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Military Family Network News · April 2010

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR MFN TEAM

New Tax Code for Filing Deadline Coming 2011!

The Internal Revenue Service has announced that starting 2011, the tax filing deadline will be May 15th. Currently, the tax filing deadline is April 15. And, the reason for the change? The country's mounting debt, of course. Estimates used to show that an average American worker works four months for the Government and the remainder of the year for themselves. (Hmmm... Did you know that if you reverse the vowels in "taxes," it spells "Texas?")



Now, because of the growing debt, we have to work FIVE months of every year. One reliable IRS source overheard a top executive, commenting with genuine sadness, "Bummer dude." The bright side? We all get a whole month to procrastinate! Also, just moments ago, the IRS released this announcement: April Fool's! You still have to file this year by April 15 and next year, too. Something's never change..

We're HERE, we mean THERE, we're EVERYWHERE! MFN has joined the 21st century and we're using Facebook and Twitter. We know! The question is: Did YOU? Because of your military lifestyles, MFN's members are some of the most media savvy users in the internet world. We've expanded our network platform just for you. Social media is another important tool so we can stay connected with you, our military community.

So, become our fan on [Facebook](#) and do tell all! Tell us your stories and experiences. Your history helps other military families with moving, deploying, transitioning and meeting other challenges in their military lives. Share what has worked for you, what has not worked and what you've learned so that others don't have to learn the hard way again.

And, give us your thoughts on [Twitter](#). Tell us how MFN can better serve you. Let us know what you need and what you'd like to see. Help us build your community of historical military family experience that families can rely on again and again. We can't wait to hear from you!

Happy Easter! Happy Passover!

Until Next Month (or you can email us at connections@MilitaryFamilyNetwork.com if you just can't wait!),

Megan, Luis and Darrell

K¹² CORNER

BUSINESS FEATURE

Mona Rabin Welcomes You to Anderson Creek Realty!

Military Relocation Broker Near Ft. Bragg

"Professionalism, Respect, and Honesty" are characteristics I strive to live by, both as a realtor and as an individual. I have worked in sales for over 30 years and recently found my niche in real estate. Fortunately, I both live and work in a beautiful gated community called Anderson Creek Club, just minutes from Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. I am committed to giving you the best possible advice that I can.



I grew up in a military family, and my spouse is a retired colonel of the United States Army; therefore, I have a special affection for our entire military community. I remember the security I felt living on military posts and have found the same support system at Anderson Creek Club. It is for that reason I decided to go to real estate school two years ago and began working in the best community in the Fort Bragg area.

The advice that I give to my home buyers is to get a pre-approval letter first before beginning the buying process to see what price range is best for your budget. Then, take your time in choosing the home that is perfect for your situation. To home sellers, my advice is to make sure your home shows in the best possible way, inside and out, because the first impression starts at the curb.

I invite everyone relocating to Fort Bragg or Pope Air Force Base, or even if you are not relocating but know someone who is, to please call me. Come take a look at Anderson Creek Club and make sure to ask for Mona! I would consider it an honor to take you on a tour and even treat you to lunch in our beautiful bar and grill. Because of men and women like you serving our country, I am very proud to be an American. In my opinion, YOU ARE THE BEST and you deserve the best possible service. Please visit our [website](#) then contact me, Mona Rabin at www.andersoncreekclub.com/mona.

Thank you,

Mona Rabin, Broker Associate
<http://andersoncreekclub.com/monarabin>
 910-814-4835 · Cell: 910-489-5579

ORGANIZATION IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THE SOUTHWEST VALLEY FAMILY YMCA PROVIDES SUPPORT TO MILITARY FAMILIES AS PART OF \$31-MILLION INITIATIVE

Armed Services YMCA and Department of Defense partnership gives military families access to youth development, family strengthening, and health and well-being programs

As part of the Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) and Department of Defense (DoD) Outreach Initiative, the Southwest Valley Family YMCA will provide military families with access to youth development, family strengthening, and health and well-being programs at community YMCAs nationwide. Membership fees will be underwritten by the DoD and administered through Military OneSource, an information and referral service for military families. YMCA of the USA, the national resource office for America's 2,686 YMCAs, will help launch the initiative at participating YMCAs



Meet K¹²!



K¹² is the largest provider of online education in America for grades K through 12. We all know how often many of our military families are required to move. K¹² is a way for those families to have a consistent educational experience, year after year. In fact, no matter where you are in the world, as long as you have an internet connection, K¹² can give your children a high quality, American education.

[2010-2011 Enrollment is Now Open!](#)

K¹² has launched enrollment across the country for the 2010-2011 school year. See the [schools in your state that offer the K¹² program](#) and find out how to enroll.

[GCA Students May Become Georgia's First Virtual 4-H Members](#)

Georgia students may soon be able to attend 4-H meetings without leaving home. A new virtual 4-H club is being test-driven by students at the Georgia Cyber Academy .

[K¹² Student Wins Most Inspiring Person Award!](#)

12-year old Zach Bonner, a Florida student in a full-time K¹² public school program, has become the youngest winner of Beliefnet.com's annual award. [Read about Zach's amazing work](#) on behalf of homeless kids.

[Online Schooling is Working for More and More Families](#)

Online schools are becoming increasingly popular in the U.S. , and nowhere more so than in Idaho . [Learn about two families' experiences](#) with the Idaho Virtual Academy .

[Video: How We Create Great Learning](#)

Watch K¹² experts explain how they develop the world's best online education. Meet some of the amazing [people who make K¹² learning happen](#) in Science, History, Remedial Reading, and more.

[Study Finds Online Students Possess Strong Social Skills](#)

A new study finds that students enrolled in full-time, online public schools possess social skills superior to, or not significantly different than, students enrolled in traditional public schools. [Read the report summary.](#)

[K¹²'s High School Algebra Text Wins AEP Distinguished Achievement Award](#)

While we're well-known for online learning, our "off-line" materials are first-class, too!

[Business Week names two K¹² partner schools the top high schools in their states!](#)

[Ohio Virtual Academy](#) and [Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School](#) were named the Parent's Choice winners as best high school in Ohio and Pennsylvania , respectively, by *Business Week* magazine and GreatSchools.net.



[K¹² proudly joins MFN in celebrating the Month of the Military Child!](#)

NEWS YOU CAN USE

across the country.

"The Southwest Valley Family YMCA is happy to help meet the critical needs facing families of deployed military service members," said Ron Sites , Executive Director, Southwest Valley Family YMCA. "Families are the most affected when a loved one gets deployed, so we are deeply committed to providing them with the support they need."

The ASYMCA-DoD Outreach Initiative responds to a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan to support military family readiness and to ensure that military family readiness programs and activities are available to all deployed National Guard and Reserve families, and some active duty families in certain special categories.

Eligible military families participating in the initiative are eligible for YMCA memberships based on participation requirements. Those eligible to participate in the new initiative include:

- All interested families of joint deployed National Guard and Reserves of all military branches;
- Active Duty Independent Duty station personnel and their families; and
- Relocated spouses and family members of deployed Active Duty personnel.

"The YMCA has a long history of supporting military service members and their families – since the Civil War – so it was natural for us to join this initiative," said Sites. "During this time of conflict, it is more important than ever that we continue providing services and support to these families in the absence of a deployed spouse."

More information about the ASYMCA-DoD Outreach Initiative can be found by visiting [www.asymca.org](#). For information about participating YMCAs, please visit [www.valleyYMCA.org](#) or [www.ymca.net](#).

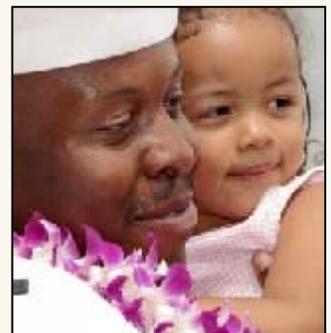
The Southwest Valley Regional YMCA has 6,739 members and 921 program members of which 2,890 or 43% were youth under the age of 18. Our YMCA facility opens its doors for a combined total of over 100 hours per week and serves our members over 13,500 times a month. The YMCA provides programs and services that promote four core values: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility. These programs include: child care, youth sports, swimming, camping, gymnastics, teen, family and senior adult programs, health and fitness, and volunteerism. The YMCA mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

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THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

April is Month of the Military Child

This month celebrates the important role that children play in the military community. It is an earnest and heartfelt acknowledgement that military children serve our nation, too, and The Military Family Network pauses to honor them and their families for their sacrifices.



Since 2002, we've have learned a lot about the youngest members of our

Official Details New Recuperation Leave Policy

Some deployed servicemembers will not be charged for rest and recuperation leave under a new Defense Department policy. [Read More...](#)

Military Gears Up for 2010 Census

The Defense Department is working with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure that all military personnel are accounted for in the 2010 census, a defense official said here today. All servicemembers and their families, whether stationed domestically or overseas, must be counted and attributed to their proper place of residence, Mary Dixon, director of the Defense Manpower Data Center, said in an interview with the Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service. [Read More...](#)

Senators Salute National Guard's Value

U.S. senators applauded the National Guard's domestic and overseas contributions at a Capitol Hill breakfast today. Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy and Missouri Sen. Christopher S. Bond co-hosted the 2010 Senate National Guard Caucus Breakfast, which also included newly elected Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown, a current Army Guard lieutenant colonel, who joked that he needs to get a haircut before he attends his monthly drill with the Massachusetts National Guard this weekend. [Read More...](#)

Gates Notes Contributions of Military Women

The nation depends upon women, both military and civilian, at all levels of the Defense Department, from the front lines in Iraq and Afghanistan to the upper echelons of military command, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said here today. [Read More...](#)

Defense Department Prepares for Recruiting Challenges

Despite historic recruitment rates since the end of the military draft, the Defense Department continues to take measures to ensure prolonged recruitment successes, a senior Pentagon official informed Congress yesterday. [Read More...](#)

Social Media Sites Provide Morale Boost, Official Says

A newly introduced Defense Department social media policy opens doors that can provide a morale boost for families and troops serving in a war zone, a senior official who helped to design the policy said this week. [Read More...](#)

Rising Personnel Costs Could Affect Readiness, Official Says

Maintaining good compensation and benefits helped to give the military a record recruiting year in fiscal 2009, but rising personnel costs could affect readiness in the future, the department's new undersecretary for personnel and readiness told a Senate panel today. [Read More...](#)

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TRICARE UPDATE

military community and our respect and admiration for them has grown. They have taught us many things including the true meaning of resiliency. Despite deployments, separations, relocations, disruptions in schools, friendships and even greater losses such as a wounded parent or a parent who doesn't come home at all, military children display a heroic resiliency for adapting, coping, meeting and overcoming the challenges of military life.

But we must not rest on our laurels. While our military children have persevered with poise, it is our duty to help them flourish. We must continue to create environments where military children feel valued, nurtured and secure where every adult touching their lives assumes responsibility for their well being and success. That is why organizations like the [Military Child Education Coalition \(MCEC\)](#) are so important. They work to help educators; health and social professionals; and communities identify needs and provide information and resources for meaningful solutions. Military children walk a path that they have not chosen; we have the power to ensure that they travel it well. The Military Family Network is proud to partner our resources with [MCEC](#), fatherhood expert [Armin Brott](#), and companies like [K12](#) to support our nation's military children.

Former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger established the Defense Department commemoration in 1986. Now in its 24th year, The Month of the Military Child is still revered as an essential reminder that we must not take our military children for granted and that we must always strive to provide quality services and support to help them succeed in the mobile and uncertain military lifestyle.

Let's Celebrate Kids!!

[Military Teens and Kids On The Move!](#)

This site was designed with you in mind. Maybe you've had to relocate a zillion times. So, grab a soda, get yourself comfortable and start clicking your way to your new home, your new school and your new life.

[Military Kidz Installation](#)

Explore your military installation...but remember, to get past the guard you will need to sign up for your Military Kidz ID Card, before you can start having fun!

[Kids.gov](#)

Find links to government and other kids' sites -- just use the navigation bar above to browse through our site. Kids.gov is the official kids' portal for the U. S. government. It links to over 2,000 web pages from government agencies, schools, and educational organizations, all geared to the learning level and interest of kids. Kids.gov is maintained by the Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC), those folks in Pueblo, CO 81009. You can learn more about FCIC by visiting [www.pueblo.gsa.gov](#). Explore, learn, and have fun!

[VA Kids](#)

Learn about veterans, who they are, cool facts, games and more!

[Military Child Education Coalition](#)

MCEC's work is focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition. Visit [MCEC](#) to find information for parents, educators, and child and student programs.

[Zero to Three](#)

This organization is proud to support military families by increasing awareness and collaboration throughout the military community so that parents and professionals can more effectively care for very young children and their families impacted by such deployment-related issues as trauma, grief, and loss. Visit our [Military Projects](#) page to learn more about how to register for trainings, updates on current initiatives and to download resources for military families.

[Letsmove.gov](#)

Let's Move! has an ambitious but important goal: to solve the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation. Let's Move will give parents the support they need, provide healthier food in schools, help our kids to be more physically active, and make healthy, affordable food available in every part of our country.

Statement by Secretary Gates on impact on health care legislation on TRICARE

As Secretary of Defense, the health and well-being of America's men and women in uniform is my highest priority. [Read More...](#)

TRICARE Extends Web-based Counseling Program

To continue giving beneficiaries the help they need, the TRICARE Assistance Program has been extended through March 20, 2011. This demonstration program lets beneficiaries use the Internet and a Web cam to speak "face-to-face" with mental health counselors 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the privacy of the beneficiary's home or wherever else they may feel comfortable. [Read More...](#)

TRICARE: Everyone Saves with Generic Drugs

Ever hear of omeprazole, zolpidem, or cetirizine? These popular generic drugs treat gastrointestinal problems, insomnia and allergies and are also available under familiar brand names. While generic drugs are not advertised on television or in magazines, they provide the same benefits as their brand-name counterparts at a lower price for TRICARE beneficiaries and the government alike. [Read More...](#)

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RELOCATION INFORMATION

Military Spouse Residency Relief Act (MSRRA) (Public Law 111-97)

The MSRRA changes some basic rules of taxation with respect to military spouses who: 1) earn income from services performed in a State in which the spouse is present with their Service member (SM) pursuant to military orders and 2) that State is not the spouse's domicile (legal residence). [Read More...](#)

Housing Program Enhancements Offer Additional Options for Struggling Homeowners

Today, as part of its ongoing commitment to continuously improve housing relief efforts, the Administration announced adjustments to the Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) and to the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) programs. These program adjustments will better assist responsible homeowners who have been affected by the economic crisis through no fault of their own. The program modifications will expand flexibility for mortgage servicers and originators to assist more unemployed homeowners and to help more people who owe more on their mortgage than their home is worth because their local markets saw large declines in home values. [Read More](#) including criteria for loan mortgage modification for eligible homeowners...

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VETERANS CORNER

Kidshealth.org

If you're looking for information you can trust about kids and teens that's free of "doctor speak," you've come to the right place. KidsHealth is the most-visited site on the Web for information about health, behavior, and development from before birth through the teen years.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's® (NCMEC) mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them.

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids

This site provides learning tools for K-12 students, parents, and teachers. These resources will teach how our government works, the use of the primary source materials of GPO Access, and how one can use GPO Access to carry out their civic responsibilities. And, just as GPO Access provides locator services to U.S. Government sites, Ben's Guide provides a similar service to U.S. Government Web sites developed for kids.

My Pyramid.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Most people first learn about nutrition in elementary school. MyPyramid for Kids was developed to reach elementary school-aged children and teach them the new Food Guidance System. MyPyramid for Kids presents all of the MyPyramid concepts in an appealing way to attract children's attention and encourage them to learn more.

Books for Military Children

Jan Pye, has been a military spouse for fifteen years and has four military children. In typical military family style, in the first five years of her marriage she had four children while living in five houses in three different countries. With a degree in library sciences to accompany her military experience, she performs a trusted, expert review of children's books that aim to mirror a child's military experience.

Fact Sheet on the Military Child

Source: American Association of School Administrators

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FAMILY SUPPORT

Support Helps Children Cope With Deployments

Children with a strong nondeployed parent or caregiver and a solid support system have a better ability to cope with deployments, two recent studies have shown. [Read More...](#)

Care Plan to Encompass More Military Families

The Defense Department's family care plan policy will be expanded in the coming months to encompass a wider population of military parents, a defense legal expert said. [Read More...](#)

More Dwell Time Coming in 2011, Army Vice Chief Says

Soldiers should find themselves spending twice as much time at home station as they do deployed by 2011, the Army's vice chief of staff said on Capitol Hill yesterday. [Read More...](#)

Center Offers Respite for Families of Fallen

Robin Raine walked through the plush, richly appointed room with purpose, her eyes fixed on a lampshade that was askew, a flaw in the otherwise immaculate sitting area. [Read More...](#)

Morphine May Reduce PTSD Risk, Study Shows

Injured servicemembers who receive morphine during trauma care are about half as likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder as those who are not administered the drug, a Navy study has revealed. [Read More...](#)

Coaches Ease Mental Health Care Transitions

The Defense Department has launched a new program that offers servicemembers undergoing mental health treatment a bridge of support as they transition between health care systems or providers. InTransition provides this continuity of care through a network of transitional support coaches who offer servicemembers one-on-one guidance through a transition, whether it's a move or a separation from service, a health care official explained. [Read More...](#)

Play it Again, Dot Mil Docs!

You are probably recognizing Dot Mil Docs as a "regular" in MFN's newsletter. That's because each month, we try to highlight an episode that we believe might be useful to you.

This month, MFN showcases [TBI Response and Treatment](#).

This episode presents Dr. Frederick Flynn of Madigan Army Medical Center talking about the medical response to traumatic brain injuries and how to treat them. So, check it out and while you are there, take a few minutes to look around. You'll be pleasantly surprised by the information that is available and amazed by what you can learn in a few short minutes.

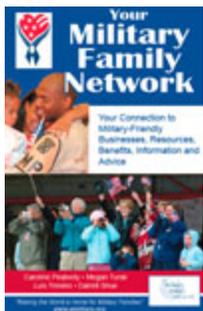
About: Dot Mil Docs is the product of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Military Health System and is the official podcast of the Military Health System. America's Military Health System (MHS) is a unique partnership of medical educators, medical researchers, and healthcare providers and their support personnel worldwide. This DoD enterprise consists of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; the medical departments of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Joint Chiefs of Staff; the [Combatant Command surgeons](#); and [TRICARE](#) providers (including private sector healthcare providers, hospitals and pharmacies). On [DotMilDocs](#), military doctors and health care experts discuss a new topic each week. You can find more information [here](#) or the main web page for MHS at [www.health.mil](#).

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MFN BOOK CLUB

Your Military Family Network

[Order Your Copy Now!](#)



"Your Military Family Network reference book is the most complete source of information for the active military, veterans and their families that I have seen. At first I just skimmed through it, but when I read the contents and your instructions on how to use this book, I realize this book was worth much more than the purchase price. Thank you for providing a helping hand for our military who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. Your book it is a treasure for me and for all military personnel." - Curt M., WWII veteran

Retailing for \$24.95, The Military Family

Defense Commissary Agency kicks off 'Your Pet, Your Family' Campaign

Source: Defense Commissary Agency

Whether you feel a distinct comfort when Fido greets you at the door with full-body wagging, or laugh hilariously when playing laser-light chase with Socks the cat, or marvel at your bird Petey's ability to mimic sounds as he makes you answer a non-ringing phone, you believe your furry and feathered friends are family.

The Defense Commissary Agency agrees with you as it kicks off its "Your Pet, Your Family" campaign March 27, at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio. This campaign recognizes that in many military families, pets are thought of as family members and need as much care as the adults and children in the family.

The "Your Pet, Your Family" campaign emphasizes that the 30 percent or more customers save on purchases at their commissary extends to all kinds of pet foods as well, from the new "fresh refrigerated" items most commissaries carry, to the more high-end name brands for pets.

Shopping at the commissary can also help customers with their battle against fleas and ticks on pets, as DeCA stocks high-end pet health products specially developed to keep bugs away from furry family members.

"The 'Your Pet, Your Family' campaign will help customers think of the commissary the next time they're looking to provide for their family pets," said Sallie Cauthers, DeCA's chief of marketing.

"So, if you bristle a bit when someone says your pet is 'just a pet,' remember the commissary knows they are never 'just a pet,'" Cauthers added. "We know your pets are your family, so look for pet promotions throughout the year in your commissary, as part of our commitment to your companions."

Visit [www.commissaries.com](#) for more great information about your Commissary benefits, healthy tips for you and your family, and to subscribe to our money-saving newsletters like [Commissary Connection](#) and [Li'l Heroes Benefit Bulletin](#)

Afterdeployment.org Launches Enhanced Web Site

While the site's essential mission to offer Web-based tools targeting behavioral health issues remains the same, the site's re-engineered architecture and content management technologies deliver wide-ranging content from diverse sources, all within a common user experience. A learning management system integrated into the new site supports the delivery of eLearning assessments and workshops that facilitate self-paced learning and behavior-change strategies. [Read More...](#)

Helping Traumatized Children at School

[Source: Kathleen Nader, D.S.W. & [Gift From Within](#)]

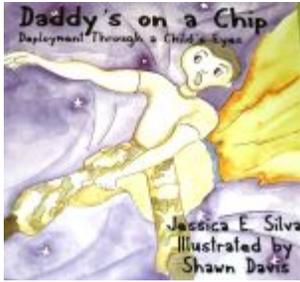
For children and adolescents, exposure to traumatic events and the symptoms that follow may interfere with the ability to have a reasonably normal school experience. In fact, posttraumatic symptoms may make the school experience and other aspects of life intolerable for some children. Trauma's disruption of school life can take many forms. Read More to learn what parents, teachers, school psychologists, and other school staff can do to help...

[More Information Here](#)

About Gift from Within.org : Gift from Within is a non-profit organization dedicated to those who suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), those at risk for PTSD, and those who care for traumatized individuals; develops and disseminates educational material, including videotapes, articles, books, and other resources through its website; maintains a roster of survivors who are willing to participate in an international network of peer support; is designated by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) public charity, eligible to receive tax-exempt grants, gifts, and donations.

Network™ is offering this valuable, must-have resource at \$14.95+s/h. Buy it for yourself, your family, a friend or loved one – MFN guarantees best price on the web! To order your copy of [Your Military Family Network](#) or copies for your organization, please visit [Your Military Family Network](#) online or call 1-866-205-2850 for more information. Group discounts available – call or email sales@MilitaryFamilyNetwork.com for details.

Daddy's On A Chip



Kids are curious about what their parents are doing while they are away on deployments. In *Daddy's On A Chip*, a young girl narrates her thoughts on what she imagines her Daddy could be doing during those long months. She also shows how her life is different at home in a humorous exploration of the everyday conundrums that every military family is challenged with. Both parents and children will enjoy the illustrations and the lighter side of deployment, while

helping children by giving them a gateway to opening up about their feelings during a difficult time. Recently added to the "Recommended List" with Fleet and Family services for DoD schools, *Daddy's On A Chip* can be used as a counseling tool as well.

A good read for children ages 3-8. To order the book, *Daddy's On A Chip*, visit www.metalsofthonor.biz or call 757-339-1555.

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MILITARY FRIENDLY DEALS

Like Ebay? You'll love GSA Auctions®!

[GSA Auctions®](#) offers Federal personal property assets ranging from commonplace items (such as office equipment and furniture) to more select products like scientific equipment, heavy machinery, airplanes, vessels and vehicles. The site offers the general public the opportunity to bid electronically on a wide array of Federal assets. The auctions are completely web-enabled, allowing all registered participants to bid on a single item or multiple items (lots) within specified timeframes. GSA Auctions® online capabilities allow GSA to offer assets located across the country to any interested buyer, regardless of location.

Get a FREE calendar from womenshealth.gov!

This calendar offers information about common health problems and important symptoms to watch out for. You'll find charts that describe the screenings and immunizations you need, tips on how to get a second opinion, how to read a drug label and more — all in a handy, portable calendar you can keep with you year round. Order through our easy [online form](#) or call us at 800-994-9662. Hurry while supplies last!

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COMMUNITY

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MONEY, EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

DOD Resumes Military Career Spouse Program

The Department of Defense announced today the resumption of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account - MyCAA - program. Beginning March 13 at 12 p.m. EST, the 136,583 military spouses who are currently enrolled in the program will once again be able to receive tuition assistance. [Read More...](#)

Board Reassesses Service Disability Ratings

Recommendations from a congressionally directed Defense Department disability review board have resulted in 61 percent of applicants having their status changed from a medical separation to retirement on the permanent disability list, the board president said. [Read More...](#)

All U.S. Military Families Get Online Tutoring and Career Help at No Charge

All eligible U.S. military families have unlimited access to Tutor.com provided by the Department of Defense. Military service members and their dependents around the world can work with a professional tutor online 24/7 to get help with homework, studying, test prep, resume writing and more. Visit <http://www.tutor.com/military-programs> for more information.

Free Tax Help for Eligible Taxpayers

The IRS offers [free tax help](#) to people with low to moderate income, senior citizens, and military personnel and their families.

Programs for eligible taxpayers include:

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)** – Certified volunteers help prepare basic returns for those with an income of approximately \$49,000 or less. Call 1-800-829-1040 to locate the nearest VITA site.
- **Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)** – Trained volunteers provide free tax counseling and basic income tax return preparation for those who are aged 60 and older. As part of the TCE program, AARP offers Tax-Aide counseling to help people of low-to-middle income. For more information about TCE, call 1-800-829-1040.
- **Military Personnel** – Military personnel and their families are eligible for free tax preparation assistance at offices within their installations. Volunteers at these VITA sites are trained to address military-specific tax issues.

Know Your Benefits! Social Security Q&A

Yolanda York, Public Affairs Specialist, Social Security Administration

Question: I am about to apply for Social Security disability benefits. I have two children, ages nine and 12. If my application is approved, will they get benefits, too? Or do the children also have to be disabled to qualify for benefits on my record?

Answer: If you qualify for Social Security disability benefits, your children may receive dependent's benefits based on your work record, even if they're not disabled themselves. As long as you receive benefits, their benefits will continue until they reach age 18, or until age 19 if they are still in high school. If your children are disabled, however, at the time that they reach age 18, they may be able to continue receiving benefits into adulthood. For more information, visit our website on disability benefits at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

Question: My cousin said he applied for Social Security retirement benefits on the Internet. Can you really do that?

Answer: Yes you can! Applying online is the easiest, fastest, and most convenient way to apply for retirement benefits. There's no need to fight the traffic to visit an office or wait for an appointment. Our website makes it

Staying Safe on Social Network Sites

The popularity of social networking sites continues to increase, especially among teenagers and young adults. The nature of these sites introduces security risks, so you should take certain precautions. [Read More...](#)

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ASK MFN'S MILITARY FAMILY SPECIALIST

Robin is MFN's Military Family Specialist. She is a regular feature to our monthly newsletter to help connect you with solutions to challenges in your military life. So, please meet Robin, a soldier of eighteen years and a family programs specialist. She will be your guide to keeping informed, being prepared and, well, mopping up messes if that's what it takes! You can reach her by emailing connections@militaryfamilynetwork.com for some good old Q&A or you can sit back and keep reading as we introduce some of her fine work right here in MFN's monthly newsletter. So, as they say, "On with the show!"

Hi Robin,

I am currently deployed for about 5 months now. My wife and I have been having a really hard time and have been talking about a divorce. No matter how hard we try, problems just keep coming up. Maybe it's the stress or just missing each other, but I heard we could get some marriage counseling through the Navy/Marine Relief Society. Is this true? Or, is there any help we can receive? – Ron F.

Hi Ron,

Thank you for reaching out to The Military Family Network. I'm sorry to learn that your current deployment is exerting undue stress on your marriage and that you are facing challenges in your relationship. Please know that there are many opportunities for you and your wife to receive guidance and that there are other solutions besides divorce. So, in short, the answer to your question is "yes, the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) has services to help. Visit them at: <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/>. (Note that this is different from Navy-Marine Relief Society.)

First of all, please know - I mean, really know - that deployments are a tremendously challenging time for both you and your wife and that often, emotions run very high and leap from one extreme to another. And, that you are both missing your partner and loved one. I share this so that you know that you and your wife are not alone and that there are a lot of resources available to help. Many couples feel and have felt as you do now, but it doesn't always have to end in divorce. Many times couples begin to think of ending the relationship, because they lack the clarity to see other viable options. But, there are options and one of them is getting assistance so that you can build your own relationship skills like communication, patience, understanding and developing the capacity to walk in each other's shoes. It also helps to get guidance on how deployments and external forces play a part of the discord that you are unfortunately experiencing.

For instance, think back to a good time with your wife, when you were both enjoying one another's company. You will probably also notice that other things going on in your life were not as stressful as they may be now. Often, we can forget how outside factors involve themselves in our responses to each other. In addition, by getting guidance, you can also learn about how to sort your difficulties - and what can reasonably be resolved when there is literally thousands of miles between you. For instance, perhaps you and your wife may agree to postpone some discussions and issues for when you return home. This is not to say that they are not important; it's just an acknowledgment that this topic would be better solved when you are together.

So, while I'm not a counselor, I have met with thousands of families and know that there is great hope for military marriages. While these marriages certainly come with their own style, so to speak, they are

simple, allowing you to apply for retirement benefits in as little as 15 minutes. You can get started now at www.socialsecurity.gov/applyonline.

Question: What is the earliest age I can begin receiving retirement benefits?

Answer: The earliest age you can begin receiving Social Security retirement benefits is 62. If you decide to receive benefits before your full retirement age, you will receive a reduced benefit. Keep in mind you will not be able to receive Medicare coverage until age 65, even if you decide to retire at an earlier age. For more information, go to www.socialsecurity.gov.

Military OneSource Offers Free Tax Filing

Defense officials encourage military families to once again take advantage of the free electronic tax filing services offered through Military OneSource. Read More... <http://www.militaryfamilynetwork.com/article.php?aid=14947>.

IRS Outlines Additional Steps to Assist Unemployed Taxpayers and Others

The Internal Revenue Service today announced several additional steps it is taking this tax season to help people having difficulties meeting their tax obligations because of unemployment or other financial problems. [Read More...](#)

Patriot Academy student-soldiers earn diplomas

Patriot Academy, the military's first accredited high school, graduated its first class here yesterday. [Read More...](#)

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MISSION CRITICAL INFO

Join the [Military Family Network](#) in the social media world!

Become a [fan](#), share your military life experience and help others build a personal support network for their military career. MFN's [Facebook page](#) connects you with friends you can count on while MFN's [Twitter](#) page keeps you informed.



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Contact Megan Turak at sales@MilitaryFamilyNetwork.com for more details.

*Military Community Submissions:

If you have a story, song or photo that you would like to share with The Military Family Network™, please contact [Luis Trevino](mailto:Luis.Trevino).

Get Seen! Get Heard! Join MFN's Referral Network!

some of the strongest bonds out there. I hope that my observations have moved you to seriously consider contacting the resources available below. Also, you may wish to seek out a copy of 'A Survival Guide for Marriages in the Military' - a book written by a retired Navy Chaplain, Gene Thomas Gomulka. [By the way, Captain Gomulka's work is also available through www.therelationshipsite.net where he provides couples with tools like "Relationship Inventory and Counseling Insights" that they can use to complement any help they may receive from other sources.]

- **Visit your Chaplain** . The Army has a program called "Strong Bonds" which is a marital retreat program and I know that some Navy Chaplains are engaged in some programs, too. See if your chaplain has any suggestions for you. Also, your Chaplain is a great, confidential "ear" and can really guide you in setting reasonable expectations. I greatly encourage you to do this - allowing yourself to become distracted could be dangerous for you and others.
- **MilitaryOneSource** - The military's official support organization offers 12 free counseling sessions for you and family members. They also have a broad range of resources for you and your wife that you may find helpful. Visit them at <http://www.militaryonesource.com>
- **Look for a reliable, trusted, confidential peer/mentor** - Is there someone in your unit who has experienced multiple deployments and has a successful marriage? They may be a good resource - I have found military families to be tremendously creative in solving problems. They may have some ideas that sound good for you and your wife.
- **Suggest that your wife develop a positive support network, too** . This should include, if possible, your unit's family readiness program. Here, she can connect with others who are sharing her experience and they may be able to comfort and support her. There also is a very good Marine Spouse forum facilitated by Julie Jones - a Marine spouse -at <http://www.militaryfamilynetwork.com/frg.html> . Check it out by reading a little about her.

If other issues that are weighing on you and your wife involve concerns like finances, health, childcare, please let us know and we can refer you to other resources as well.

Best wishes to you and your wife - Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. I'm rooting for you!

Peace out, Robin

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The Military Family Network™ has connected and worked with media outfits of all kinds including ABC, NBC, CBS, MSNBC, Montel Williams, Dr. Phil Show, Sesame Street, AARP, Newsweek, Army Times, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, Social Security, Department of Labor, Military OneSource, Reader's Digest, VFW, United Press International, Lifetime, etc. and countless newspapers around the world. These organizations contact MFN for a variety of reasons, but in each case, they want to hear from the military community.

If you are a service member, military family member or veteran and would like to be included in MFN's referral network for media opportunities, please email lou@militaryfamilynetwork.com with your interest and contact information and Lou will be glad to include you for future opportunities.

Privacy Notice: The Military Family Network™ is committed to ensuring the privacy of our military community according to the Department of Defense and MFN does not release or sell information about individuals. In the event that you participate in MFN's referral network, you will be contacted by MFN about the opportunity first and if you are interested, you will be given the choice to provide MFN with permission to release your contact information (name, email or phone only) or be given the contact information to make the connection yourself. If you are an active member of the Armed Forces, it is always advisable to contact PAO for guidelines, permission, etc., before participating in public media opportunities.

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