

FAMILY FOCUS

Vermont Air National Guard

Volume II, No. 2

Family Readiness & Support Services

Wing Family Readiness Center

88 NCO Drive Suite 114, South Burlington, VT

Angela Prive (802) 652-8035, Sandy Quesnel (802) 660-5210 x5617, E-Mail: angela.prive@vtburl.ang.af.mil

Reunion

A time to rebuild, reunite and rekindle your marriage and relationship.



The reunion of a family after a separation can be just as stressful as the separation itself. If your family has experienced some strain or tension during a reunion, you are not alone. You may have wondered why an occasion that is "supposed" to be so romantic and exciting should turn out less than perfect.

From the moment you are separated from the person you care about, you may begin to build up an image of that person in your mind. You may fantasize about how wonderful everything will be when you are together again.

You may remember the members of your family as they appear in the photograph in your wallet--the picture perfect all-American family. A similar process is happening with the spouse and children. The missing member may be placed on a pedestal as the warrior out defending the country. Memories of everyday life such as making ends meet, occasional disagreements, and disciplining the children, begin to fade from everyone's mind. The reunion is seen as the solution to all problems. "Once we are together again, everything will be perfect." However, reality rarely has a chance to live up to the high expectations you have set in your minds.

This is not meant to be a forecast of "doom and gloom." Homecomings can be very happy occasions as long as all family members make an effort to be as realistic as possible. If the tendency to not pick after oneself around the house occurred before the separation, that habit probably has not miraculously disappeared. If a weight problem existed prior to the separation, do not expect a fifty-pound loss to have occurred during the separation. If one of the children was experiencing a problem at school,

do not expect the problem to disappear at reunion time.

Talking to one another and working through the everyday challenges that family life presents is what is important. This does not all have to be accomplished on the day of the family reunion. Give yourselves some time to enjoy one another. Everyone needs to get reacquainted before problem solving begins.

AIR GUARD MEMBER

Ease yourself back into the family gradually. If you come on like a "Sherman tank" and try to bulldoze your way back into your family's life, feelings of resentment will surface. See yourself as a "Special Guest" for a while.

Take some time to observe how the family has been running in your absence. You might be tempted to jump right in with "Now that I am home, there are going to be a few changes around here." You will see that some things will change naturally as a result of your presence in the family. If you disagree about the way other things have been handled, wait a few days and discuss it openly with your spouse.

Do not try to take over the finances immediately. A complete interrogation regarding the state of the checkbook as soon as you walk through the door is bound to create hostility. Set aside some time when things have calmed down to review the financial situation with your spouse.

Take it easy with the children in terms of discipline. For a while, stick with the rules your spouse has established during your absence. Immediately playing the "heavy" will not open up opportunities for you and the children to get to know one another again. It is not difficult to understand why some children are afraid of the returning parent if all they have to look forward to is "a changing of the guard."

On the other hand, sometimes it is easy to spoil your children. If you have not seen them for a long period of time, or you are home for only short periods of

time, you may find yourself not wanting to discipline them. You are probably eager to make up for the time you were unable to spend with them. This is certainly understandable. But do not put your spouse in the position of constantly playing the "heavy" while you have all the fun with the children.

Do not be surprised if your spouse is a little envious of your travels. Your life may look very exciting compared to the job of "keeping the home fires burning." Surprise your spouse with a gift when you return from a new place. This way they can show off their "treasures" from different states or countries and cultures, and share in your experiences.

Expect your spouse to have changed. Neither of you is the same person you were a few months ago, or even a few weeks ago. The main adjustment for military families after a separation is the change in roles. Your spouse has learned to cope alone as a matter of survival. Out of necessity, some of your roles have been taken over in order to compensate for your absence. Try not to be threatened if you find an independent person when you return home. The fact that your spouse can cope without you does not necessarily mean that he or she cares about you any less.

SPOUSE

Keep in mind that your spouse has been operating in a regimented environment with a daily routine. Transition to family life takes a while. In some instances, your spouse might be a rebellious against any kind of schedule or preplanned activity you have set up. Be patient! There might also be some trouble sleeping soundly throughout the night at first. It takes some time to make the transition from barracks-style living to home living, especially if your spouse has been standing rotating shifts or working irregular hours.

Do not take it personally if you find your spouse day dreaming about work-related issues. Your spouse has been immersed in a totally work-related environment while away from home. It takes a while to let go of that world, even when a spouse is relieved to be away from it and home with the family.

You might find that your spouse is either surprised or even hurt that you have been able to manage everything so well alone. Try not to get defensive. Everyone wants to feel needed. Reassure your partner that although you are capable of handling the household and family on your own, you need companionship and emotional support. Point out that it also makes life a lot easier when you have someone with whom you can share these responsibilities.

Go slowly – don't try to make up for lost time. Accept that your partner may be different. Take time to get reacquainted. It is normal for there to be some readjustment difficulties. If after three weeks you or your family members are still having trouble

readjusting, please don't hesitate to ask for help.

CHILDREN

Some children will keep their distance from the returning parent for a while. They may still have unresolved feelings of anger toward that individual for leaving them, and are not ready to allow that parent to be part of their lives yet. They may have to be "courted" for a while until they feel comfortable again.

Other children will become "clingers." Each time the parent disappears from sight for a few moments, they think the adult has gone away from home again. As a result they tend to hold on for dear life and not let the parent out of their sight. Be patient. This will pass with time as they see you leave and return again.

At reunion time Dad could be meeting his new infant son or daughter for the first time. This can be quite an emotional experience for everyone, including the infant. Do not feel that you have to thrust a crying infant into the arms of a returning member. Do not feel overwhelming rejection if your infant will not come to you at first. Infants are people too, and they need time to develop trust before they feel comfortable with a new adult in their lives.

Plan to spend some time individually with each one of your children by doing some activity that is special to them. This allows the parent to get reacquainted with each child in a way that is most comfortable for that particular child. It also makes each child feel special and appreciated for their individuality.

Expect your children to have changed, both physically and emotionally. Sometimes the changes are barely noticeable from day to day, but if you go away, you might discover upon your return that your toddler is walking, your fourth grader has learned the multiplication tables, and your teenage daughter has a new boyfriend.

Remember to be patient and give everyone time to readjust to family life together again. Spend some time alone with your spouse, children, parents etc. and take time for yourself as well. [If you or any of your family members feel like you are having trouble coping with adjustment, it is healthy to ask for help. Contact a counseling agency, a minister, your Family Readiness center, Military Chaplin or the Veterans Administration. They can also refer you to other outside resources for help. \(See "helpful websites" on page 5\)](#)

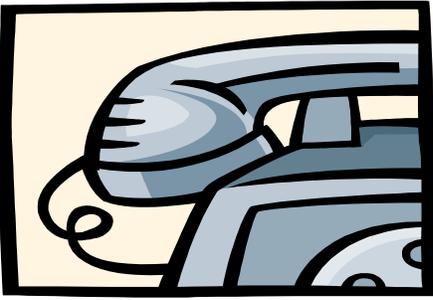
+ American Red Cross

Armed Forces Emergency Services

Servicing Military Personnel in times of emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They can help you send emergency messages to your service member.

Nationwide: 1-877-272-7337

Vermont: 1-800-660-9130 or 1-888-272-7337 (24 hrs)



Our Video Phone is installed and operational!

If you or your children would like to be able to see and talk to your deployed service member, this is a great tool for you to use!

Just call our office and we will help you coordinate the call with your service member.

Video Phone calls are done by appointment, so we can close the office for your privacy during your Video Phone call. For more information please call Angela or Sandy at Family Readiness: 802-652-8035 or (802) 660-5210 ext 5617.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING WORKSHOP

The Vermont Air National Guard Family Readiness and Support Services conducted its first Volunteer Training Workshop on May 17 and 18 2003. Topics included Community Services (Red Cross and PATH), TriCare, Military Assistance, Money Matters, Volunteer Management and Information and Referral. It was an opportunity for volunteers, new and old; to attend training, get to know each other and the Family Readiness staff. Everyone received a lot of great tools and information, along with good food and prizes. Plus we all had lots of fun!



Call our office to find out about your Squadron's Family Readiness group, how they can help you, or how you can become a volunteer!

FAMILY DAY 2003



The Vermont Air National Guard held its annual family day on June 8th 2003. It was a huge success with great food, great weather, a clown and lots of activities for the kids and

families. Activities included rock climbing, Bouncing obstacle courses, and a variety of crafts. A big round of applause to all the kids who helped make the "Hands of Support" flag with their hands (see photo above). A special thank you to all the volunteers for their time, effort and dedication, which helped make this Family Day one of the best ever!

**Vermont Air National Guard
Volunteer Recognition
2002-2003**



Congratulations to the following individuals:

Spouse of the Year – Monica Gragg

Family of the Year– The Pochop family

Youth of the Year – Leslie Irvine

Military Member of the Year –CAPT Jeff Rector

Thank you all for
your hard work and dedication!





For more information call:

1-800-724-9988

Website: www.armymwr.com

Kids Corner

Cool Kids Frozen Treats

Nothing beats the heat on a hot day like a delicious frozen treat. Your kids will be especially delighted with these tasty ideas, because even the littlest hands will find them easy to make

Supplies

- 10 small disposable plastic cups (3-ounce size, such as those used in the bathroom)
- 10 wooden sticks (the type commonly used for ice cream on a stick)
- Ingredients from one of the delicious recipes below

Directions

Mix the ingredients, and pour equal amounts of the mixture into each cup. Place cups on a baking sheet or platter, and put them into your freezer. When liquid begins to solidify

but is not yet completely frozen, insert wooden sticks into the center of the liquid so that they stand upright. Place them back into the freezer. When treats are frozen solid, they're ready to enjoy.

To remove treats from cup, simply push on the bottom of the cup until the frozen liquid slides out. Do not pull on the wooden stick to remove the treat from the cup.

Freezy Orange Cream: Two cups of vanilla yogurt and one can of frozen orange juice concentrate make up this classic summer flavor. Add an extra teaspoon of vanilla if you desire.

Ice Pop Pudding: Mix one box of instant pudding powder with the amount of milk recommended on the box. Instead of putting the mixture into the refrigerator to solidify, follow the freezing directions above.

Crazy Flavor Pops: Get as wild as you want to make these pops. Think fruit juices, fruit drinks, or even soda (we recommend you use flat soda, since carbonation can affect texture and flavor). Use your favorite, or mix and match to create a flavor that's all your own.

Your cool kids will love making and eating these frozen treats as a snack or dessert. The hardest part is waiting for them to freeze!

QUICK TIP: Cool Cubes are another tasty way to cool off a summer drink, and they don't require the wooden sticks or cups. Just pour fruit juice into an ice cube tray and freeze them solid. Add frozen cubes to lemonade or fruit juice. Try delicious combinations such as lemonade with grape Cool Cubes or orange juice with pineapple Cool Cubes.

You can also use lemonade Cool Cubes to chill a pitcher of lemonade without diluting the flavor.

Adults may prefer the simple flavor of lemonade Cool Cubes dropped into a glass of soda water.



Have a great Summer!

Ask about the REST program!

This program is for kids (or adults) who miss their deployed service member.

Just bring in a photo (regular or digital) and we will transfer it on to a pillowcase (which we provide) for you, or you can bring in a t-shirt and we will put the transfer on it for you.

It helps kids can feel like they still have Mommy or Daddy with them! They love it!

Service members can come to our office before they leave for deployment and have this done for their family members (we will either mail them out for you or you can bring them home).

Just give our office a call at: 802-652-8035 or 802-660-5210 ext. 5617 to set up a time for you to have this done (takes appx. 20 minutes).

TRICARE INFORMATION

Counseling for dependents of military members who have TriCare:

To obtain counseling services, please call 1-888-999-5195 and chose option 2 for mental health services. Chose option 2 to speak to a representative who will help you find a provider in the network in your area.

If there is not a provider (there are few especially for children) in the network, then they will help you find one that is out of the network. It is a good idea to have someone in mind when you call, if you can. If you have found a counselor that you want to use (or one that is in your area) the representative can help you to get that counselor approved and get the paperwork going.

If you need further assistance, please call Angela or Sandy at the Family Readiness Office: 802-652-8035 or 802-660-5210 ext. 5617

HELPFUL WEBSITES

www.tricare.osd.mil/deers (to change DEERS info)

www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl (to find closest ID card facility)

www.helping.apa.org/resilience/homecoming
(homecoming info.)

www.otonomimedia.com/bratzone
(military kids website)

www.legionkids.org (American Legion kids website)

www.militarylifestyle.com (Coupons, Info etc.)

www.military.com (Education benefits, VA loans etc.)

www.guardfamily.org (resources and info)

www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve (Tricare/medical info)

www.ucci.com/was/uccweb/home.jsp (Dental info)

www.guardassist.mhn.com (resources and info)

www.defenselink.mil (family readiness info)

www.sierramilitary.com (Tricare/medical info)

www.legion.org (American Legion)

www.booksforbrats.net (books for military kids)

www.va.gov (Veterans Administration website)

FAMILY FOCUS is a publication brought to you and published by the Vermont Air National Guard Family Readiness & Support Services Office. The purpose is to inform Vermont Air National Guard members and their families of military issues and issues that effect them. Also, this publication is to recognize Guard family members and Family Readiness Groups for their contributions to the community and to the Vermont Air National Guard. **FAMILY FOCUS** welcomes and encourages pictures / articles for future publications. Contact Angela or Sandy at the Family Readiness Office: (802) 652-8035 or (802) 660-5210 x 5617 to submit information or e-mail us at: angela.prive@vtburl.ang.af.mil

Vermont Air National Guard
158th Fighter Wing
Family Readiness & Support Services
88 NCO Drive Suite 114
South Burlington, VT

TO THE FAMILY OF: