to experience the magic of the season with the support of the community and Operation Homefront. We are here to help make your holidays brighter and more joyful. Reach out today!



## EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE



**If you have any questions regarding the process, how to submit a nomination, or the criteria, please contact Patrick Anderson**

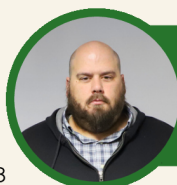
The [Freedom Award](#) Nomination Season runs from October 1st through December 31st. The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for supporting their employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve.

Nominations must be submitted by a Guard or Reserve member employed by a civilian company they are nominating, or by a family member.

The award was created to publicly recognize employers who provide exceptional support to their Guard and Reserve employees. It is the highest in a series of employer recognition awards given each year by the Department of Defense.

Up to 15 awards are presented yearly to employers in three categories: large business, small business, and the public sector.

The nomination process is open to all Guard and Reserve personnel or a family member acting on their behalf. Applications are submitted online to ESGR. A national selection board comprised of senior Defense officials and business leaders selects the award recipients.



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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE EMPLOYER SUPPORT  
**FREEDOM AWARD**

# KITCHEN SPOONS & COMBAT BOOTS



As we look to close out the completely revamped Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots 2024 season we encourage you to take a look back at a few of our most popular episodes!

Earlier in the year we asked Brian Stoudnour from Military Kids Vermont to sit down with us and discuss all the great programs, events, and activities available to military families and their kids to try and answer the age-old question, "How can I keep my kids entertained and engaged?"



In preparation for our biggest event of the summer we met up with the Vermont Lake Monsters mascot, Champ, for a little fun on the field and ask some viewer questions.



Watch all past and future KS&CB episodes at [facebook.com/kitchenspoonsandcombatboots](https://facebook.com/kitchenspoonsandcombatboots)

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## Family Readiness & Program Manager

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## Military and Family Readiness Lead

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## Air Wing Chaplain

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## YOU CAN HELP US IMPROVE OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN AS LITTLE AS 5 MINUTES.

Enter the URL shown below into your  
browser or scan the QR code.



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

