



"The Lone Star Battalion"

April 2011

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"The 1st Battalion, 23rd Marines Have Landed"



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**1ST BATTALION, 23D MARINES
"THE LONE STAR BATTALION"
BATTALION COMMANDER'S MESSAGE
TO FAMILY MEMBERS**



Dear Family and Friends of the Marines and Sailors from 1st Battalion, 23d Marines,

It is a pleasure to write you from Afghanistan. It has been a long road to get to this point, but the Marines have distinguished themselves by their hard work and dedication at every step of the way. They earned a reputation on Camp Pendleton as the Marines always in the field training, even on the weekend when most of the base was quiet. We stood out from everyone else because we were the only Marines wearing the desert (tan) colored MARPAT uniform on Camp Pendleton while everyone else wore green MARPAT uniforms. We were allowed to wear this uniform because we were preparing ourselves for Afghanistan where all the Marines wear that uniform. Now we have joined our brothers-in-arms over here where all Marines wear the desert MARPAT uniform.

I wanted to take a moment to update you on what the Lone Star Battalion has accomplished since my last letter. First, the Marines have done very well over the last four months at Camp Pendleton, California. Their focused training demanded most of their time in order to get it all accomplished before our departure. The training was not only time consuming, but demanding to ensure the Marines are well prepared for the complex environment of Afghanistan that will test their military and non-military skills to be successful. The counter insurgency war that is being waged demands from the small units the ability to counter the Taliban's efforts on multiple fronts. These fronts include the ability to disrupt the Taliban's ties to the local populace in order to provide the people the opportunity to learn how to defend themselves from the Taliban campaign of terror and intimidation. While security is being improved ongoing efforts are used to improve their education, health care, law enforcement and public works to improve the economy which are the same things the American people seek.

The war over here is primarily being won on the shoulders of our young NCOs (Non commissioned Officers) that lead our squads of Marines. These young men lead 12 other Marines and are the face of the NATO coalition of troops over here when they talk to the local Afghan people. They are well equipped to not only communicate with the locals to figure out how best to disrupt their ties with the Taliban, but also how to teach them to take care of themselves. To protect themselves against the Taliban, the squads have trained to be highly proficient with the use of their weapon systems that include mortars, rockets, machine guns and M4 rifles should the Taliban choose to engage them with small arms. This allows the squad to put the Taliban into a dilemma since they are able to pin him down with multiple weapon systems. The squads are very well trained on how to counter the Taliban IED threat over here by getting licensed to drive the latest counter IED vehicles such as the MATV, MRAP and 7 ton Armadillo. They are also proficient with hand held metal detectors used to find IEDs planted under the earth. Some of their Marines have been trained as IED detector, dog handlers that control dogs trained to sniff for explosives. Ultimately the best counter IED measure will be earning the trust of the local people to receive their assistance in finding the IEDs beforehand and/or taking measures to deter the Taliban from placing IEDs in their area.

The squad training does not end there. The squads have some Marines that have received specialized training as Combat Hunters, who find tracks and evidence that enable them to locate the Taliban even though they do not wear uniforms. These techniques are similar to how your local law enforcement investigators find criminals. Furthermore, their training with combat policing instructors and tactical site exploitation experts equips the Marines with the ability to walk the streets to be able to investigate areas where the Taliban would likely need to have to engage the locals to stay relevant because without the

support of the local people they become irrelevant. Again, using techniques used by police here in America. The Marines are able to collect evidence on the violent and criminal acts of the Taliban in a thorough manner to ensure they are prosecuted in the Afghan courts. To build upon their intelligence and information on the Taliban and their Al Qaeda supporters each company of Marines have their own intelligence cell of specially trained intelligence Marines to ensure efforts against the Taliban are done in the most effective manner to make the most impact on the enemy during the deployment. The numerous police officers and lawyers in the battalion have greatly enhanced this capability in the battalion.

In order for the squads to engage with the local Afghan people they have received countless hours of Afghanistan cultural training so not to disrespect the local people. They understand that by respecting the culture they have the opportunity to earn the trust of the local Afghan people. They have been trained on the Afghan languages of Pashto and Dari. This training was taught by Afghan instructors and through interactive computer programs to test them. They all have on their person key phrases in the Afghan languages. Their cultural training has taught them the social hierarchy to be able to identify the powerful and most influential people in an Afghan village. They have interpreters embedded with them to assist in this translation. All of this training was put to the test multiple times when the battalion paid for Afghan role players (people from Afghanistan) to integrate into the training exercises to challenge the Marines in the most realistic way possible.

The Marines have received extensive training in first aid. Many of them have been trained as Combat Life Savers and Combat Trauma Management specialists; and have received training on how to call in a helicopter to a zone to come to the aid of an injured Marine. They have the latest in first aid equipment on their person. This training included practicing simulated medical evacuations during field exercises to test their proficiency and timeliness in their emergency response.

These comments just touch on the highlights of what the Marines have been able to accomplish over the last four months, but it goes to say they are now ready. To wrap up this training I had the opportunity to present several medals to Marines that had demonstrated excellence throughout the period and deliver some final words to the battalion. My intent was to put this current War on Terror into context. To give the Marines a long view on why what they are doing and are about to be asked to do is important not only for our country's sake, but for all people.

Since my last letter to you, we have changed the battalion's logo to reflect its history and why we serve. First, the logo is found inside a red circle with the top adorned with our nickname, "The Lone Star Battalion." The bottom of the circle is our motto and why we serve, "Remember 9-11." The red diamond now has listed all the wars the battalion served in to include World War II, Operation Iraqi Freedom and now Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan). The number 4 in the middle of the logo is the same logo as our reserve division, 4th Marine Division.

Now that most of the battalion is in Afghanistan, I appreciate your continued understanding of your Marine as most of his time will be committed to the mission at hand. Due to the remote locations, it may take longer to communicate to your Marine. Your patience is appreciated. Thank you for your support from a grateful country and a commander who after twenty years continues to be in awe at the unselfish commitment of the Marine and his family.

Semper Fidelis (Always Faithful).



LtCol Russell Todd Zink
1st Battalion, 23d Marines
Commanding Officer

From your Family Readiness Officer, Kristen Ruiz

832-380-7523

Kristen.ruiz@usmc.mil



1/23 Families,

I hope this finds you and yours healthy, happy and eagerly enjoying the challenges of each new day. But really; the car just broke down, you lost the power of attorney, the kids are screaming and anything that can go wrong, did go wrong as soon as your Marine or Sailor left. These can definitely be some trying times, and that is why the Family Readiness Program is here to help. Myself, along with our Deputy FRO's are here to provide resources and information to Marines and Family members to enable the Marines to focus on their mission at hand and not be concentrating with issues at home.

If there is an issue that may arise that you cannot figure out, please let me or your Deputy FRO know. Newsletters and updates from me will continue throughout the deployment. If there is information that you find helpful please let me know so I can pass it to our other families. In this newsletter, you will find some helpful hints with organizations that are set up to help make this deployment a little easier for you. I have attached contact information for each program for you to receive further details.

I am planning and organizing events at each of the companies, these are put on to keep you informed and to help you connect with other family members in the battalion. There will be a "in the Midst" Yellow Ribbon Event for all family members to attend at their company during the months of May and June. These events will be extremely informative and are helpful in coping with deployment.

Beginning in February, the Marine Corps has changed the way in which family readiness Communications will be sent out. The Mass Communication Tool will go away in June, and will Be replaced with Marine Online (MOL). *****PLEASE ENSURE YOUR MARINE HAS ADDED YOU AS A CONTACT UNDER THE FAMILY READINESS SECTION OF HIS/HER MOL ACCOUNT.** This is very important! If your Marine does not add you as a contact in MOL, you will not receive Communications from me after June.

The family readiness program is very important to the command and they want to do anything to help support you so that no one will ever feel alone. Until next time, thank you for all of your support and please know you are not alone.

Semper Fi!

DEPUTY FRO'S

ALPHA /HEADQUARTERS COMPANY 1stSgt Grimmert 832-380-7520 harvey.grimmert@usmc.mil

BRAVO COMPANY 1stSgt Donald 318-747-0795 cedric.donald@usmc.mil

CHARLIE COMPANY 1stSgt Crawford 361-961-1595 paul.crawford@usmc.mil

CHARLIE DET SSgt Whipkey 956-425-9643 jason.whipkey@usmc.mil

WEAPONS COMPANY 1stSgt Bohn 512-458-4019 kenneth.c.bohn@usmc.mil

How to get involved and stay informed??

- Ensure your FRO(Family Readiness Officer) has your contact Information- primary phone and email
- Inform friends and family members of these communication avenues-newsletter and website
- Attend events planned and advertised on the unit website
- Volunteer in the family readiness program
- Visit the Battalion Website for Information and resources:

<http://www.usmc.mil/unit/marforres/4thMarDiv/23rdMar/1stBn/Pages/default.aspx>

UPCOMING FAMILY READINESS EVENTS.

10 April- Bravo Company family readiness information meeting, Bossier City, Louisiana-Point of Contact: 1stSgt Donald 318-747-0795
cedric.donald@usmc.mil



1 May- Charlie Company family readiness information meeting, Corpus Christi, Texas- Point of Contact: 1stSgt Crawford 361-961-1595 paul.crawford@usmc.mil

15 May Weapons Company In the midst Yellow Ribbon Event Austin, Texas
Point of Contact:1stSgt Bohn 512-458-4019 kenneth.c.bohn@usmc.mil

11 June Bravo Company In the midst Yellow Ribbon Event Bossier City, Louisiana
Point of Contact: 1stSgt Donald 318-747-0795 cedric.donald@usmc.mil

12 June Alpha/Headquarters Company In the midst Yellow Ribbon Event Houston, Texas
Point of Contact: 1stSgt Grimmert 832-380-7520 harvey.grimmert@usmc.mil

25 June Charlie/CDET Company In the midst Yellow Ribbon Event Corpus Christi, Texas
Point of Contact:1stSgt Crawford paul.crawford@usmc.mil



YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

The Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP) is a DoD-wide effort to help National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments, especially during the reintegration phase that occurs months after Service members return home. Commanders and leaders play a critical role in assuring that Reserve Service members and their families attend Yellow Ribbon events where they can access information on health care, education/training opportunities, financial, and many more resources available to them. **Travel reimbursements and hotel accommodations for those family members living outside of the normal commuting distance are provided for Yellow Ribbon Events.** Registration forms will be sent to you via email. 1 Family member per Marine is authorized for reimbursement, all family members welcome to attend! Please see above Yellow Ribbon event dates and determine which event/location works best for you!

Mailing Items Overseas



Military Mailing Restrictions per USPS

Before you send a letter or package to one of our military service members overseas, make sure you're aware of the restrictions. Mail addressed to military and diplomatic post offices overseas is subject to certain conditions or restrictions regarding content, preparation, and handling.

Although there are specific restrictions for each five-digit Military and Diplomatic Post Office ZIP Code (APO/FPO/DPO), generally, **the following are prohibited** in the region of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom:

- **Obscene articles** (prints, paintings, cards, films, videotapes, etc)
- **Any matter depicting nude or seminude persons**, pornographic or sexual items or nonauthorized political material
- **Bulk quantities of religious materials contrary to the Islamic faith.** Items for the personal use of the addressee are permissible.
- **Pork or by-pork products.**
- **Military Restrictions** For specific restrictions and mailing prices to an APO/FPO/DPO address, visit the Price Calculator on the USPS website ([http://www.usps.com/pricecalculator](#)). You can also call 1-800-ASK-USPS or consult your local Post Office™.

Make sure your package arrives intact

There are certain factors to consider when sending packages to our troops overseas. To make sure package contents arrive in good shape, take these into consideration.

Extreme Temperatures: Desert temperatures typically exceed 100 degrees. (No chocolate!)

The Box: Select a strong box with room for cushioning. On recycled boxes, cover all previous labels and markings with a heavy black marker or adhesive labels.

Cushioning: Place the cushioning all around your items. Close and shake the box to see whether you have enough cushioning. Add more newspaper, styrofoam, cushioning material if you hear items shifting.

Batteries: Battery powered items will sometimes get turned on during shipment. Remove and wrap the batteries separately.

Sealing: Tape the opening of the box and reinforce all seams with 2 inch wide tape. Use clear or brown packaging tape, reinforced packing tape or paper tape. Do not use cord, string or twine.

Include a card describing the contents: Improperly wrapped packages can fall apart during shipment. Including a card inside, listing the sender's and recipient's addresses plus a description of the contents, helps in collecting the items.

For some items, need to ship it to your U.S. home first Amazon.com and some other online retailers cannot ship electronics, cameras, computers and food to APO/FPO addresses. You need to have these items shipped to your home in the U.S. first, then take them to your U.S. Post Office where they can be shipped to the APO/FPO address. See [Amazon.com Shipping Restrictions](#) for more info.

Fill out the address correctly You must address all mail to a specific soldier. You can no longer address mail to "Any Servicemember " or "Any Soldier" due to security concerns. Use the specific unit as the address, "APO" as the city and "AE" as the state. APO AE mail goes to New York first, where it is transferred to the Military Post Office system for air transport overseas.

Mail it early Letters and packages take anywhere from as little as **7 days** up to **21 days** to arrive in Iraq or Afghanistan Same applies to important dates such as birthdays. Letters and cards less than 13 ounces are sent First Class Mail while everything more than 13 ounces is sent Priority Mail.

Use free USPS Flat Rate shipping materials The U.S. Postal Service will send you free Flat Rate shipping boxes, Customs forms, Priority Mail labels and tape for sending packages to Iraq or Afghanistan. Call 1-800-610-8734, select option 1 (Express Mail, Priority Mail or Global Express) and ask the service agent for the Military Kit (or Mili-Kit). By using Flat Rate boxes, you can save *substantially* on postage. The local Post Office will also have these on hand if you want to pick them up locally.

List the Marine's address inside the package This will ensure your package gets your Marine in the event that the address on the box is unreadable or the box has been opened or is damaged.

Check the size and weight

Your package can't be more than 84 inches long or be more than 130 inches when you total up the length (the longest side) plus the girth (thickest portion), or weigh more than 70 lbs.

Use the proper Customs Form For all parcel packages, you need to fill out the proper Customs Form. Be sure and fill out the form accurately as all mail is x-ray scanned. Here are the regulations:

-Letters and cards less than 16 ounces - no form needed

-Packages less than 16 ounces and less than \$400 value - **Form 2976**

-All mail greater than 16 ounces - **Form 2976-A** with **2976-E** mailer envelope

Under-report the value on the Customs Form To discourage theft, which does happen occasionally in the APO mail system, underestimate the value of the merchandise listed on the Customs Form.

Always check "Gift" on the Customs Form

By checking "Gift" instead of "Merchandise" or other, potential duty import taxes can be avoided.

You may visit the UPS website and order up to 25 flat rate boxes free of charge. These flat rate boxes are discounted, and are Only \$12.95 when used to send to APO/FPO addresses; regardless of weight. Box dimensions are **12" x 12" x 5-1/2"** Box features the "America Supports You" logo and APO/FPO addressing block.



1/23 Company Mailing Addresses



Alpha Company

Rank/Name
1/23 Alpha Co(Platoon/Sec)
UNIT 42091
FPO AP 96427-2091

Bravo Company

Rank/Name
1/23 Bravo Co(Platoon/Sec)
UNIT 42092
FPO AP 96427-2092

Charlie Company

Rank/Name
1/23 Charlie Co(Platoon/Sec)
UNIT 42093
FPO AP 96427-2093

Headquarters Company

Rank/Name
1/23 H&S Co(Platoon/Sec)
UNIT 42090
FPO AP 96427-2090

Weapons Company

Rank/Name
1/23 Weapons Co(Platoon/Sec)
UNIT 42094
FPO AP 96427-2094



MARINES
THE FEW. THE PROUD.

Be proud of your Marine Corps connection—WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!

GOOD TO KNOW INFORMATION

Military Installation Information Operators

Barksdale AFB	Bossier City, Louisiana	(318)456-1110
Brooke Army Medical Center	San Antonio, Texas	(210)916-4141
Camp Mabry	Austin, Texas	(512)782-5001
Fort Hood	Killeen, Texas	(254)287-1110
Fort Sam Houston	San Antonio, Texas	(210)221-1211
Kelly/Lackland AFB	San Antonio, Texas	(210)925-1110
Lackland AFB	San Antonio, Texas	(210)671-1110
Camp Pendleton	California	(760)725-4111
Fort Polk	Fort Polk, Louisiana	(337)531-2911
NAS Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi, Texas	(361)961-2084



Tricare (South Region)

1-800-444-5445

Lodging

1-800-NAVYINN

Armed Forces Vacation Club

1-800-628-9466

Texas Veterans Commission

(512)389-6543

DOD DEERS update

1-800-538-9552

ID Card Offices

Ellington Field	Houston, Texas	(281)929-2860	T-F 730-1200
Texas National Guard Armory	Houston, Texas	(281)558-1742	
Lackland AFB	San Antonio, Texas	(210)671-4178	
Randolph AFB	San Antonio, Texas	(210)652-1845	
Fort Hood	Killeen, Texas	(254)287-2518	
Camp Mabry	Austin, Texas	(512)458-4154	
Barksdale AFB	Bossier City, La	(318)456-3710/4883	
NAS Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi, Texas	(361)961-3840	

ID Cards- find office nearest you, visit <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/owa/home>

Tricare www.tricare.osd.mil 1.800.444.5445

Tricare Dental www.tricaredentalprogram.com 1.800.866.8499

1/23 Family Readiness Officer kristen.ruiz@usmc.mil 832-380-7523

Department of Labor <http://www.dol.gov/>

Employer Support Guard and Reserve www.esgr.org

Texas Department of Public Safety www.txdps.state.tx.us

Texas Workforce Commission www.twc.state.tx.us/

Texas Veterans Commission <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>

Job Connection Employment Program <http://jcep.info>

Defense Commissary Agency <http://www.commissaries.com>

United States Marine Corps www.usmc.mil

Military One Source—Free YMCA membership, Free Counseling, Free Financial Planning. Education, relocation, parenting, stress—you name it— Military One Source is here to help you with just about any need. Available by phone or online, our free service is provided by the Department of Defense for active-duty, Guard, and Reserve service members and their families. The service is completely private and confidential, with few exceptions. For more information go to <http://www.militaryonesource.com> or Call 1-800-342-9647

Phone Cards— Spawar is a refillable calling card. MCCA sales them or visit: <http://oif.spawareurope.net/>

MotoMail— Communication with your Marine or Sailor via electronic delivered letters in as little as 24 hours. To set up MotoMail go to motomail.com.

United Through Reading— United through readings mission is to unite families facing physical separation by facilitation the bonding experience of reading aloud together. For more information, go to <http://www.unitedthroughreading.org>.

LINKS— Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (L.I.N.K.S) is a program within Marine Corps Family Team Building that enhances the readiness of Marines, both single and married, and their families by offering an orientation to the Marine Corps lifestyle. Ask your Family Readiness Officer about this!

Marine Parents— Marine Parents is a response to parents needs to find information and to connect and share with one another during deployments. For more information please contact www.marineparents.com

NACCRRRA— NACCRRRA is working with the U.S. Military Services to help those who serve in the military to find and afford child care that suits their unique needs. To receive assistants with child care or 12 hours a month of free child care go to <http://www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms> or call 1-800-424-2246

Daddy Dolls— Help Children Cope with stress of a deployment and separation. For more information go to <https://hugahero.com>

ASYMCA— Armed Services YMCA offers programs and services which strengthen families and encourage individuals to achieve their fullest potential. <http://www.asymca.org/>

Tri-Care— For any questions or to notify of changes (out of state, addresses, phone, baby, etc) contact Tri-Care Prime Remote: South Region Contractor: Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc. 1800-444-5445 <http://www.humana-military.com/>

Navy Marine Corp Relief— Navy Marine Corp Relief assist military Families to achieve financial self sufficiency and find solutions to emergency needs. For more information visit <http://www.nmcrs.org>

WIC– To safeguard the health of low-income women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing: nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating and referrals to healthcare. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic/>

Blue Star Mothers of America– Mothers who have or have had children honorably serving in the Military. <http://www.bluestarsouthbayla.org>

Red Cross Emergency Notifications

Red Cross emergency communications services keeps deployed military personnel in touch with their families following the death or serious illness of an immediate family member, the birth of a service member's child or grandchild or when a family faces other emergencies. Where ever their military service takes them, he or she knows that the Red Cross will deliver notification in times of an emergency at home. Even if the service member receives an e-mail or phone call from home, Red Cross-verified information assists commanding officers with making a decision regarding emergency leave. Without this verification, the service member may not be able to come home during a family crisis. When calling the Red Cross (1877-272-7337) to send an emergency message to a family member, please have the following information ready:

- Service Member's Full Name
 - Branch of Service
 - Social Security Number
 - Military Address Where Deployed
 - Home Base Unit
-

Child & Youth Assistance Programs



Our Military Kids

Our Military Kids helps families who often fall outside the parameters of established support programs – the families of National Guard and Reserve service men and women who have been and are continuing to sacrifice so much for our country. Along with the sacrifice of having a parent away in service for months at a time, many Guard and Reserve families are financially stretched and cannot afford the fees for sports, fine arts, or tutoring programs so crucial to their children's sense of well-being.

Our Military Kids, www.ourmilitarykids.org assists with Grants that pay for participation in activities including various sports programs, fine arts programs, tutoring programs, and other programs such as driver's ed, camps, and scouting. Eligible families apply for a grant and within days of receiving the application in the Our Military Kids office, a packet is sent to the child thanking them for their service to our country and notifying them of the award, and a check is sent directly to the service provider. To be eligible, your child must be ages 3-18 and your spouse currently deployed overseas with the National Guard or Reserves. The grants, which can be up to \$500, will pay for up to six months of an extracurricular activity.

To apply:

Visit the Our Military Kids website www.ourmilitarykids.org, and download and complete the appropriate application. Send it to Our Military Kids along with a copy of three supporting documents:

A copy of deployment orders which show that the child's parent is National Guard or Reserve and is deployed overseas.

A copy of the child's military dependent ID card, OR a copy of the completed Form 1172, Application for Uniformed Services Identification (DEERS Form), OR a copy of the child's birth certificate if he/she is the biological child of the deployed service member.

Documentation of the cost of the sports, fine arts or tutoring program. Include a program flyer, the website address (URL) or a letter from the organization which clearly states the cost of the program.

Grant requests for tutoring services provided by an individual must include a copy of the tutor's teaching certificate.

Mail applications with supporting documents to:

Our Military Kids, Inc.

6861 Elm Street, Suite 2-A

McLean, VA 22101

Or Fax to: 703-734-6503

Questions:

Call: 703-734-6654

Toll Free: 1-866-691-6654

Email: omkinquiry@ourmilitarykids.org

National Association of Childcare Resources and Referral Agencies (NACCRA)

Am I eligible?

Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) is for Families of:

Active Duty Marines

Active Reserve Marines

Marine Recruiters

For married Marines, the spouse must be working, looking for work or attending school. The same policies will apply to unmarried legal parents living in the same household. Children of Active Duty and Reserve Marines, living within 30 miles of an installation, must be on the waitlist at the installation child care program and not have denied a viable child care option within the last year.

Eligible Families receive:

Help finding approved high-quality child care in your community
Fee assistance to help cover part of the cost of child care. How do I find an approved high-quality provider? Contact Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2246 for a personal consultation. Approved providers must meet all the Marine Corps's requirements. The provider must have a state child care license and have received an inspection within the last 12 months.

PLUS...

The Deployed Respite Care Program



While your Marine is deployed, you will receive 16 hours of respite childcare per month for as long as your Marine is deployed. Simply call 1800-424-2246 and mention this program.

To apply:

Complete an online application at <http://www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms/marine-corps/> and submit required documents. Make sure your provider submits required documents. Questions?? Call 1-800-424-2246

YMCA Operation kid Comfort

Operation Kid Comfort creates custom-made quilts for children of deployed military personnel who experience grief from missing their mom or dad.

ASYMCA's Operation Kid Comfort is designed to address the emotional stress that children of military personnel suffer during a parent's absence from home, providing free quilts for children ages 6 and under and pillows for children ages 7 and older. ASYMCA volunteers collect photographs from military families to make "photo-transfer" quilts that feature images of the deployed family member. With the help of local quilting artists, volunteers are taught the basic steps of quilt making, how to crop and scan pictures, preparation of the fabric, and use of equipment. Once the quilt is complete, it is given to the child to play with, sleep with, or use to comfort them from the grief of missing their mom or dad.

Parents or loved ones of children of deployed parents can request a quilt or pillow by filling out the [Operation Kid Comfort Request Form](http://www.asymca.org/what-we-do-3/national-programs-services/operation-kid-comfort/). <http://www.asymca.org/what-we-do-3/national-programs-services/operation-kid-comfort/>

Armed Forces YMCA offers various child & youth programs. Visit <http://www.asymca.org/> to view all of the programs that they offer.

Military Outreach Initiative and Respite Child Care



Deployment can be a stressful and uncertain time for our nation's servicemen and women and their families. In partnership with the Armed Services YMCA and the Department of Defense, the Y is proud to offer memberships and respite child care services to eligible military families and personnel to give them extra support during this difficult period. It's our way of giving back to those who dedicate themselves to serving our country.

Title 10 personnel are eligible for a Y membership, including:

Family members of deployed National Guard and Reservists

Active Duty Independent Duty personnel and their families

Relocated spouse/dependent children of deployed Active Duty personnel

Note: The Relocated Spouse category supports families/spouse who relocate away from an installation/duty station while the active duty service member is deployed. All of the following criteria must be met:

The service member is DEPLOYED for a minimum of six months (on deployment orders—NOT unaccompanied orders, NOT geographic bachelors). The spouse has relocated away from the military installation where the service member is assigned (most often, back home near family). Wounded service members assigned to a Community Based Warrior in Transition Unit (CBWTU)

What do I need to do?

-Contact Military OneSource at www.militaryonesource.com or 800-342-9647 to confirm your eligibility and receive an eligibility form.

-Find a participating Y in your area by visiting <http://www.ymca.net/militaryoutreach/memberships.html>

-Fill out and bring your eligibility form, Military ID and any other required documentation (usually, your Deployment Orders or Military Service Headquarters approval letter) to a participating YMCA for verification. Please do not leave copies of these documents at the YMCA.

Spouse Education



The Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Program (MyCAA) is a career development and employment assistance program sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD). MyCAA helps military spouses pursue licenses, certificates, certifications or Associate's Degrees (excluding General Studies and Liberal Arts) necessary for gainful employment in high demand, high growth Portable Career Fields and Occupations.

As part of the Military Spouse's Career Lifecycle, MyCAA offers

the following:

Training and Education Financial Assistance: MyCAA provides a maximum education benefit of \$4,000 with an annual fiscal year cap of \$2,000 to assist eligible military spouses who need professional credentials to meet their Portable Career goals. Annual cap waivers are available if there is an upfront tuition cost that exceeds \$2,000 (up to the maximum education benefit of \$4,000).

Employment Readiness Counseling: Counseling services are provided to all military spouses married to active duty service members of all ranks, regardless of their eligibility to receive MyCAA financial assistance and their desire to pursue higher levels of education. Counseling services help military spouses identify additional sources of federal, state and local financial assistance, expanded career choices and opportunities, and support resources (e.g. child care, transportation, books, computers, equipment, supplies, etc.).

Employment Assistance and Career Services : Referrals are made to networks of military friendly employers for MyCAA spouse participants who have completed their programs of study using MyCAA funding and who are ready to seek gainful employment.

Who is eligible for MyCAA Financial Assistance?

- Spouses of service members on active duty in pay grades E-1 to E-5, W-1 to W-2, and O-1 to O-2 who can start and complete their coursework while their military sponsor is on Title 10 military orders, including spouses married to members of the National Guard and Reserve Components in these same pay grades.
- **Those who are not eligible include:** Spouses married to service members in pay grades: E-6 and above; W-3 and above; and O-3 and above
- Spouses who are a member of the armed forces themselves currently on Title 10 orders
- Spouses who are married but legally separated (or under court order or statute of any state or US territory) from a member of the armed forces on Title 10 orders
- Spouses whose National Guard/Reserve Component military sponsor is in a Warning Orders/Alert, Post Deployment/Demobilization or Transition Status
- Spouses married to a member of the Coast Guard
- Spouses who have participated in the DoD-DoL Career Advancement Accounts (CAA) Pilot Program
- Spouses who are unable to start and complete their course(s) while their military sponsor is on Title 10 orders.
- **MyCAA will NOT pay for the following :**
 - o Tuition for courses and examinations that are not included in the spouse's Education and Training Plan and those that have already started or been completed by the spouse
 - o Reimbursements of any kind
 - o Books, supplies, equipment, uniforms, computers and electronic devices of any kind
 - o Student activities, events and entertainment
 - o Pre-payment/deposits for future courses, unless costs are part of a block of study
 - o School or college level entrance examinations, comprehensive exams and related preparatory courses
 - o Courses, tests or fees normally paid by an employer as part of a job training program
 - o Non-academic credit or ungraded courses, including courses taken on an audit basis or as an internship, practicum, apprenticeship, or clinical supervision; also, orientation programs that are non-academic credit or ungraded
 - o Courses taken more than one time unless MyCAA has received a full refund from the school
 - o Academic credit by examination tests (e.g. CLEP, etc.)
 - o General Studies and Liberal Arts Associate's Degrees
 - o Personal enrichment courses (excluding courses that are academic credit/graded electives in an approved MyCAA Spouse Education and Training Plan)
 - o Transportation, lodging, child care, and medical services
 - o Course Extensions (except for approved hardship waivers)
 - o Study Abroad Programs (excluding programs of study offered by participating MyCAA schools on overseas military bases)

How can you establish a MyCAA Account? Visit the MyCAA Spouse Portal online at <https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>. Provide required Spouse Profile information. A real-time DEERS eligibility check will confirm if you meet MyCAA eligibility requirements so you can move forward and establish your MyCAA Account. Those who do not pass this check will be provided additional guidance.

How can you provide MyCAA with feedback? Visit MyCAAFedback@militaryonesource.com to send MyCAA your ideas and recommendations. Visit [Contact Us](https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa) (<https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>) to provide information about your MyCAA program experience once you have found gainful employment.

How can you get additional information or assistance? Call 1-800-342-9647 to speak with a MyCAA Career and Education Consultant or, if you already have an established MyCAA Account, use your Message Box as the fastest way to receive information and assistance.

School representatives should visit the "For School" resource page on the MyCAA Spouse Portal for program eligibility, participation and contact information



Military One Source Tax Services

The Military OneSource Tax Program will begin on Mon-day, January 17, 2011. The program will provide free access to a customized version of the basic H&R Block at Home® electronic tax filing product. This customized product allows for free federal filing and free state filing (up to three states). In addition, free telephonic tax consultations are available to help with tax related issues. Please see our list of Frequently

Asked Questions to learn more about the program and filing your 2010 taxes.

***An Important Note:** Please do not create a user account on the public H&R Block Web site. You will incur a fee if you file using the public H&R Block Web site/product. If you create an account on the public H&R Block Web site, regard-less of how you access the ac-count in the future, the H&R Block system will view you as a public user (the system tags the account when it is created, according to the version of the product being used at that time).

Please wait until Monday, January 17th, when the customized MOS version is made available via a link on the Military OneSource Web site to create your account

Find More Filing Tips resources:

<https://www.militaryonesource.com/MOS/FindInformation/Category/TaxFilingServices.aspx>

FREE VETERANS HOUSING SEMINAR- APRIL 17

The seminar will take place at DeVry University, 11125 Equity Drive, Houston (Campus is located on W. Sam Houston Pkwy between Clay and Tanner) commencing with registration at 9:30am.

The seminar is hosted by the Texas Veterans Land Board and DeVry University. The featured organizations are the Texas Veterans Land Board, Texas Veterans Commission, Department of Veterans Affairs and Harris County Veterans Service Office. The topics include low-interest housing loans, low-interest land loans, low-interest home improvement loans Texas State Veterans Homes, and Texas State Veterans Cemeteries.

For more information please contact Rosa Zurbriggen with DeVry University at 281-408-6047 or Mike McReaken at the Texas Veterans Land Board at 713-383-2729.

Do you know your child's dental health needs?

Commentary by Capt. Render Parkman
2nd Dental Squadron

BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La. -- February is Children's Dental Health Month and the Barksdale Dental Clinic will address the common questions regarding infant oral health care asked often by our first-time parents.

When should you start caring for your baby's teeth?

It is actually a good idea to get in the habit of cleaning your baby's gums even before teeth emerge. To clean your baby's mouth, lay your baby in your lap using the orientation easiest for you and your infant. Gently rub a clean and damp piece of gauze or washcloth along both the upper and lower gums. Cleaning your baby's gums after every feeding is ideal, but at a minimum clean the child's gums at least two times per day - after breakfast and after the last feeding of the day. As your child's teeth begin to erupt, which is usually at around six months, look for a baby toothbrush with a small, soft bristle head and larger grip suitable for your hand.

Should I use tooth paste to clean my baby's teeth?

As long as you're cleaning your child's teeth regularly, you don't need to use any toothpaste yet. Just brush the teeth gently on both the outside and inside surfaces twice a day. Brush the tongue as well, if they will let you, to remove the bacteria that can cause bad breath. One quick swipe is enough. Replace the toothbrush as soon as the bristles start to look worn or splayed out. A little fluoride is a good thing for your baby's teeth, but too much of it can lead to a condition called fluorosis, which in mild cases causes white spots to show up on your child's adult teeth.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends waiting until your child is two years old to use fluoridated toothpaste and even then you should let him use only a tiny, pea-sized amount each time. Young children tend to swallow their toothpaste rather than spit it out and swallowing too much fluoridated toothpaste over time can lead to fluorosis.

When do I need to take my child to the dentist?

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association recommend you bring your baby to see a dentist between 6 and 12 months-of-age. An early dental exam might identify a problem early therefore preventing cavities. Establishing a relationship with a dentist early-on provides families with a source for important dental information as well as routine and emergency dental care.

Baby teeth are important because they allow for a proper diet, jaw growth, giving the face its form and appearance, assist in the formation of proper speech and most important--act as space savers for adult teeth. Tooth decay in babies can lead to pain, infection, malnutrition and premature loss of teeth, which can affect the development of permanent teeth. Good oral health habits started at an early age at home increases the chance for a healthy mouth during your child's young life and carries on through adulthood.

EASTER BIRD'S NEST DESSERT RECIPE

INGREDIENTS: 1 jar marshmallow cream
1/4 cup creamy peanut butter
2 tablespoons butter -- melted
1 can chow mein noodles
Easter-colored candy coated milk chocolate pieces or jelly beans
powdered sugar



PREPARATION: Combine the marshmallow cream, peanut butter, and melted butter until smooth. Fold in chow mein noodles. Chill. Scoop out mixture by 1/3 cupfuls to form "nests" on a wax paper lined cookie sheet. Chill for 30-45 minutes. Place candies in each nest.

★ PICTURE THIS ★



NMTA MISSION

