



# FROM THE HOMEFRONT

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER CREATED TO KEEP FAMILIES CONNECTED

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**American  
Red Cross**

**MARCH IS RED CROSS MONTH**  
We recognize their unwavering  
commitment to the Military. Find  
out more about this important  
organization inside.

## A Note From the Director, Family Programs



***We recruit soldiers, but retain families.*** I was recently reminded of this saying and feel it goes to the heart of what we do at Family Programs. The commitment inherently needed for a life in the military requires sacrifices from all-the service member as well as his/her family. For the young, tech savvy generation-that might mean their parents. For married soldiers- that usually means their spouses and children. No matter the family structure, it is the families that are

the heart and soul of the military.

***We recruit soldiers, but retain families.*** Retaining and supporting our families has never been more important- not only are our service members deploying, they are deploying during a pandemic. These two circumstances has never happened before in our lifetime. Deployments are hard enough on our families, but to do it when we are still grappling with the effects of COVID 19-economically, socially, and physically-adds another layer of stress on our families.

***We recruit soldiers, but retain families.*** Everything we do at Family Programs is with the families in mind. The programs and services we provide are all geared towards taking care of our families-providing them with the resources they need, when they need them. If our families are taken care of, the soldiers can focus on their missions. For Family Programs, it always starts with the families.

***We recruit soldiers, but retain families.*** If ever there was a mantra that must define what we do every day at Family Programs, it is this. Our families deserve no less.

DAVID C. LEONARD

Director, Family Programs, Vermont National Guard  
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Military & Family Support Center  
888-607-8773



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

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# Airman and Family Readiness Manager

## Greetings from your Airman and Family Readiness Office.



Hard to believe it is March! Recently I found that March is (unofficially) National Nutrition Month. It is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. Paying attention to eating and exercise habits, and keeping fit and healthy is all part of our goal to “Be Ready”!

There are many resources out there for assistance with weight management and fitness management. Consider partnering with a Military OneSource Health and Wellness Coaching Program coach. The Health and Wellness Coaching Program is a free resource for eligible individuals who

wish to improve their health and overall well-being. [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil) Here’s to improving our health habits this spring!

The challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic impact all of us. During these unprecedented times, it’s critical that our fellow Service members and their families have 24/7 access to credible resources to not only protect our physical health, but our mental health as well.

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) partnered with Psych Hub—the world’s largest online platform for digital mental health education—to make their COVID-19 Mental Health Resource Hub available free of charge. <https://psych-hub.com/> NGB recently produced a video providing the Guard community with an overview of this comprehensive digital library, which features more than 600 articles, videos, and other resources to support mental health and reduce stigma during and beyond the pandemic. The video and Resource Hub are available at [www.nationalguard.mil/wrf](http://www.nationalguard.mil/wrf). We encourage you to watch the video, visit the Resource Hub for yourself. It is imperative now more than ever that we look out for each other. We are a team and we need each and every one of you. We hope that this resource will provide additional support to those that need it.

Just a reminder.... Daylight savings starts on Sunday March 14th so “spring ahead” your clocks an hour. March 20th is the first day of spring!!

Mary Mahoney  
158 FW  
Airman and Family Readiness Manager  
802-652-8035



## Military OneSource

### MilTax: Free Tax Return Filing Help for Your Service Member & Families



All service members have access to Military OneSource MilTax, a suite of free tax services designed specifically for military personnel, to help save them money and let them file their tax return quickly and confidently – increasing their chances of scoring a nice tax refund. This service extends to married spouses (filing joint or separately) and employed dependent children.

MilTax includes:

- Easy-to-use tax preparation and e-filing software
- Personalized support from tax consultants
- Current information about filing taxes in the military

MilTax is designed to address the realities of military life, such as deployments, combat and training pay, housing and rentals and multistate filings. Best of all, MilTax is 100% free for service members.

Easy-to-use tax software with guaranteed results  
MilTax preparation and e-filing software is available mid-January through mid-October. It’s easy to use, walking the preparer through a series of questions to complete the tax return. The software allows users



American  
Red Cross

Every March is your chance to be a hero and help the Red Cross fulfill their mission.

to securely e-file federal returns and up to three state tax forms. All calculations are guaranteed accurate by the software provider, so you can use MilTax with confidence. For more information and to access MilTax directly, visit [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil).

Easy, accessible tax support from military experts  
If your service member has questions about taxes or just needs help getting started, MilTax consultants are available by appointment, over the phone to help with tax situations specific to military service, such as how to report deployment and combat pay, filing deadlines and extensions. Call 800-342-9647 to access this additional support.

MilTax services are always 100% FREE, and available 24/7 through the Military OneSource Program.

For more support and wellness tips, contact Military OneSource at 800-342-9647 or visit [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil).  
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### MIND AND BODY



Genetics, environment and stress play an important role in psychological and physiological development.

These developmental factors along with positive and negative processes affect mind-body health in both children and adults. A child and adult will acquire from their environment an immense amount of information that will make their existence full of meaning. They will get this "meaning" through their senses: hear, sight, smell, taste, and touch. Genetics (nature) and environment (nurture) are important ingredients that determine who they are as individuals. It is an individual's emotions that link and integrate mind and body toward a healthy mind-body development. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress and learning the appropriate methods of dealing with stress will contribute to a healthier



lifestyle. The daily pressures of life can create a chain reaction of stressful occurrences that may lead many individual's in acquiring health related illnesses and diseases. This will in turn affect their families and communities. They will need to discover appropriate ways in reducing their stress. People have the power, the power of choice, to change. Having the ability to change specific habits or lifestyle preferences will generate and enhance an individual's total well-being as well as the lives of others.

Finding ways of humanizing the dialogue between the mind and body will allow the body to release and undo patterns of repression and tension that have developed throughout an individual's life and society as a whole. Self-exploration, stress reduction, and the transformation of behavior can lead to a spiritual opening that will benefit humanity. The future holds many surprises!

Charlene Caiano-  
Ph 802-338-3445

## Vermont Veterans Outreach

### Steve Hernandez Vermont Veterans Outreach Specialist

Steven Hernandez (Steve) was born in Manhattan NY, but spent most of his childhood in Puerto Rico, before moving back to the Bronx at the age of 11 graduating from Christopher Columbus HS. While enrolled at UVM he joined the VT Army National Guard.

In 2007, Steve graduated from AIT as an 11B (Infantryman) in Fort Benning Georgia. Steve joined the ranks at A Co 3-172nd INF (MTN) where he deployed in support of OEF in 2009-2010 as a Grenadier.

He continued to serve with A Co and HHC 3-172nd until 2018, when he switched gears to join the 3-124th IO Battalion in Northfield, VT where he is currently working to become a fully qualified instructor.

In 2013, he became the proud father of Lily Sophia Hernandez and loves spending all his free

time with her.

Steve completed a B.S. in Software Development from Champlain College in 2018.

While with the VTARNG, Steve has worked closely with the Vermont Veteran's Outreach program as a Yellow Ribbon Program Assistant, Media Specialist, and Vermont Veterans Outreach Call Center Coordinator.

Steve has rejoined the team as the Program Analyst for the Vermont Veteran's Outreach Program where he currently maintains their databases and develops custom solutions to automate and improve processes.

Steven Hernandez is very excited to take on this new challenge and hopes to support the Vermont Veteran's Outreach team in the best way possible.



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

## Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots

### Employment Strong: Virtually, from Start to Finish

March 3rd 2021 at 7PM

Has COVID-19 got you thinking about a new career path? Are you curious about how to even look for a remote job? Not sure where to start? Join the Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots team on Wednesday, March 3rd at 7PM for our webinar "Employment Strong: Virtually, From Start to Finish."

We will be discussing ways to find meaningful work moving past the pandemic, how to search for remote jobs, and review trends in employment that could influence your choices! We will have time at the end for questions with our resident employment expert and Military & Family Readiness Specialist Nick Thomas. We invite you to get on the call to learn, share, and support each other as we look to strengthening our communities together by achieving more meaningful employment opportunities.

Register in advance for this meeting:  
<http://bit.ly/2Wp9ubP>  
\*NEW LINK FOR 2021\*

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Zoom meeting.

NOTE: Please join the meeting from your personal device.  
(Government devices are NOT allowed)

#### Questions?

Candice Bryan-Broe at 802-338-3652,  
Michaela LaCoss at 802-338-4317, or  
Marcie Caulfield at 802-338-3164

### HOW CAN I HELP?

**DONATE:** Your donation impacts lives; provides shelter, food, emotional support and other necessities.

**GIVE BLOOD:** Your Donation Matters!  
More than 38,000 blood donations are needed every day.

**TAKE A CLASS:** 10 million people learn emergency skills such as CPR through the Red Cross.

## 3 Mindsets to help Military Kids Thrive through Deployment



Here are 3 mindsets that will help young people build their resilience and confidence so they can thrive even through challenging times.

### 1. LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Changing their perspective by looking for opportunities, changes their internal dialogue about an event or circumstance to a more positive, less emotional viewpoint.

If a challenging circumstance is seen as an opportunity for growth, they are better able to deal with it, bounce back and learn from it. They will learn that challenges are chapters of their life, not their whole story.

**Have your kiddo answer the following questions:**

- I. What challenging circumstance are you facing?
- II. What's something you can learn from this challenging circumstance?
- III. What choice could you put into action with your new found knowledge?

### 2. MISTAKES HAPPEN

The fear of making a mistake can be a huge deterrent to try something new. Mistakes can trigger big emotions like embarrassment, disappointment or shame. What if we taught our youth to see making a mistake as an opportunity to celebrate that they are growing and learning?

What if we taught them that it's normal to feel nervous 'butterflies in your stomach' or worried when thinking about making a mistake? Perhaps then, they would be excited to try something new instead of fearing 'what if I make a mistake?'

**Have your kiddo do the following exercises:**

- I. Write about a time you allowed your fear of making a mistake stop you from saying or doing something.
- II. What do you wish you would have said or done?
- III. What did you learn from this experience?

### 3. FIND A SOLUTION

Everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, will experience challenges and mistakes. Children who understand that life is like a roller coaster, with lots of ups and downs, will be able to bounce back with more ease and confidence. Giving them the opportunity to find solutions to challenges and mistakes that affect them, will enhance their ability to problem solve. It will also give them the confidence to face adversity with more calmness.

**Have your kiddo do the following exercises:**

- I. Write about a time you did something you thought you couldn't do.
- II. What did you learn about yourself from that experience?
- III. List 3 new things you could try.

The youngsters around us learn from our example, so be mindful of your responses to difficult situations and mistakes. To learn more visit [sarawestbrook.com](https://www.sarawestbrook.com) (this site is not endorsed by VTNG-CYP).



In the Spirit of Adventure,

Brian Stoudnour

Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator- Contractor

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



## DATA BREACH: NOW WHAT?



It feels like there is a new data breach every week across the country. We just had one in our own back yard. The VT Department of Labor just announced a data breach, so let's talk about what you should do whether you are affected by this breach or not.

This information is always good to know, the faster you act when it happens the faster you can protect your personal information.

The first step is to place a fraud alert on your three credit reports, this notifies companies to ask more questions when a request for new credit comes in.

Place a free, one-year fraud alert by contacting one of the three credit bureaus. That company must tell the other two.

- **Experian.com/help**  
888-EXPERIAN (888-397-3742)
- **TransUnion.com/credit-help**  
888-909-8872
- **Equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services**  
800-685-1111

Make sure you are always looking at your credit reports throughout the year, just to make sure everything is being reported correctly. You are entitled to



a free credit report from all three agencies at:

**[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)**

If you have looked at one credit report recently, then space out looking at one every 4 months then you will watch all three free throughout the year.

If you get notified your information has been compromised, go to [www.Identitytheft.gov](http://www.Identitytheft.gov) and fill out a report with the FTC. They will collect some of your information about the breach and create a Personal Recovery Plan with all the steps and contact information for all the companies you need to notify. If you create an account, they will walk you through each recovery step, update your plan as needed, track your progress, and pre-fill forms and letters for you.

As always, I am here to answer questions and walk you through these steps if you are a victim of a data breach. Please contact me to set up an appointment, [megan.j.sather.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:megan.j.sather.ctr@mail.mil) or 802-318-2507

## RED CROSS FACTS

• The Red Cross has won the most Nobel Prize Awards.

• The Red Cross was founded in 1881 by Clara Barton.

• The Red Cross supports over 1,000 organizations across the U.S.

• It supplies 45% of the nation's blood supply.



## VTARNG JFHQ State Chaplain

### Chaplain's Reflection:



As the Brigade begins to deploy and families in Vermont connect with each other through texts, phone, calls, family readiness meetings, and even going out for lunch together, remember the importance of showing hospitality to one another. Once the COVID-19 pandemic decreases,

families may even spend time together at one another's home.

What's the difference between **entertaining** guests and showing **hospitality**?

The recorded events of Martha and Mary is well-known. Martha was distracted about serving and demonstrated what entertaining focuses on-what will people think of me? Mary demonstrated hospitality by focusing on others. She cared more about others and listened their concerns than how the house looked or all the preparations for food.

Mary's menu for her guests: sandwiches and chips so that she could sit and listen without all the distractions. Martha's menu for her guests: a three-course meal and used the special dishes for special occasions!

Martha and Mary were both excited to have Jesus and the disciples at their home, but Martha focused on herself

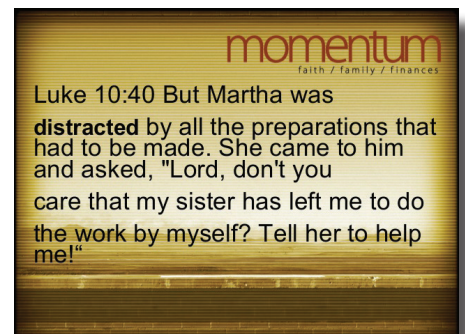
and Mary focused on Jesus. When you invite someone to your home, focus on them and watch how your attitude and the results of the time spent together changes. Everyone will enjoy the time together and leave encouraged and ready to confront the challenges of life.

May the LORD  
bless you!  
For God and  
Country-Live out  
the Call!

CH Brett Charsky

*"Caring for the SOUL of the Army"*

*Invest in PEOPLE, Connect them in SPIRIT, and Cultivate COMMUNITY!*



Check us out on Facebook!

[www.facebook.com/VTNG-Religious-Affairs-101913244864999](https://www.facebook.com/VTNG-Religious-Affairs-101913244864999)

## Reminders from Vermont Employment Support Program



Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) proudly announces a successful 2021 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award nomination season. ESGR received 3,382 nominations for this prestigious award for employers throughout the 50 states, Guam-CNMI, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and District of Columbia. The 3,382 nominations received from a National Guard or Reserve employee in their organization highlight the tremendous support employers provide to their Reserve Component employees. The Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the Department of Defense to employers for their exceptional support of National Guard and Reserve members.



The Vermont ESGR field committee received 11 nominations for review and we would like to acknowledge those service members and their supportive employers.

Capt Candice McClure (ANG) - USCIS Office of Contracting – Williston  
SSG Skyler Genest (ARNG) – Vermont Department of Liquor and Lottery – Montpelier  
COL Scott Nelson (USAR) – Norwich University Applied Research Institute – Northfield  
SMSgt Michael French (ANG) – USCIS – South Burlington  
Capt Joanna Beeman (ANG) – Marathon Health – Winooski  
MSG Chris Tanguay (ARNG) – National Life Holding – Montpelier  
MAJ Miller Pearsall (USAR) – Northwestern Medical Center – St. Albans  
SGT Carlton Quenneville (ARNG) – Green City Garage – South Burlington  
SGT William Cathcart (USAR) – Liberty Auto Sales – Fair Haven  
SFC Sonya Girr (ARNG) – NuHarbor Security, Inc. – Colchester  
SPC Seth Foy (ARNG) – LWI Metal Works – Morrisville

On behalf of the Secretary of Defense, ESGR runs the annual award program, which has presented the honor to only 295 employers since 1996. Please consider nominating your employer for a Patriot Award which is the first in a series of successive awards.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve > Service Members & Family > Nominate your Employer ([esgr.mil](mailto:esgr.mil))

Sabrina Milano  
State Chair, VT ESGR

### DID YOU KNOW?

In the case of a family emergency, the fastest way to get a service member home is through the American Red Cross.

## Military and Family Readiness Centers

**WELCOME TO THE MARCH!** The start of spring is right around the corner!



One trend that the Military and Family Readiness team has seen in the past months is questions regarding TRICARE and health insurance. This is especially important for the coming months as we begin to get more active outdoors enjoying all that Vermont has to offer.

In addition, it is important to understand what is available to you as a service member and how competitive TRICARE can be when compared to civilian insurance options.

Overall there are many plans that are available, but for our traditional drilling Guardsman (one weekend a month, 2 weeks AT) and on orders for less than 30 days, Tricare Reserve Select is a plan that is designed to cover you and your family for low cost medical insurance as well as any Line of Duty (LOD) injuries sustained while on duty for your training.

There is also a dental plan that is available for a low separate premium. If activated for a deployment or AGR Tour, (Orders longer than 30 days) many other

plans become available. The take away from this twofold.

1. If you currently have insurance, compare costs and benefits with your current company plan. You may be shocked as to how good the coverage is and how much you can save every month!

2. If you do not have insurance, as a member of the Vermont National Guard there is no reason to not have insurance. Protecting yourself from high medical bills and prescription costs has never been easier. In addition, if your civilian employer does not offer it or you are between jobs, TRICARE is a great way to sustain coverage during gaps.

For more information on TRICARE and what you need to do to enroll; call, email, or text YOUR Military and Family Readiness Specialist to get informed options for you and your DEERS eligible dependents.

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