

National Guard Soldier & Family

Foundations

September/October 2011
Vol. 3, Issue 2



**BREAKING
THE SILENCE**
JUSTIN JONES'
STRUGGLE WITH
HOMELESSNESS

ADOPT A SOLDIER
CHARITY GIVES BACK
TO THE TROOPS

MAJOR STRETCH
EXERCISES TO
INCREASE YOUR
FLEXIBILITY

Marathon Man

MAJ GEORGE KRAEHE
RUNS ACROSS AMERICA
FOR FALLEN SOLDIERS

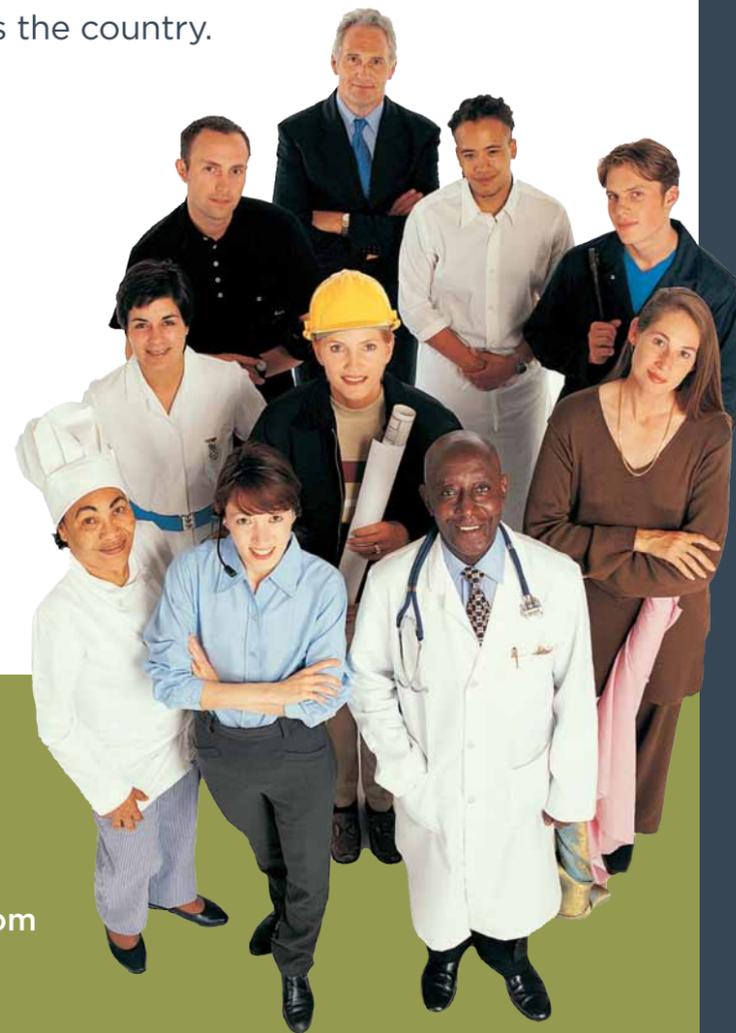


BECOME A CAREER MENTOR

You love your job—now make a difference by telling high school and college students about it. We're looking for Guard members, both active and retired, to share their stories with students across the country.

The Guard's new **Career Mentor** volunteer program will expose educators and students to the diverse civilian occupations held by members of the Guard.

Signing up in the **Career Mentor** database is fast and simple—but the impression you can leave on a student will be long-lasting.



Sign up to become a
Career Mentor today.

www.partnersineducation.com

TIME TO GET HELP?



Visit the Mental Health
Resource Center
tricare.mil/mentalhealth



Feature

Breaking the Silence

Justin Jones Opens Up About Being Homeless

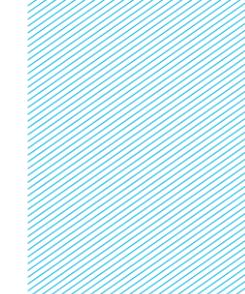
In March 2008, PFC Justin Jones lost his job and was forced to leave his apartment. For the next year, Jones would struggle to find a permanent residence, often forced to sleep in his car. Now a student at Tennessee Tech University, he has decided to share his story—in hopes that other homeless Veterans will hear it and realize they aren't alone in their plight.

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"We will never forget."

Ten years after 9/11, we're among the many Americans who clearly recall where they were and what they felt when the terrorist attacks shook our nation. We have a philosophy in-house that we don't stuff away that memory. We remember it often and refuse to forget. The tragedies of 9/11 are a motivator for us to continue to fine-tune our work to better serve you in an ever-changing world.

Since 2001, the Guard has transformed its training, readiness and mission. With these changes, the Family has adapted. And will adapt again as the Guard transitions down to nine-month deployments, while increasing attention in Afghanistan.

Tennessee, like many States and Territories, is meeting these changes by bolstering support for their force and Families. We understand situations nationwide vary based on localized needs. With that, as you enrich your own programs, take a look at what Tennessee is doing (p. 10). We hope it will spark an idea or motivate a positive action in your program. While not all approaches may apply nationwide, there's some baseline thinking there that is literally saving lives.

Similarly, we share the story of

Justin Jones, a former homeless Veteran (p. 24). Instead of diluting this critical topic with generalities, we offer Justin's story as a motivator. We hope to encourage those on the verge of homelessness, or experiencing it now, to seek help. We hope to encourage those who know someone who is homeless to reach out and offer help. After all, it is our duty as Americans to take care of our Vets on and off the battlefield.

This thinking goes to the core of what this magazine is about—taking care of our military, not shying away from the hard topics, and honoring your service and your sacrifice. Why? Because we refuse to forget. We know how critical it is to continue the fight for freedom. We know you are the real heroes at home and abroad who stand up for all of us.

Thank you,



Keith Kawasaki,
Editor-in-Chief
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On the Cover:

MAJ George Kraehe is running 50 marathons in 50 states to honor our fallen heroes.

PHOTO BY ANDREW DEMATTOS



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Foundations

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To serve and support Army National Guard Soldiers and their Families by providing information and resources to improve their quality of life. To provide opportunities for all Soldiers and Families to benefit from the services available to them through the National Guard by presenting timely and relevant knowledge.

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Dear Soldiers, Airmen, Families and Friends of the National Guard,

In just a few days, 10 years will have passed since 9/11, the horrific attack on our homeland that forever changed our lives and the lives of future generations. *Terrorism* has become a watchword in our vocabulary and is included daily in our thoughts and decision making.

Since that dreadful day, the National Guard has been ensuring that this great nation does not succumb to the threats of terrorism and those who seek to destroy our democracy.

When our Airmen and Soldiers are called to arms, the National Guard responds without fault or question. Whether it's a deployment around the globe or a response here at home, they've proven time and again that they're the best military value to the citizens of this nation.

During deployments, the Airman and the Soldier go to work, and the Families remain at home to maintain normalcy. This is the hardest task of all, and it's imperative that we provide them with every resource available. Numerous programs have been created to assist our Families, but, due to occasional unintentional bureaucracy, these programs are sometimes hard to take advantage of.

I believe that taking care of our Families and the individual needs of our Veteran Warriors is the best combat multiplier that we can use to ensure accomplishment of our mission. To this end, the Tennessee National Guard has formed an additional staff section within our Joint Force Headquarters and designated it J9. This entity encompasses all things related to Warrior and Family support, ranging from risk management to resiliency, deployment reintegration, assistance for Veterans, sexual assault prevention, physiological health, chaplains and spiritual well-being. It also incorporates our Yellow

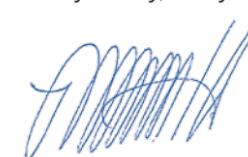


Ribbon program, Funeral Honors, Operation Military Kids, education assistance and financial counseling.

We have also partnered with organizations such as the Jason Foundation to ensure that we have help combating the growing number of suicides among our ranks.

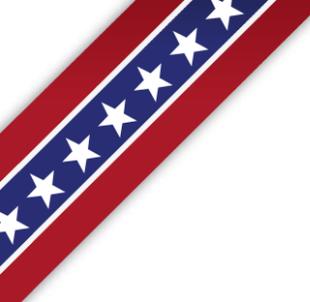
When my son Travis was young, the Disney movie *The Lion King* was all the rage. That movie focused on the "circle of life" and the notion that all creatures are dependent on each other. We have deemed our J9 participants to be the maintainers of our "circle of life" within the Tennessee National Guard. Our Guard Family is a "circle of life," a Family that has kept this nation free for generations.

Always ready, always there,



MG Max Haston
Adjutant General
Tennessee National Guard

PHOTO COURTESY OF TENNESSEE NATIONAL GUARD



Homecoming

Honoring Those Who Serve

Utah.

After a yearlong deployment to Iraq, 175 Soldiers from the Utah National Guard's 141st Military Intelligence Battalion are welcomed home by Families and friends.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE UTAH NATIONAL GUARD

**18 Services
One Source**

J9 has a mission as diverse as the men and women who serve in the Guard. Whether it's suicide prevention, response to sexual assault, reintegration, employment assistance or services for children impacted by a parent's deployment, Service Members, spouses and Veterans can find help through a single source.

The full list of Tennessee's J9 programs and offices:

Family Assistance Specialist

Family Readiness Support Assistant

State Youth Coordinator

Tennessee National Guard Family Readiness Council

Yellow Ribbon Program

Director of Psychological Health

Transition Assistance Advisor

Military and Family Life Consultants

Personal Financial Counseling

Chaplain Services

Military OneSource

Operation: Military Kids

Survivor Outreach Services

Military Funeral Honors

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)

Resiliency Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Program (R3SP)

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

Airman & Family Readiness Program Manager

umbrella of support

Financial problems. Unemployment. Suicide. They're difficult issues that National Guard members and their Families face all too often due to the difficult cycles of deployments and homecomings, service and sacrifice. But the Tennessee National Guard is determined to do something about it. BY CAREY MOORE

The Tennessee National Guard's Military and Family Operations Directorate, known as the J9 Initiative (J9), was created last March, so that Service Members, Veterans and Families can receive the services they need through a single point of contact.

Headquartered in Nashville, with Family Assistance Centers across the state, J9's mission is to reduce the high-risk stressors Guard members and their Families face, and, in doing so, to keep them strong and resilient. The five core components of its programs are Family Readiness, Family Assistance, Child and Youth Programs, Support Assistance, and Direct Support to Army and Air Guard.

"If I'm in a Humvee or MRAP and the [Guard member] in front of me is worrying about a sick child or a wife who can't make a house payment, all of a sudden he has endangered his life," explained MG Terry "Max" Haston, adjutant general of the Tennessee National Guard and the force behind J9. "I need his head in the game. One of the tenets of combat is mass, and that's what I want to do—amass these efforts and put them under [one] umbrella," says Haston.

That umbrella is administered by COL Patricia M. Jones, a military Veteran of nearly 30 years and the first female Tennessee National Guard company commander to lead a unit into war, during Operation Desert Storm. And while the J9 initiative is a program of the Tennessee Guard, those using its services can take advantage of federal programs, too, if needed. Yet their Tennessee-based point of contact remains the same; in other words, if they need multiple services, they won't be shuffled off to multiple agencies.

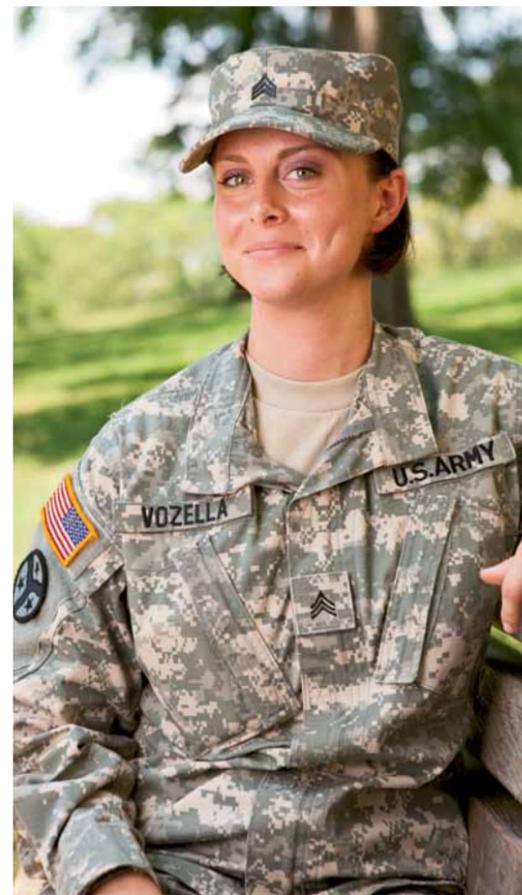
But right now, Jones says, one of their most important tasks is "trying to make sure people know J9 has all these services. We want them to know we're here for them, and they're not alone."

MAKING PROGRESS

Knowing she wasn't alone was comforting for SGT Autumn Vozella. When she first realized she had a problem with alcohol and needed treatment, she was very nervous about telling her commander and first sergeant about the situation. However, once she did, she found that both were 100 percent supportive of her. "Knowing I had that [support] made it easier." She completed



EVAN BAINES



ADAM LIVINGSTON

▲ **COL Patty Jones**, a 30-year military Veteran, is passionate about promoting the benefits of the J9 program.

◀ **SGT Autumn Vozella** completed an alcohol treatment program despite some hesitation, and learned she wasn't the only person struggling with substance abuse.

an alcohol treatment program at the Murfreesboro, TN, Veterans Affairs facility in July, which she was directed to through J9.

Vozella, who was deployed as a medic in Iraq, relayed that it can be difficult for military members to seek help because in the past, there was a perceived stigma about doing so—a fear that it would be seen as a sign of weakness. This is something the J9 Initiative seeks to change. And, Vozella believes that attitudes have already shifted. "If you seek treatment, you show that you're dedicated. You're going to work every day and doing your best, unlike someone hiding a problem."

Suicide is a growing problem in the military. In fact, Congress.org reports

that in 2009, the number of suicides by Active Duty service men and women was actually higher than combat casualties.

That's why suicide prevention is a key component of J9's mission. To facilitate this goal, Haston came up with a concept for the Tennessee Guard in which each Service Member was challenged to find a Wingman or Battle Buddy—someone they could turn to if they needed help. This one-on-one support and mentoring is designed to prevent suicidal thoughts from taking shape. Or, if someone appears to be at risk for actually taking action, a Battle Buddy can alert counselors and get that Soldier immediate help.

The Wingman/Battle Buddy idea came out of tragedies within the Tennessee Guard, including in Haston's Nashville headquarters. Suicide claimed four of his Service Members in 45 days, including a full-time staffer he knew personally. Haston is confident the concept is working and believes that at least five lives have been saved because a Battle Buddy stepped in.

Jones echoes the optimism. "It's awesome to see someone getting help

► **SGT Keith Hale** suffered from TBI and PTSD after his second deployment to Iraq. He now receives full medical treatment at Fort Campbell, KY, with help from the J9 program.

who otherwise could be a statistic.”

To get suicide prevention efforts up to speed faster, the Tennessee National Guard partnered with the Jason Foundation, an organization recognized nationally in fighting teen suicide.

AVERTING DISASTER

Stresses on military Families come in all shapes and sizes, and from all corners of their lives—many times, several at once.

Take SGT Keith Hale and his wife, TiAnna. During Keith's second deployment to Iraq, he suffered traumatic brain injury (TBI). This was in addition to hearing loss and a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis.

Though Keith had insurance during Active Duty, his coverage was set to expire in December 2010, six months after his return. TiAnna was working as a medical assistant at a suburban



Nashville hospital, but because her husband's treatment often required up to seven doctor appointments a day, she had to leave her job.

Suddenly, the parents of three were faced with no income and potential disaster. Then, at a Yellow Ribbon briefing, the Hales met Mike Goodrich, a J9 Transition Assistance Advisor. With his help, Hale was placed back on Active Duty in the Warrior Transition Unit. Now the Family is at Fort Campbell, where Keith receives full medical treatment. TiAnna says she doesn't know what they would do without the care her husband now receives.

The Hales have been affected by suicide, too. According to TiAnna, at least three members of her husband's battalion took their lives after returning home. “So many of them don't know those resources are there and don't have Family to help support them.”

Because of their experiences, the Hales have pointed other Service Members toward J9's services. “I cannot tell you how many [of them] need this help,

◄ **Brenda Pusser** lost her job after the death of her husband. As a result, her home fell into foreclosure. Through Survivor Outreach Services, she was able to obtain financial assistance.

Asking for Help: A Sign of Strength

Both Haston and Jones emphasize that asking for help won't hurt a Guard member's career. The chain of command is aware that increased stress in the Tennessee National Guard is contributing to an increase in suicidal thoughts.

It's also important to keep asking for help until you're satisfied. In the words of Jones, “If someone uses a service that didn't meet their need, they should come back and ask again. Let us try again.”

[and] need to be reached,” TiAnna says.

But J9 programs extend far beyond Active Duty, as Brenda Pusser learned. Her husband, Rex Pusser, a sergeant in the Tennessee National Guard, died from pulmonary fibrosis in May 2007. Soon after, Brenda had shoulder surgery. Complications and a second surgery kept her out of work, and she lost her job.

“In seven months we went from being a two-income Family to a no-income Family,” Pusser says.

As a result, the Family home—once shared by Brenda, Rex, their daughter and two granddaughters—fell into foreclosure.

However, the day after receiving the foreclosure notice, Pusser received a letter from Russ Maxey, J9's support coordinator for Survivor Outreach Services, detailing a financial assistance program for survivors.

“That letter was a lifeline,” she says. “I felt like there was somebody who knows what I'm going through and cares.”

With Maxey coordinating efforts among Veterans Affairs, West Tennessee Legal Services and the mortgage company, Pusser's payment was modified enough for her to be able to stay in her home. “I basically went from being without a job, to having enough money to make payments every month and provide a stable home for my grandchildren,” she says.

Maxey also offered to put Pusser in touch with a program that could help

her find another job. However, she didn't pursue it because she had found a job she liked, working on staff at her church.

Yet, employment assistance is one service many do take advantage of. The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program has traditionally recognized employer support and promoted applicable laws. However, in Tennessee, working with the J9 Initiative, ESGR has expanded to offer even more resources to help Service Members, spouses and Veterans find jobs. These include job fairs, employment assistance workshops, writing cover letters, and one under-utilized skill—translating military experience into civilian terms.

CROSSOVER SKILLS

SGT Bradley Taylor is one Guard member who has benefited from this J9 service, especially when it comes to translating skills he learned as a military police (MP) officer in Iraq.

“As an MP, I thought my primary job skill was maintaining law and order,” Taylor says. “But [ESGR] showed me all the different skills I actually have and how to put that on paper. I wound up with a whole page of skills and qualifications just from being a military police officer—stuff I never would have thought of saying in a resume.”

Taylor learned those tips in a three-day Employee Assistance Workshop last May in Nashville. Within a couple of days of completing



► **SGT Bradley Taylor** improved his resume at an Employee Assistance Workshop, which helped him land a job at a security firm in Chattanooga, TN.

it, he interviewed with a security firm in Chattanooga, TN, where at age 22 he is now a supervisor.

Though J9 is less than a year old, Jones reports that its Family assistance specialists received countless inquiries from Service Members and Families in June. Of those, 79 cases were created for follow-up.

Jones credits much of J9's success to her 50 contractors and staff. “Everybody who works here wants to help,” she says. “They have a passion for it. If the definition of teamwork is being just as happy as the person who hits the home run or wins the game, then we've got a great team.”

How to Reach J9

Phone: (877) 311-3264

Website:
TNMilitary.org/fphome.html

Facebook:
Facebook.com/tnnationalguardj9

4 ways to beef up your burger

Grilling is a classic summer pastime, and hamburgers are, of course, an all-time favorite. But when it comes to burgers, beef isn't the only game in town. From spicy chicken to sweet and sour turkey, to yummy new topping ideas like salsa or cilantro mayonnaise, this month's recipes bring you delicious twists on the traditional burger that are sure to surprise and delight your Family and friends.

BY TESSA SMITH

Sweet & Sour Turkey Burgers

1 LB. TURKEY MEAT, GROUND
 ¼ CUP DRIED BREADCRUMBS
 1 TBSP. SOY SAUCE
 1 TBSP. HONEY
 1 TBSP. APPLE CIDER VINEGAR
 ¼ CUP CHOPPED GREEN ONIONS
 ¼ CUP CHILI SAUCE
 PINEAPPLE SLICES
 LEAF LETTUCE, ANY KIND
 WHOLE-WHEAT BUNS

Combine honey, vinegar, breadcrumbs and soy sauce in a bowl, and blend well. Then add the ground turkey and the chopped green onions, and mix well. Form into four patties.

You can grill on an outside grill (use nonstick spray), a stovetop pan or a George Foreman grill. I like the George Foreman grill best for this, as it's easy to clean. When serving, spread some of the chili sauce on the patty, and top with a pineapple ring and lettuce. *Serves 4.*

Spicy Chicken Burgers

½ LB. SPICY SAUSAGE
 ¼ TSP. SALT
 5 SIX-INCH CORN TORTILLAS, TORN INTO BITE-SIZE PIECES
 1½ LBS. SKINLESS, BONELESS CHICKEN BREASTS, COARSELY CHOPPED
 1 JALAPEÑO PEPPER, SEEDED AND CHOPPED
 COOKING SPRAY
 ONION-FLAVORED BUNS TOASTED OR WHOLE-WHEAT BUNS TOASTED
 SLICES OF TOMATO

Combine chopped chicken breast meat with chopped sausage, and mix well. Add the salt, tortilla pieces and jalapeño peppers; mix well. Form into eight patties and grill on indoor griddle or outside BBQ grill. Top with Mayonnaise Spread. *Serves 8.*

✪ Making your own burgers lets you experiment with different flavors.

Here are some simple seasoning ideas: **Onion soup mix.** Add one package of onion soup mix to your meat. It creates a great onion flavor. Add grilled onions and provolone cheese for a patty-melt-style burger. **Ranch dressing mix.** Add one package of ranch dressing mix to your meat. This is especially great with turkey burgers and chicken burgers. You can even add fresh, sliced avocado for a summer-fun burger. **Other seasoning ideas.** Salt and pepper, garlic salt, jerky seasoning, Worcestershire sauce and steak sauce.

MAYONNAISE SPREAD

½ CUP FAT-FREE MAYONNAISE
 ¼ CUP FRESH CILANTRO LEAVES
 2 TBSP. FRESH LIME JUICE
 ¼ TSP. SALT
 ¼ RIPE PEELED AVOCADO

Combine all ingredients and mix well.

Summer Healthy Fajita Turkey Burgers

¼ CUP BOTTLED TOMATILLO SALSA
 2 TBSP. CHOPPED AVOCADO
 1 TBSP. CHOPPED FRESH CILANTRO
 2 ONE-OUNCE SLICES WHITE BREAD
 COOKING SPRAY
 ½ CUP FINELY CHOPPED ONION
 ½ CUP FINELY CHOPPED RED BELL PEPPER
 ½ CUP FINELY CHOPPED GREEN BELL PEPPER
 2 TSP. FAJITA SEASONING, DIVIDED
 ¼ TSP. SALT, DIVIDED
 1 TBSP. TOMATO PASTE
 1 LB. GROUND TURKEY
 1 EGG WHITE
 WHOLE-WHEAT HAMBURGER BUNS, TOASTED

Combine tomatillo salsa, chopped avocado and cilantro; set aside. Place bread in a food

processor; pulse 10 times or until crumbs measure one cup. Heat a large, nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add onion and bell peppers; sauté five minutes or until tender. Stir in ½ teaspoon of fajita seasoning and ¼ teaspoon of salt. Let cool.

Combine breadcrumbs, onion mixture, remaining 1½ teaspoons of fajita seasoning, remaining ¼ teaspoon of salt, tomato paste, turkey and egg white in a large bowl. Using damp hands, divide turkey mixture into four equal portions, shaping each into a ¾-inch-thick patty. Heat pan over medium heat. Recoat pan with cooking spray. Add patties; cook four minutes on each side or until done. Place one patty on bottom half of each bun. Top each serving with 1½ tablespoons of salsa mixture; top with remaining halves of buns. *Serves 4.*

Mediterranean Feta Burgers

1½ LBS. GROUND BEEF OR TURKEY
 ¼ CUP CHOPPED GREEN OR RED PEPPERS—I LIKE BOTH
 1 TBSP. WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE
 ½ LB. FETA CHEESE, CRUMBLE
 ¼ CUP CHOPPED ONIONS

SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE WHOLE-WHEAT BUNS

Combine ground meat with half of the feta cheese, onions and peppers, and mix well. Then add the salt and pepper and Worcestershire sauce. Form into patties. Grill or fry in pan.

Once patties are thoroughly cooked, add about one tablespoon of the additional feta cheese to each burger, and allow to melt. Top with Garlic/Mint Yogurt Sauce. *Serves 4-6.*

GARLIC/MINT YOGURT SAUCE

½ CUP LIGHT YOGURT, PLAIN
 2 CLOVES MINCED GARLIC
 1 TSP. FINELY MINCED FRESH MINT LEAVES
 ¼ CUP LEMON JUICE
 SALT TO TASTE

Combine all ingredients and mix well.

Quick Sauce Tip

Homemade Thousand Island Dressing Sauce

Mix ½ cup ketchup, ½ cup mayonnaise (regular or light), and ¼ cup pickle relish. Mix well. Refrigerate after use.

major stretch

A Quick and Easy Routine for Total-Body Flexibility

BY ZLT HOLLY DI GIOVINE
PHOTOS BY ADAM LIVINGSTON

Stretching is one of the most valuable parts of a daily fitness routine, because it increases flexibility. Flexibility is the ability to move all the joints in the body through their intended range of motion. Many common health problems—headaches, backaches, fatigue—can be traced to poor flexibility. Factors that influence flexibility include genetics, anatomy, age, past injuries, and daily and lifelong habits. While you can't pick your parents or change your age, addressing your daily habits to achieve optimal range of motion can help prevent common health problems and improve your overall well-being.

Benefits of Flexibility

Increased oxygen supply

Chest, internal rotator cuff muscles and abdominals are typically shortened from constant use, poor posture and weak back muscles. This can lead to constriction of the lungs, resulting in shallow breathing and tight neck muscles that can lead to headaches. Focus on sitting up straight at all times to begin to address these issues.

Reduced pain from muscle imbalances

When a muscle becomes overly tight, its opposing muscle will be under constant strain. Tight hip flexors cause the pelvis to tilt forward, straining the hamstrings. Loosening the hip flexors leads to balance between the front and back of the body, which reduces pain in the upper hamstrings.

Reduced risk of injury

If a muscle is tight, it's at risk of a strain when subjected to even the slightest twist and turn—not just at the gym, but anywhere.

Increased performance levels

A muscle that can move freely is able to generate power throughout the entire range of motion, resulting in faster running, stronger push-ups and a tighter tummy.

Improved posture, increased confidence

Good posture makes people appear more confident and in command, and can result in a more positive outlook on life. Standing up straight becomes more automatic when you have a regular, well-rounded stretching practice.

ZLT HOLLY DI GIOVINE of the South Carolina Army National Guard earned her fitness certification from the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) and works as a personal trainer and as a fit camp leader.

Basic Flexibility Routine

The following series of stretches is designed to increase the range of motion in every joint in the body from head to toe.



1. Home Base

Stand with feet hip-width apart, toes and knees facing straight ahead. Slightly tuck the tailbone to eliminate an arch in the lower back. > Lift sternum away from the belly button, and roll shoulders up, back and down with chin parallel to the ground. > Actively draw your abs toward your spine and spread fingertips toward the ground. > Lift your toe-tips to actively engage your arches.



3. Flat Back

In this position, your legs, back and arms are straight as you stretch your sternum forward and arch your lower back. > Keep a flat back for three deep breaths. > Then move to Forward Bend.



2. Victory Stretch

Reach arms forward and up toward ceiling, feeling a stretch from the hips up through the fingertips. > Return arms to starting position. > Repeat 10 times, actively stretching arms toward the ground and then the ceiling.



4. Forward Bend

Grab your elbows with the opposite hand and relax forward with straight or slightly bent legs. > After three to five deep breaths, move back to Flat Back for three breaths. > Alternate back and forth two to three times.



5. Lunge

From Forward Bend, place your hands on the floor and take a giant step back with your right foot so that your left knee is directly over your left ankle. ▶ Both feet face straight ahead. ▶ Hands are either on the ground or on your front thigh. ▶ Stretch your chest forward and up as you reach back through the back heel. Hold for three to five deep breaths, then step back into Plank.



7. Downward Dog

From Plank, bend your knees deeply, look straight ahead and lift hips toward the sky as you press your chest toward your thighs. ▶ Hold for three to five breaths, then step the right foot forward to repeat the Lunge-Plank-Downward Dog series on the other side.

9. Return to Home Base

Walk feet to hands and come into Forward Bend, then Flat Back, then rise up to Victory Stretch, and end in Home Base. ▶ Repeat the sequence, but lunge with the opposite leg forward. ▶ With practice this will take about five minutes, and you can then begin to do more rounds.



6. Plank

Plank is a combo strength/stretch move. ▶ Hands are shoulder-width apart with fingers straight ahead. ▶ Press the ground away from you and feel your shoulder blades separate. ▶ Your chin should be slightly lifted. ▶ Maintain a straight line from head to heel and tuck your tailbone to flatten your back. ▶ Build up to be able to hold this from one to 10 breaths.



8. Cobra/Upward Dog

For Cobra, press your hands into the ground and curl the upper torso gently away from the ground, stretching the abdominals and chest, keeping hips on the ground. ▶ If your lower back doesn't hurt, fully extend arms and raise chest forward and up, into Upward Dog, actively pressing hands and feet down as thighs lift off the floor. Hold for three to five breaths, then push back to Downward Dog.



Tips for Stretching Safely

To avoid injury from over-stretching, apply the following tips:

- ▶ **Keep Breathing**
Find a position where you feel a slight stretch, and then breathe deeper to naturally deepen the stretch.
- ▶ **Avoid Bouncing**
When performing basic stretches, your movements should be controlled and deliberate. Unless you are specifically instructed to incorporate ballistic stretching by a qualified professional, move slowly so you can define your "edge." Your edge is the place where you feel a stretch but can hear your body when it tells you to stop.
- ▶ **Build Heat**
Warm muscles are more elastic than cold ones and therefore less prone to strains. Move in and out of light stretches before attempting to find your edge to ease your muscles into the stretch.
- ▶ **Different Day, Different Body**
Every day your body will have different tight and loose spots. Identify these areas and spend more time warming up the tight spots by holding stretches for a couple of extra breaths.

Hamstring/Calf Stretch With Strap

Hamstrings that are too tight can cause knee pain and back pain. Are you at risk? Here's a test to see if your hamstrings have optimal length: Sit on the floor with legs extended and feet facing straight up. A happy hamstring will allow you to sit up very straight with back flat and toes flexing back toward your shins.

You will need a yoga strap or other inelastic object.



Hamstring Stretch

Lie on your back with the strap secured around the ball of your foot. ▶ Keeping your right leg straight, raise it up 12 inches off the ground. ▶ Keeping both arms and legs straight, exhale as you move the arms overhead until you feel a gentle stretch in the back of the leg. ▶ Return to the starting position as you breathe in. ▶ Repeat five to 10 times. ▶ Repeat entire sequence for left leg.



Try these stretches for optimal hamstring flexibility.

Calf Stretch

To move the stretch into the calf, raise the right leg toward the ceiling and use the strap to pull the ball of the foot toward the shin and reach through the heel toward the ceiling. ▶ Hold for three to five breaths. ▶ Repeat on left leg.

Stretching at Work

If you spend hours of your day sitting at a desk, taking three-minute stretch breaks periodically can help counteract the gravitational pull of slouching over a computer. Sit up straight in your chair as if a string is attached to the top of your head, pulling it toward the ceiling. Feel your spine elongate and shoulders open. Take a few deep breaths in your mouth and out your nose, exhaling deeply for three to six counts. Continue to breathe deeply, with three to five breaths in and out during the following stretches.



Shoulder Stretch

With fingers interlocked, press palms toward the ceiling, relaxing your shoulders toward the ground. Then, relax your chin toward your chest and reach palms higher. Separate hands, reclass fingers in opposite position and repeat.



Side Stretch

Strongly reach one arm up and one arm down, then lean slightly toward the arm-down side, feeling a stretch along the opposite side of your body. Then, slowly turn ribs and head toward the ceiling to deepen the stretch. Repeat on the other side.



Seated Twist

Sit tall and rotate torso to the left. Keep shoulders and palms open. Breathe in and sit taller; exhale and rotate deeper. After three to five deep breaths, look back over the other shoulder. Repeat on other side.



COMMON FOODS
Containing Gluten

- | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Bagels | Cereal | Flour | Ice Cream Cones | Pizza Crust |
| Biscuits | Chicken Nuggets | Fried Vegetables | Macaroni | Pretzels |
| Bread | Cookies | Graham Crackers | Muffins | Spaghetti |
| Cake | Crackers | Hamburger and Hot Dog Buns | Pancakes | Stuffing |
| | Doughnuts | | Pasta | Waffles |
| | | | Pastries | |



An estimated 99 percent of people who have a problem with gluten don't know that they do.

the **truth** about a gluten-free diet

BY BRYAN SULLIVAN

Going “gluten-free” is all the buzz these days. Some even say it is the greatest thing since sliced bread. But, what is gluten? Why should someone quit eating it? Should everyone go gluten-free? According to many health professionals: no.

First, it's important to understand that most people can eat gluten. There are primarily two groups of people who should not. “People with celiac disease and people who have gluten intolerance/allergies are the only people who should participate in a gluten-free diet,” says Jenna Vandiver, registered dietitian for Baptist Hospital and Nashville Medical Group in Nashville, TN. Celiac disease is a genetic autoimmune disorder that results in inflammation and damage to the small intestine, with symptoms including severe diarrhea, vomiting, bloating and fatigue. A simple blood test can detect antibodies suggestive of the condition. People with celiac disease experience malabsorption due to the inflammation of the small intestine. The only treatment at this time is a permanent and complete removal of gluten from their diet.

It's currently estimated that approximately 3 million to 4 million people in the U.S. have celiac disease, and the numbers for gluten intolerance are thought to be even

higher than that. An estimated 99 percent of people who have a problem with gluten don't know that they do. They tend to attribute their symptoms to something else. People who experience chronic upset stomachs, fatigue, vomiting and even depression may have gluten allergies or celiac disease.

Health experts say that for most of the population, there is no reason to deliberately avoid gluten, and there is no scientific evidence that doing so will improve physical or mental well-being. In fact, if you are not in one of the two groups, following a gluten-free diet for a long time may result in nutritional deficiencies in the body, because eating a gluten-free diet means you are avoiding certain healthy, natural foods rich in required nutrients. Some gluten-free foods are not fortified, do not have a variety of nutrients, and are especially low in folate, fiber and iron.

FINDING GLUTEN

“Gluten is a protein that is found in wheat, barley, rye and any of its derivatives,” says Vandiver. “It can also be found in flours and bread products, and processed food products such as deli meats and sausage. It may even be

[added to] lipsticks and vitamins.”

For some products, the presence of gluten is essential. For instance, bread rises before it's baked due to the fact that gluten aids the fermentation in the dough. Similarly, gluten will help the bread firm up and ensures that the bread will keep its shape. For many vegetarians, this quality is desirable because it mimics certain meat properties.

A true gluten-free diet can be a challenge to stick to. It's not as easy as simply avoiding cereal, pastas or breads. For instance, some grains, such as oats, do not contain gluten, but may be grown near or processed with grains that do, which can contaminate the gluten-free grains.

“With gluten, cross-contamination happens easily,” says Vandiver. “Any contact between a gluten-free product and an item containing gluten [can cause] contamination. This means gluten-free products must be stored in a separate location. [They require] separate appliances and cooking

utensils, and separate containers for condiments such as butter.”

Despite these dietary restrictions, The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse says that people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance still have numerous food choices. They can use potato, rice, soy, amaranth, quinoa, buckwheat or bean flour instead of wheat flour. They can buy gluten-free bread, pasta and other products from stores that carry organic foods, or order products from special food companies.

Plain meat, fish, rice, fruits and vegetables do not contain gluten, so people with celiac disease can freely eat these foods. Additionally, gluten-free products are increasingly available at mainstream stores. In the past, people with celiac disease were advised not to eat oats, but new evidence suggests that most people can safely eat a small amount, as long as the oats are not contaminated with wheat gluten during processing. **?**



For more information on gluten-free diets and celiac disease, check out these websites: Celiac.org | AmericanCeliac.org | EatRight.org | The-Gluten-Free-Chef.com



healthcare made simple

BY CORTNEY M. NICOLATO,
CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL IN HEALTH
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (CPHIT)

Organizing your medical history can be a headache. From doctors to lab tests, there's so much to keep track of. Now, a new free tool called a "personal health record" (PHR) lets you log all of your medical data into one place in your computer and access it from anywhere. No more headache—the PHR is a tonic.

Technology has become a cornerstone of everyday life. Whether you're sharing pictures of the kids on Facebook or making a bank transaction at the kitchen table, technology makes life easier. Managing Family healthcare is no exception.

My Family recently moved to a new home, and we had to change healthcare providers. This could have been a complicated, time-consuming endeavor, involving countless phone calls and follow-ups. But, five years ago, I did something that would ensure a simpler process: I put my Family's healthcare records into a PHR.

A PHR is an online medical data-organization tool that allows the user to collect, store and manage their personal healthcare information in one place. Entries can include information about doctor visits, lab tests, medical images such as sonograms, and medications. PHRs also allow you to share this information with others—most importantly, your healthcare providers and your Family members.

If a patient visiting a healthcare provider for the first time has only a partial set of their medical records, the provider won't be able to get a sense of the patient's overall medical status. A PHR contains the big picture, and you can share it with your doctors easily. This allows the provider to take extra precautions with your treatment, such as monitoring medications and avoiding unnecessary duplication of tests. The more information providers can gather and share, the better the treatment and potential outcome.

Key Benefits of a PHR

- Consolidates and houses Family health data securely in one central location
- Saves time and enhances communication flow with healthcare providers
- Helps prevent duplication of tests
- Offers free access to health education resources and tools

BLUE BUTTON

For military Families, healthcare management can be especially difficult during a deployment. Fortunately, through the military health system (MHS), Guard Families have access to a free online PHR that can make the process much easier. It's called the Blue Button and is located on TRICARE's website: TricareOnline.com.

The Blue Button program lets users enter data such as medications, allergy profiles, demographic information and a personal health summary. This information can then be saved to a PDF file on the user's computer.

Chuck Campbell, chief information officer for MHS, explained, "After logging on to the secure site, users will be able

to add information to their personal health data. Users will need to select the Blue Button feature titled 'Save Personal Health Data' before they can save their ... data to a PDF file on their local computer." To use the TRICARE Online PHR, National Guard members and Families need to be in Active status and must be members of TRICARE.

LOTS OF OPTIONS

Another great resource is Microsoft HealthVault, which is a data system that provides a secure place to store your health information. HealthVault offers more than 150 different medical devices and applications (including PHRs) on their platform so that you can view your information and make educated health decisions. Google also has a PHR that offers similar features and functionality.

Veterans Affairs offers MyHealthVet, a PHR for Veterans and their Families. For non-Veterans, there are excellent PHRs available through healthcare providers or hospitals. Ask your provider to see if they have a PHR, and obtain details on how to get started. Many times, these PHRs can automatically transfer information from their system into your PHR, saving you time and effort.

Getting started is easy, and you don't need to do it all at once. The next time you visit a healthcare professional or even the pharmacy or a lab, ask for a copy of your health record. You can take these documents home and enter them into your PHR in about five minutes.

A PHR is empowering, because it puts you in the driver's seat when it comes to managing your Family's healthcare records. 📌



Online Resources

VA's MyHealthVet
www.MyHealth.va.gov

Microsoft HealthVault
www.HealthVault.com

TRICARE Online
www.TricareOnline.com

MiCare PHR project
www.MiCare.va.gov

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Breaking the Silence

JUSTIN JONES OPENS UP
ABOUT BEING HOMELESS

STORY BY STEPHANIE INMAN | PHOTOS BY EVAN BAINES



ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN 2008, Justin Jones layered on every available article of clothing he owned to protect himself from the cold. It was nightfall, and the temperature was hovering around freezing. He was sitting in his car in a deserted grocery store parking lot. He reclined the front seat and shifted his body, trying to find the most comfortable position for sleeping. Justin, 27, who joined the Tennessee Army National Guard in December 2002, was homeless. He had been without a home for two months at this point. Sadly, his situation is not uncommon among Veterans.

The most recent statistical report on homeless Veterans from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) states that “On a single night in January 2009, 75,609 Veterans were homeless; 57 percent were staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program; and the remaining 43 percent were living on the street, in an abandoned building, or another place not meant for human habitation (i.e., unsheltered).” Today, the VA estimates that the number of homeless Veterans on any given night has risen to 107,000.

Mary Ross, deputy executive director at Operation Stand Down Nashville, a nonprofit organization that helps Veterans, is passionate about assisting the homeless Veteran population. Ross served in the Active Duty Army for 21 years, so this cause is close to her heart.

“If you have served your country and fought for our freedom, then I think you deserve the opportunity to have a good life,” she said. “This is such an urgent issue because of the sheer number of Veterans who are homeless.”

For Justin, the struggle to find permanent housing began in childhood.

Fitting In

When Justin was 8, his father—absent during most of Justin’s childhood—disappeared from his son’s life altogether. When Justin was 11, his mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Due to his mother’s erratic behavior, conditions at Justin’s home in Hendersonville, TN, were tumultuous. Some days were peaceful, and others were filled with yelling and turmoil. He learned at an early age how to care for himself.

As Justin grew older, his mother’s outbursts intensified. He began sneaking out of the house to get away from her. Both mother and son reached a breaking point. Justin’s mother took him to juvenile court when he was 12 years old, claiming that he was unruly. But, Justin had kept a written record of his mother’s rages and fits, and presented them to the judge. He never lived with his mother again, instead moving through multiple foster homes and group homes until age 21.

Frequently transferring from one foster family to another created a psychological yearning in Justin to belong somewhere—to feel accepted.

Having never found it with his family, he sought it elsewhere. This was one reason that, at 18, he joined the Guard. He became part of the 105th Personnel Company as a 42F, a Human Resource Information System Management Specialist.

“I was drawn to the camaraderie [in the Guard]—being part of a group and having that sense of belonging,” he explained. “Because I had moved so often [as a child], I never developed peer relationships. I didn’t learn social skills. The military was an opportunity to develop the social skills and camaraderie that I never experienced in my youth.”

In January 2006, Justin left for a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan. When he returned home, he got a job as a security officer at a warehouse in Nashville, TN. He had an apartment and used the GI Bill to pursue a higher education at Middle Tennessee State University.

But in March 2008, Justin was laid off from that job. He’d been living from one paycheck to the next, and without any savings, could no longer afford his rent. He began living in his car—a 1992 Ford Taurus.





“It’s part of the Soldier’s mentality. Never quit, never ask for help and never accept defeat. For me, asking for help was accepting defeat.”

—PFC Justin Jones,
Tennessee Army National Guard

The military training Soldiers receive conditions them to “adapt and overcome” problems and adversity. “It’s part of the Soldier’s mentality,” Justin explained. “Never quit, never ask for help and never accept defeat. For me, asking for help was accepting defeat.”

Justin hid his homelessness from everyone, especially his Family, because he was ashamed. Soldiers are accustomed to successfully tackling difficult challenges, Ross said. So when they lose their home or job, it often feels like failure, and they try to handle the situation on their own.

Stressful Dilemma

Ross explained that this is one of the biggest obstacles in decreasing homelessness, suicide and other issues among Veterans—that many don’t seek help. They are fearful that it will appear as weakness and possibly hurt their



military career. But she’s working to dispel both of these fears.

Asking for help requires great courage, Ross said. If a Veteran is struggling with challenges such as homelessness or PTSD, they need to seek assistance.

Justin wouldn’t realize until later the necessity of utilizing resources like Operation Stand Down. In the beginning, he tried to handle it on his own. He spent many nights in his car. Friends occasionally offered him a place to stay. For a brief time, he slept at a fire station, where a friend worked. After searching for work relentlessly, he found another security job, but his pay wasn’t enough to rent an apartment. He continued to sleep at friends’ homes or in his car.

Two months later, things took an unfortunate turn. After finishing his shift at his security job, Justin got in his car to head for class. He set the 9 mm

gun he used for work on the car floorboard. When he arrived at school, a campus police officer approached the car, saw the gun and arrested Justin. It was against the law to have a firearm on campus.

Unaware of the law, Justin was dumbfounded. He wasn’t the criminal or violent type in the least. On the contrary, he had always gone out of his way to help those in need. For instance, he sometimes kept a 5-gallon can of gas, orange cones, a spare tire and a reflector vest in his car, in case he found someone stranded on the side of the road.

Yet, he was sent to jail. He couldn’t afford bail, so he was there for six months. But oddly, he realized that he actually didn’t want to leave. For the first time in months, he had warm shelter, a comfortable bed and plenty of food. And in a strange way, jail offered something else—the sense of belonging

he’d been searching for his entire life.

When Justin was released from jail in October 2008, his car had been impounded, and when no one claimed it, it was sold to a junkyard. It had contained all of his personal belongings.

“I had three duffel bags filled with clothes, and all my personal identification documents ... in that car,” Justin sighed. “I walked into the jail in May, and when I walked out, it was the middle of October. I was wearing a T-shirt, shorts and flip-flops. I had my wallet, my badge and a set of keys to a vehicle that I didn’t own. That’s all I had.”

Job and a Hard Place

With no mode of transportation and no home, Justin reached out for help. A friend and former neighbor, Roy Rich, offered him a place to stay for two months. During that time, he acquired a car but was unable to find a job. Like many National Guard Soldiers, he faced an obstacle in his job search: Some civilian employers are reluctant to hire Soldiers because of the possibility of a deployment. And even if a Soldier does have a civilian job, if they deploy, there’s no guarantee their job will be there when they get back.

The longer Justin remained unemployed, the more discouraged he became. He almost gave up believing he would ever find work. As Christmas Eve approached, Rich reminded Justin of an agreement they had made—Justin was to move out by January 1. Rich cared, and felt he needed to give Justin a nudge to get him back on his feet.

The following morning, Christmas Day 2008, Justin packed up his things and headed for the Nashville Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter. However, because of the holiday, they could not admit him. That’s the night he wound up in the grocery store parking lot, sleeping in his car in the freezing cold.

After that night, Justin began sleeping at the Nashville Rescue Mission. He developed a routine—spending the night at the rescue mission, waking up at 5 a.m. for breakfast and then setting out in search of a job. Consistently applying at day labor and

temporary work agencies, Justin found work, but nothing permanent. He visited the career center at Tennessee’s unemployment department for guidance in finding work. The center suggested he visit Operation Stand Down in Nashville.

Justin utilized Operation Stand Down’s resources extensively. He improved his resume, printed business cards and fine-tuned his interviewing skills. The more time he spent there, the more he found himself drawn to volunteering.

“That’s the kind of guy I am,” he said. “If I have something that I can spare or impart to someone, then I am going to help them. I started going to Stand Down every day. I would still go out to the day labor place, but if they hadn’t found anything for me by about 10 a.m., I would just go over to Stand Down and say, ‘Hey, I’m here. How can I help?’ ”

The Giving Spirit

Richard Eaton was the customer service coordinator at Operation Stand Down when Justin first began attending. He remembers that Justin was anxious to volunteer.

“[When he came in], he needed help, but he wanted to help at the same time,” said Eaton. “He was interactive, and that’s what many of our [Veterans] need. Whether it was helping distribute supplies or going over intake packets, he did it.”

Justin would perform even the most basic tasks, like making coffee or opening mail. He realized that it would be his dream to work full time at Operation Stand Down. He was about to start working at the front desk temporarily, when he was called up for another deployment, this time to Iraq. His deployment would go from May 2009 to May 2010.

During this second deployment, Justin saved his money with the specific intention of making sure he could get an apartment when he came back. Upon returning home, he enrolled in college at Tennessee Tech to pursue a degree in sociology. His goal was to become a social worker and help homeless Veterans or foster children.

Today, Justin has an apartment in Cookeville, TN, and will start his junior

1 in 3

HOMELESS ADULT MALES ARE VETERANS

107,000

VETERANS ARE HOMELESS ON ANY GIVEN NIGHT, ACCORDING TO VA ESTIMATES

1.5 million

VETERANS ARE CONSIDERED AT RISK FOR HOMELESSNESS DUE TO POVERTY, LACK OF SUPPORT NETWORKS AND DISMAL LIVING CONDITIONS IN OVERCROWDED OR SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

— Information courtesy of National Coalition of Homeless Veterans

VA Actions to Help Prevent Homelessness

Nearly \$60 million in grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs will serve an estimated 22,000 homeless and at-risk Veterans and their Families.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SGT. ALYSSA VASQUEZ AND LTC. JOSEPH SEAGUIST

Operation Stand Down

Operation Stand Down Nashville is for all Veterans—not just the homeless. Their services include job placement assistance, housing opportunities, counseling and a new resale clothing store that provides free clothes to Veterans. The organization also holds an annual event providing Veterans with immediate-need services such as hot showers, haircuts, food, legal aid and medical attention.

To make a donation, visit OSDNashville.org.

Similar organizations exist nationwide.

To find one in your area, visit the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans website: nchv.org.



year of college in September 2011. Having left the National Guard in December 2010, he's focused on his dream of helping those in need, and still volunteers regularly at Operation Stand Down.

"He's part of the Family," said Ross. "No one bats an eye when they see Justin behind the desk answering phones or putting away files. We would feel odd if he was sitting in the waiting area. He comes in and goes straight to work."

Realizing how beneficial Operation Stand Down was in his journey to stability, Justin feels it's important for Veterans struggling with homelessness or any other challenge to utilize all available resources. Although he's still cautious about telling his Family members that he's been homeless, he's sharing the story with those who need to hear it most—other homeless and at-risk

Veterans. He does this through his work at Operation Stand Down, with one main objective being to encourage Veterans to feel safe and comfortable in reaching out for help.

Another primary goal is to help eliminate stereotypes about the homeless—for instance, that they live that way due to drug or alcohol addiction. Neither of these situations applied to Justin, who doesn't drink alcohol and has never used drugs. Unemployment is another major factor in homelessness among Veterans.

"When people look at a guy standing on the corner [asking for money], they see a homeless person—not a person experiencing hard times," said Justin. "I don't like the term 'homeless person.' Homelessness is a state of being. It's not who you are." 



Risk Factors

FOR VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

- Unemployment
- Ineligibility for or lack of Veteran's benefits
- Legal trouble
- Mental health problems
- Disabilities
- Divorce/separation
- Domestic violence
- Lack of Family or social support network
- Substance abuse

Female Homeless Veterans

An estimated 13,000 female Veterans are homeless today. Final Salute is an organization that provides safe and suitable housing for them. The program believes in and promotes community involvement and resources to achieve their mission, which includes:

- ▶ Preventing homelessness
- ▶ Emergency shelter
- ▶ Transitional housing
- ▶ Emergency financial assistance
- ▶ Independence

If you're a female Veteran who is homeless or at risk for becoming homeless, or if you know someone who is, contact Final Salute:

 (866) 720-9171

 FinalSaluteinc.org

The following programs provide services specifically enhanced for homeless women, including those with dependent children:

Vietnam Veterans of California, Inc., Sacramento, CA | VietVets.org

United Veterans of America, Inc., Leeds, MA | WeSoldierOn.org

United States Veterans Initiative, Inc., Long Beach, CA | USVetsInc.org

Salvation Army, a California Corporation, Los Angeles, CA
SalvationArmyUSA.org

West Side Catholic Center, Cleveland, OH | WSCCenter.org

Get Involved

Nonprofit organizations and homeless shelters have limited resources available to Veterans. So they rely significantly on volunteers and contributors for extra assistance. Here are a few ways you can help out.

Make a donation to your local homeless Veteran provider.

To locate a community-based organization in your city, visit www.nchv.org.

Involve others.

If you are not already part of an organization, align yourself with a few other people who are interested in attacking this issue.

Participate in local homeless coalitions.

Chances are, there is one in your community. If not, this could be the time to bring people together around this critical need.

Contact your elected officials.

Discuss what is being done in your community for homeless Veterans.

Get Help Now

HERE ARE A FEW OF YOUR RESOURCES

- ▶ **Call Center for Homeless Vets (VA)**
(877) 424-3838
- ▶ **Department of Housing and Urban Development, VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program**
(877) 424-3838
va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp
- ▶ **Disabled American Veterans**
(877) 426-2838
www.dav.org
- ▶ **Focus on Recovery Helpline** (alcohol/drugs)
(800) 374-2800 or
(800) 234-1253
- ▶ **Food Stamps Information Line**
(800) 221-5689
- ▶ **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans**
nchv.org
- ▶ **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
(800) 784-2433
- ▶ **VA's Compensated Work Therapy/ Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) program**
www.cwt.va.gov/index.asp

STORY BY RACHEL GLADSTONE | PHOTOS BY ANDREW DEMATTOS

marathon man

**MAJ George Kraehe
Runs Across America
for Fallen Soldiers**



Honoring fallen Soldiers is an important tradition in the military, and Service Members find a myriad of ways to do so. Many partake in long marches or marathons. MAJ George Kraehe of the 93rd Brigade, New Mexico National Guard, is one of those who has chosen to run in marathons. But not just any marathons.

Kraehe has begun a mission to run 50 marathons in 50 states, memorializing a specific fallen Soldier in each one. The money he's raising is going to TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors), a nonprofit organization that provides services to Family members of fallen Soldiers.

Kraehe first became aware of TAPS in 2006, while serving in Iraq. "TAPS was sponsoring a race near Tikrit, called the Honolulu Marathon Forward," Kraehe explained. "The race was happening simultaneously in Honolulu and Iraq. I had run a few marathons before and wanted to run in the Forward. When a TAPS representative suggested that I run in memory

of a fallen Marine captain, I agreed. It made [the marathon] much more meaningful to me.”

After returning from deployment in 2007, Kraehe continued running in marathons, and soon got the idea to run 50 marathons in 50 states. Recalling the marathon he’d run in Iraq, he was drawn to the idea of making the goal about something bigger than himself. “I wanted to combine my efforts with a good cause, and the only one I considered was TAPS,” he said. “It seemed appropriate to run in every state; it’s a way of [creating exposure for] TAPS, and honoring the Soldiers and their Families at the same time. But in addition, I wanted to increase awareness among the general public that ... there are still Soldiers out there dying for their country.”

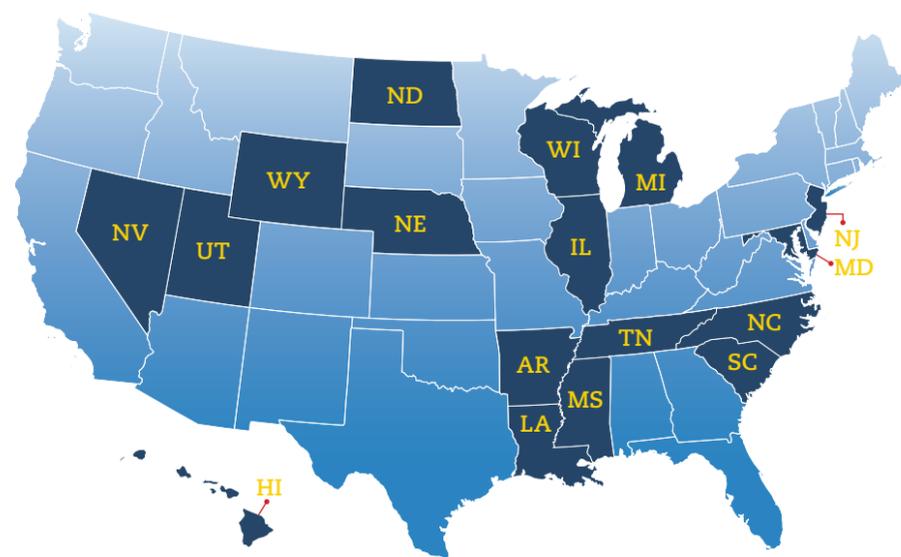
MAN ON A MISSION

When Kraehe contacted TAPS, he reached Marie Campbell, director of TAPS’ Run and Remember program. She was thrilled to get his call and hear his idea, which the two of them named “50 in 50.”

“We’d never had anyone do ‘50 in 50’ for us before, and we were really excited about it,” Campbell shared. “Every time he’s set to run a marathon, I find a fallen hero for him in that state. I sent him one of our [shirts], and he wears a picture of the Soldier on the [shirt] when he runs.”

Kraehe ran his first marathon for TAPS in Utah in 2009. He has run 16 more since, raising \$4,500 to date. The donations have been from friends and

 **State of the States** Since 2009, MAJ George Kraehe has run 17 marathons in 17 states to benefit TAPS.



acquaintances who each contribute \$1 per mile. All of his expenses—entry fees, travel and lodging—come out of his own pocket. But, he doesn’t mind. The marathons are rewarding for him.

“A marathon requires a certain level of commitment, and it usually induces some amount of spirituality at some point. There’s a part of the race where you have to dig down deep and give it all you’ve got, emotionally and physically. It helps to know you’re doing it for someone who gave their life for their country. It increases my commitment to finishing.”

On some occasions, Kraehe has met the Families of the victims. Those moments are often very emotional for

him. “I ran a race in Maryland, and the father and stepmother of the Soldier [I was running for] visited me the night before,” he shared. “We talked a great deal about their loss and how difficult it was. It was inspiring to hear how they were overcoming the tragedy. We met again the day of the race—they were at the finish line. We had lunch [afterward]. It was amazing to see that, despite their loss, they still have faith in ... their country.”

“On another occasion, in Arkansas,” he continued, “I was running in memory of a Soldier who’d been [lost] only three months earlier. His wife and four kids were at the finish line. They looked like



George’s mission to run 50 marathons in 50 states has become a Family affair. His wife, Kelly, and two sons, Benno and Kai, often run in the races as well.

they were still heartbroken. It was a very sobering moment for me. It makes you wish you could do more.”

Along with the emotional impact of these marathons, Kraehe faces tough physical hurdles. “I ran a marathon in Wyoming, outside of Laramie,” he recalled. “The race started at an elevation of about 9,000 feet. It was very hilly, and very cold and windy. The last four miles were straight up a steep, muddy hill. It was pretty brutal. It was the most difficult marathon I’ve done yet. But I thought, ‘I’ve got to do this. I’m running in somebody’s memory.’”

FAMILY ON THE RUN

Kraehe, who has 27 years of military

service, lives in Albuquerque with his wife, Kelly, and their sons, Benno, 13, and Kai, 6. He works a civilian job at the Department of Justice in Albuquerque, so finding time for marathons takes a bit of juggling. His Family helps a lot, he said.

Kelly, an art teacher in Albuquerque, is proud of her husband. “I’m very supportive of his running, because I think it helps him heal a little bit from [having been] in Iraq,” she said. “And TAPS is a great organization.”

Often, Kelly and the boys run in the races as well. “It’s fun when we go with him,” she shared.

Benno weighed in with praise for his dad. “I think he’s great and persevering,” he said. “Dad has a good heart for



To support MAJ Kraehe in his marathons, go to Taps.kintera.org/friends/50marathons50states.

running the marathons for those fallen Soldiers.”

Primarily, it’s military tradition that keeps Kraehe running. “It’s part of our ... culture [as Soldiers] to honor those who’ve sacrificed their lives,” he explained. “Remembering the fallen is an everyday part of being a Soldier.”

Although he doesn’t yet know the exact schedule for his upcoming races, he does know where he wants to run his 50th race—his home state. “New Mexico will probably be my final marathon,” he said. “I’ve given some thought as to how I want to do that—I may run for every fallen Soldier [from the state]. I know some of their Families. I think that will probably be a special race for me.”

Getting Ready to Run

Preparing to run 26.2 miles is no walk in the park. However, after countless marathons, George Kraehe has a training regimen that works. Here’s his routine.



Diet

A vegetarian “except for fish,” he begins eating a lot of pasta one week prior to a marathon. He also makes sure to eat pasta the night before the race. His regular diet includes lots of fruit and vegetables, and he avoids sweets as much as possible.



Workout

Physical preparation consists of—you guessed it—running. The details change based on his marathon schedule, but he tries to run six days per week, totaling 30–60 miles per week. Speed training is included. The night before a race, he tries to get a good night’s sleep—although, he laughs, “It hardly ever happens.”



Mental Prep

For each race, George makes a mental plan in advance and sets three goals: 1. Avoid injury; 2. Finish the race; 3. Break his personal record. “So far, I’ve achieved two out of three of those goals in every race,” he says. “A few times, all three.”



Above: America's Adopt a Soldier and Outback Steakhouse joined forces for an Army National Guard Family Readiness Group care-packing event. **Opposite Page:** America's Adopt a Soldier teamed with the USO in support of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd IBCT welcome-home celebration. *Pictured left to right,* BG Mark Anderson, Wisconsin assistant adjutant general; Mary Keeser, America's Adopt a Soldier founder; Brittini Black, recording artist; BG Donald P. Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general; COL (Ret.) Steve Bensed, former 32nd IBCT commander.

adopt a soldier

Foundation Empowers America to Give Back to the Troops and Their Families

BY LIISA SULLIVAN

A commitment to making a difference in the lives of Veterans, Soldiers and their Families is the core of the America's Adopt a Soldier program.

"It's not a matter of why, but why not," said founder Mary E. Keeser, when asked why she started it. "Why not use one's knowledge and network capital to make a positive impact and give back? We're all in this together, and through commitment, compassion and balance, we can make a difference."

MANY MISSIONS

The America's Adopt a Soldier program was founded in 2009 in an effort to formalize and bring focus to several programs that were already under way. Its mission is broken up into four parts:

Inform and Educate: To maintain visibility when addressing the needs of Service Members, Veterans and their Families through hosting or participating in special events, workshops, speaking engagements and concerts.

Care Packages: To ensure that every deployed Service Member receives a care package through regional and local partnerships and outreach to Families, Service Members and communities. While national packing days take place in July and November, support is year-round.

Wounded Warrior Path To Strength (WWPTS): This is a partnership to be developed over a four-year period with Dell, Microsoft, Verizon, Sprint and AT&T. Currently, laptops and desktop systems are delivered to Wounded

Warriors at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Microsoft donates software and training; Verizon contributes mobile broadband access. These computer-based rehabilitation programs enable a speedier recovery and foster new career skills.

Other: To respond to and/or facilitate the stated needs of service, Veteran or Family members (e.g., internships, sponsorships, clothing, financial support, etc.).

GRASSROOTS GRIT

"By pooling our resources into one focused program, we can better serve and respond to need," said Keeser.

This unified program accomplishes its mission through the grassroots assistance of thousands of volunteers nationwide.

"I first met Mary at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center," said Sandra Lowe, mother of a Soldier who had been wounded in Afghanistan. "It was a tough day. But, I soon learned that Mary was one of those people I would not just know, but be privileged to know."

Today, Lowe volunteers for WWPTS in her city of Savannah, GA, and says that she has seen many Soldiers and their Families benefit from this program, including her son, who has attended many of the field trips and concerts.

Well-known country singer Brittini Black leads the way in the concert arena.

"We are so grateful that Brittini has stepped forward and embraced an active role as our ambassador and partner," said Keeser. "Her commitment not only to raising awareness, but also [to offering] critical financial support, demonstrates her character and sincere desire to make a difference."

In support of America's Adopt a Soldier program, Black donates \$1 for every CD sold and has performed at multiple America's Adopt a Soldier concerts.

"The camaraderie that develops at these concerts and events is so important to morale," said Lowe. "The computer classes are also invaluable."

To date, America's Adopt a Soldier has delivered more than 700 fully

equipped laptop and desktop systems to Wounded Warriors.

ONE FOR ALL

The fourth mission works to ensure that all Service Members receive assistance as needed. For instance, SSG Shane Overstreet shared a story about a unit member who was training in Oklahoma when his house was significantly damaged by fire.

"I searched for ways to help this Soldier, but since he was not Active Duty, services were limited. And then I found Mary. She helped organize donations that ranged from major appliances and furnishings to gift cards and Christmas presents. Additionally, Army Community Service is now revisiting how they assist Guard Soldiers in need," explained Overstreet.

Keeser adds that the support from the Guard has been overwhelming. "We are so proud of our esteemed board of honorary advisors and military liaison representatives," she said. "Many of them are retired from or have a long history with the Guard. We just couldn't ask for anything more." 

For information about how to get involved, visit:
AmericasAdoptASoldier.org



Handle With Care

Deployed Soldiers can sign up online to be "adopted" for national care package distribution. In 2009, more than 2,000 care packages were mailed; in 2010, the goal was 100,000. In 2011, the goal is to ensure that every deployed Service Member receives a care package.

Packages typically include:

- Baby wipes
- Socks
- DVDs
- CDs/CD players
- Liquid body wash soap
- Toiletries (toothbrushes, toothpaste)
- Snacks (hard candy, crackers)
- Water, coffee, sports drinks
- Sunblock
- Paper, pens, pencils, envelopes
- Batteries
- Foot powder
- Small can food items
- Books, magazines, crossword puzzles

"The care packages were well received," said a Soldier of Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1-113th Field Artillery, whose unit received a shipment from the program. "The ... awareness that someone out there is ... passionate enough to ... select and package these items brings instant smiles and a real sense of pride to our faces. It's during these times that I am reminded that our separation and sacrifices are not ours alone, but rather shared."

credit card safety tips

You Can't Afford to Ignore

BY JUNE WALBERT,
USAA CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER

Let's face it—credit cards make life a lot easier. No longer is our shopping limited to a trip to the store. We can buy things from the comfort of our couch, office or really, from anywhere, by phone or Internet. But that convenience doesn't come without a cost: It creates opportunities for fraud. With over 600 million credit cards in American pockets and purses, fear of financial information being stolen is understandable. I know about this from personal experience. Recently, my credit card information was lifted and the thief made purchases in Australia. I have no idea how it happened, but the bank called me even before I knew it had happened. I had to get a new card with a new number. But, even though I escaped with nothing more than an eye-opening experience, full-blown identity theft is a very real threat. And with credit and debit card use continuing to rise, the risks are increasing, too. What can you do to protect yourself? Incorporate these eight tips into your financial routine for a strong dose of preventive medicine.

Do not share your card information with others.

This tip may seem to go without saying, but the importance of keeping your personal information private cannot be overstated. This means more than inadvertently handing your card over to someone or leaving it behind somewhere. Remember that your PIN and security code are two things that stand between you and the bad guys. Don't write them down, memorize instead. A fraudster can get a long way with that information.

Be careful when you shop by phone or online.

Shopping this way can be easy and save a lot of time (though not necessarily money). Never give your card number over the phone unless you are

certain you are dealing with a reputable company and when you have called to actually place an order. When making purchases online, be sure to confirm that a merchant's website is protected and personal information is secure by locating a lock and key symbol in the browser status bar (your Internet browser may use different symbols or techniques).



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Set up account alerts. You can set up handy warnings if you've exceeded the spending limits you've set for yourself on credit and debit cards. As an example, your bank can send you a text alert if you spend more than \$200—a gentle budget reminder, but also a nice defensive tactic. You can also set up a "fraud alert." This is new whiz-bang technology that some banks offer to stop fraud in its tracks. When suspicious activity is detected, such as unusual spending, the bank will send you a text, as an example, asking if it's really you that's buying the fur coat in San Antonio. You can then reply by text or give them a call.

Keep your card within sight at all times.

This may seem next to impossible, particularly at restaurants. But to be ultra safe, try to keep a close eye on your card and its whereabouts. This ensures the right amount is charged via a company-approved machine, and that your card is not picking up someone else's tab.



Review transactions often. Help your bank help you by staying on top of account activity. This is a quick and effective way to detect fraudulent activity early on. According to Javelin Strategy and Research, the average time it takes to detect fraud has dropped to an impressive 20 hours.

Review credit bureau reports regularly.

These reports reflect the various credit lines you have in your name and can provide an at-a-glance indication if there are accounts established by an unsavory third party. You can get a free

report from each of the three credit agencies at AnnualCreditReport.com. If you've never checked your credit before, peruse all three at once to get a feel for entries on your report. After that, consider spacing out the reports to receive one of the three every four months to track activity. Better yet, consider signing up for a credit monitoring service that will email you when a new account is applied for in your name.

Know what's in your wallet.

Consider making a front and back copy of all cards you carry. In the event you're the victim of a pickpocket, you'll have a jump start on reporting the crime. Store the copy someplace safe and easily retrievable in the event you need it.

Avoid being "skimmed."

Thieves are getting more creative these days in an attempt to stay one step ahead of the law. Skimmers are handheld or mounted devices used by fraudsters to read credit card information. According to Consumer Reports, equipment may be set up at gas stations, salons, restaurants and other retailers to capture your magnetic strip and keypad strokes. Always be vigilant by ensuring nothing looks odd or jerry-rigged. Also be wary if anything looks out of place at your ATM location and report it to authorities. If you have a "contactless" credit card—one that does not have to be swiped to use—the ability for others to lift your information from afar can be particularly disconcerting. For the moment, this can be prevented by placing your card in a metal sleeve or stainless steel wallet, or even by wrapping it in aluminum foil!

In this fast-paced, technologically ever-evolving world we live in, it's important to stay informed and read correspondence from your bank. Most banks offer 100 percent fraud protection for both credit and debit cards. Contact your bank to understand what kind of protection you have. No defense is fail-safe, but being aware and vigilant can go a long way to limiting the financial, emotional and time-consuming damage.

This material is for informational purposes only and is not investment advice, an indicator of future performance, a solicitation, an offer to buy or sell, or a recommendation.



Your card information was stolen. What now?

- ▶ Immediately inform your financial institution that your card has been lost or stolen or fraud has occurred; start the reimbursement process
- ▶ If other personally identifiable information has been compromised, consider placing a Credit Bureau Fraud Alert
- ▶ Contact the local police and report your card lost/stolen or fraudulently acquired

Visit ftc.gov for additional consumer protection tips

Do you have a financial question for June?

Visit June's website:
AskJune.military.com

in the company of patriots

BY MAJ LEKESHA HANCE, ESGR

Employer Gives Long-Term Support to Wife of Wounded Warrior

When LTC Randy Royer left for work on November 5, 2009, it seemed to be a day like any other day. He said goodbye to his Family and headed out to perform his duties as a member of the Alabama National Guard, 135th Expeditionary Sustainment Command. But, the events to come would change his life forever.

Preparing for deployment, Randy reported to the Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) center at Fort Hood, TX, to complete the paperwork and other requirements. He was seated in a processing area, waiting to be called to the desk, when suddenly a man with a gun opened fire and began shooting randomly at the people around him.

Twelve Soldiers and one civilian were killed, and 32 other people were injured. Randy was among the wounded, having been shot several times in the left arm and leg.

A LONG RECOVERY

At first, Randy's wife, Tricia, had a hard time processing the news of the shooting. In addition to the emotional impact of the tragedy, she had a full-time job and realized that helping with her husband's recovery would probably require time away from work—possibly a lot of time. She didn't know how

supportive her employer, Southern Clinic, PC, would be. In the long months that followed, she learned that they were extremely supportive.

Southern Clinic, an internal medicine facility, treats patients ages 15 and up. It provides services including lab work, vascular testing, ultrasounds and bone density testing. Tricia has been an

employee there since 1997. Her duties include switchboard operator, handling requests for medical records, and lending her assistance in other areas as needed.

"From the moment I found out [about the shooting] until now, Southern Clinic, PC, has gone above and beyond the responsibilities of an employer," Tricia emphasized. "I was told by my [supervisor], Dr. J. Edwin Morriss III, to go to Randy and not worry about my job. I am so thankful that I was able to stay home with him throughout the past year."

After the shooting, the Royers' lives would never be the same. When Randy was released from the hospital, he needed 24/7 in-home care. Tasks once considered simple or routine became extremely difficult. There were numerous medical procedures and evaluations. He underwent physical therapy to

relearn to use his left leg and left arm. He required a walker.

Because of the intensity of the process, he needed Tricia around to assist with daily tasks. He was unable to drive because he had a cast on his left arm, so he needed her to take him to his numerous medical appointments. He also needed her for moral support.

Southern Clinic never said no to anything she needed. On the contrary, they took special measures to make it possible for her to stay home with Randy, attend appointments with him and travel with him between Texas and Alabama when necessary. They encouraged her to work from home when possible, so that she could still earn money and receive a paycheck. Her supervisor let her determine how many hours she thought she could handle. The company sent flowers and cards. They also paid several visits the Royers' house in person, to do whatever they could to help the entire Family.

"My employer and coworkers have been wonderful to our Family," Tricia said gratefully. "Without complaining, my coworkers stepped up and took over my job duties while I was coming and going with no set work schedule. Even

now, they call at least every two to three days, wanting to know Randy's status."

AMAZING GENEROSITY

Randy gradually regained his independence. Tricia, resuming her standard work schedule, said, "We will be forever grateful to Southern Clinic. I am proud to say I work for a company with such patriotism and concern for employees who are involved in military service."

Southern Clinic is one of many patriotic companies across the nation that support not only Guard and Reserve members' service, but their spouses as well. Employers such as these allow Soldiers to carry out their mission with a sense of job security, and allow the spouse to help their Soldier as necessary. These organizations deserve thanks for their support—and sometimes, that thanks comes in the form of the Patriot Award. Southern Clinic, PC, received the Patriot Award for going above and beyond for the Royers, and for its ongoing commitment to and support of the Guard and Reserve.

Service Members and their spouses can nominate their employers for the Patriot Award at ESGR's website, esgr.mil/pa.



▲ LTC Randy Royer and his wife, Tricia Royer, with staff members of Southern Clinic and ESGR after Southern Clinic received the Patriot Award for outstanding support to the spouse and Service Member during a time of need or crisis.



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You can also find many resources and answers at esgr.mil.

This website contains extensive information on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), employment opportunities and additional ways to honor your employer.



Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency established in 1972, develops and maintains employer support for Guard and Reserve service. ESGR advocates relevant initiatives, recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of applicable laws, and resolves conflict between Service Members and employers. Paramount to ESGR's mission is encouraging employment of Guard and Reserve Soldiers who bring integrity, global perspective and proven leadership to the civilian work force.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ESGR

grounds for a great time

New York Guard Builds Playground for Boys & Girls Club in Binghamton

BY LIISA SULLIVAN, STAFF WRITER



When the Boys and Girls Club of Binghamton, NY, was in need of a playground, the National Guard came to their rescue. MaryBeth Smith, executive director for the Binghamton Boys and Girls Clubs of America, called the 204th Engineer Battalion, New York Army National Guard, and within a few days, the dream had become a reality.

Smith got the idea to call the National Guard for help when she remembered having seen their name attached to another local project a few months earlier. "I thought I would give them a call to see if they could help," she explained. A friend of hers knew a Soldier from the 204th personally and gave Smith his phone number. Smith said she was glad she made the call.

"This new playground will serve at least 130 children daily," said Smith. "Many of them do not live near a park, and this will give them an opportunity to play in a park-like setting and to get lots of exercise."

The kids gave it rave reviews, too. Christopher Bufford, 9, said that he loves "the thing that you can go back and

"The best part of the project was that the kids did not know it was happening. It was great to see their reactions."

—SFC David Youngs, 204th Engineer Battalion, New York Army National Guard

forth on," referring to the zip line. "That's mad fun," he shared. Ariana Keeney, 6, likes the slides. "The middle slide is the fastest," she announced, adding that it's her favorite.

The project took approximately 30 hours to complete, and ran from June 13 through June 15. The team—10 Soldiers total—had just returned from Fort Dix and were ready to give back to their community. Once they began, they worked long days until the playground was ready for action.

SFC David Youngs was tasked with keeping everyone going. "It was a terrific project," he said. "We did everything from putting down mulch and building barriers to pouring concrete, assembling the playground and pressure washing the building. We also worked closely with the town of Binghamton, which was a positive and rewarding experience."

Youngs added that some of the Soldiers even had a personal investment in the venture, because they have

children who will be able to enjoy the playground as well.

"The best part of the project was that the kids did not know it was happening," said Youngs. "The club closed for a few days [during construction], but there was no explanation to the kids as to why. So, when the club reopened, they were so surprised and excited—it was great to see their reactions."

Smith shared that this is one of the greatest volunteer experiences of her career. "The [Soldiers] were kind, caring, polite and so very helpful," she said. "They knew what they were doing, and they worked very hard, stopping only to have lunch for just a short time. They also did small projects around the club when they finished their assignment. They were very organized and at the end of each day, they left the club in great shape. They cared about the kids. We call them our friends—they plan to return for more projects and to serve dinner to our members. We can't wait." 

PHOTO COURTESY OF EDWARD A SWAD

inspiration upload

MP3 Players With Spiritual Content Raise Soldier Morale Overseas

BY RACHEL GLADSTONE, STAFF WRITER



There are times when we're called to action, and when this happens, resistance is all but impossible. Such was the case for Cheri Lomonte when she had the idea to form The Frontline Faith Project (FrontlineFaithProject.org), an organization out of Austin, TX, that distributes MP3 players loaded with spiritual content to our Armed Forces, free of charge.

On March 31, 2009, Lomonte, the host of an internationally syndicated faith-based radio program, "Mary's Touch," was interviewing a woman for the show.

"She had a son in the Army, serving overseas," Lomonte said. "And she told me that our troops often go seven to nine months without seeing a chaplain. I couldn't believe it. I thought, we have to do something."

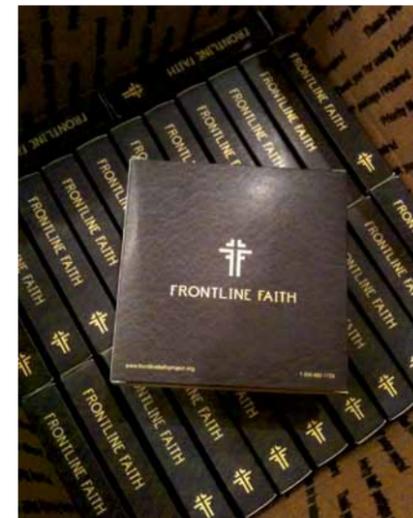
Previously, Lomonte had embarked on a project where she'd distributed MP3 players to homeless people in Austin. "That made me think, we could take MP3 players, load them with spiritual content and give them to our troops," she explained.

Having no personal ties to the military, Lomonte reached out to a friend who did, and within a few weeks, found herself sitting at her dining room table with five retired generals.

"I explained what I wanted to do," she said. "And they told me what rules I'd have to follow and what kind of content would be most helpful to Soldiers in the field."

By January of 2010, Lomonte and her production team had amassed 7½ hours of spiritual content that included everything from stories told by former POWs to prayers and letters written and narrated by children.

But Lomonte had to find a way to pay for the MP3s, and the following Sunday, she made a plea to her church's congregation. "This is what we're doing for the military, and I need your help,"



she told them. "We all pray as a country for our Soldiers, but this is something tangible we can hand them." Within a couple of hours she'd raised \$11,000.

By July, she and her team had produced 800 players. Through a friend of "Mary's Touch," Lomonte contacted a chaplain at the Pentagon, and orders began pouring in. "First they asked for 100, and then an additional 50," she said. "Then they asked for 200 more. Then it was, 'Please send as many as possible.'"

Between requests from chaplains and a word-of-mouth campaign, everything snowballed, and to date, Frontline Faith has distributed 12,000 MP3 players, 98 percent of which are sent to deployed

Soldiers. The organization also serves Soldiers who are about to deploy, as well as Wounded Warriors. "They come home with none of their personal belongings, just the clothes on their backs," Lomonte explained. "I thought they were the first ones who might need to hear something spiritual."

Lomonte is both humbled and grateful for the letters she consistently receives from those who've been touched by this project. A Soldier serving in Afghanistan wrote, "I got this MP3 player from my chaplain. The homilies really inspired me."

In the past, Lomonte considered herself a skeptic when it came to those who claimed they'd found a calling, but that has changed for her. "I've always been a woman of faith," she said. "Sometimes people would say, 'Oh, I've had a calling,' and I couldn't really relate. But when that woman told me [about the lack of chaplains], I knew I had been called to fill that void. It was something I just had to do. Everything I have done in my whole life has led me to this. And I've never stopped to say, 'Why me?' I've stopped to say, 'Thank you' and 'What can I do next?'" 

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEFF GARDNER

yard care relief

Volunteers Mow and Plow for Families of Deployed Soldiers

BY BRYAN SULLIVAN

Life's daily tasks can be overwhelming. But when it comes to military Families with a deployed Soldier, those challenges can reach heights most civilians will never know. Grocery shopping, getting the car repaired, driving the kids around—a spouse performing the chores solo can become unmanageable.

For many, one of the toughest tasks is yard work. Whether it's mowing the lawn and landscaping in spring and summer, or snowplowing in winter, yard work is time-consuming and physically demanding.

What's a Family to do? Call GreenCare for Troops and SnowCare for Troops.

GreenCare and SnowCare are nationwide programs that connect yard-care professionals with Families who have a deployed Soldier, to help the Families with their yard work while the Soldier is away.

The need for the program is apparent, says Joy Westenberg, manager of GreenCare and SnowCare. "The backbones of our Soldiers are our military Families at home," she said. "Without their care, support and love, our Soldiers have a difficult time doing their jobs."

Jeff Wegner of Saint Cloud, MN, a retired chief warrant officer who served

in the first Gulf War, had been looking for a way to continue supporting the troops. He had recently bought a snowplow from a company affiliated with SnowCare for Troops, and that company mentioned the program to him. He was intrigued by the idea.

"In 2010, I started Veteran Lawn Care & Snow Removal," Wegner explained. Now, his business provides services to three Families in the Saint Cloud area.

Brooke Craznetzki, whose husband is serving in Iraq, is on Wegner's route.

"With my hands full with a 6-month-old daughter and two dogs, I'm a pretty busy woman," Craznetzki explained. "I made a call to GreenCare for Troops, and they connected me with Veteran Lawn Care & Snow Removal. They come once a week, and it really helps."

Wegner's services include mowing, trimming, cleaning debris, snowplowing, snowblowing and shoveling.

The program not only helps the military Families, but also gives the volunteers a way to thank the troops. "[Soldiers and their Families] are making sacrifices for my Family and me, and I want to give them a little peace of mind," emphasized Wegner. "They deserve whatever support they can get from their community." 📍

To learn more about GreenCare for Troops and SnowCare for Troops, visit ProjectEverGreen.com. You'll find links to these programs on the home page.

Let It Snow

In its first winter, SnowCare for Troops attracted more than 800 volunteers in the snowbelt areas of the nation. More than 700 military Families participated. SnowCare's recent partnership with THE BOSS, a sponsor of the program, has proved to be a true blessing. "After all, they're protecting our freedom," said Mark Klossner, marketing director for THE BOSS. "Plowing their driveway is the least we can do."

extreme healing

Operation Mend Provides Free Surgery and Support to America's Most Severely Wounded Warriors

BY AMANDA POWERS

Of the organizations designed to help reintegrate Soldiers into the civilian world, only a few address both physical and emotional needs. One unique example is Operation Mend, a medical program that has changed the lives of nearly 50 military personnel since its inception in April 2007. ¶ Operation Mend is a collaboration between Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles, CA, and Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX. The program provides free medical services, including reconstructive surgery, to wounded Soldiers and Veterans in all branches of service. ¶ Foundations spoke to program founder Ronald A. Katz, an inventor, philanthropist and board member of the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center.

What is Operation Mend's mission?

To provide Wounded Warriors with the best care that military medicine and the private sector have to offer.

How are patients chosen to participate?

[Mainly] by referral from the Brooke Army Medical Center. We also have patients from Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and patients who are out of the service now, but who contact us because they are desperate to have their faces, hands or some other severe injury repaired.

In your opinion, what makes Operation Mend unique?

One thing is that it's a community-involved program. We have 40 Families who have volunteered to be a "Buddy Family" for each patient. From the minute a patient gets off the plane, there is someone to meet them, and someone who takes them to every appointment and waits for them. These Buddy Families maintain a connection with the patient during their entire stay, so there's kind of a cocoon of care.

What is your favorite part about being involved in Operation Mend?

It's seeing a boy who has no hands, and one eye is blind, and the other eye is pretty well closed—[suddenly] seeing his eyes open, and seeing the [positive] change in his personality.



Operation Mend founder Ronald A. Katz (right) with GEN (Ret.) David H. Petraeus.

Do you have any advice or encouragement for military personnel who are considering participating in Operation Mend?

Ask your caregiver to call us directly. We'll see if you are a candidate. We actually seek out Wounded Warriors through the Wounded Warrior regiments. Retired Service Members are entitled [too]. They shouldn't have to live with terribly debilitating wounds that lead to depression. They should come to UCLA, and we'll give it everything that we have.

Is there anything that Americans should know about the hardships Wounded Warriors go through?

That no matter what they look like, they are human beings with feelings. It's wonderful to be able to see that. 📍

Dr. Timothy Miller

Surgeon for Operation Mend

Dr. Timothy Miller is the chief of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at UCLA Medical Center, where Operation Mend is based. A military Veteran himself, he has worked at UCLA for 30 years and enjoys having the opportunity to give back to Veterans.

Of the Wounded Warriors you have met through Operation Mend, whose story and recovery has impacted you the most, and why?

I couldn't select any one patient. I think that all of them are amazing young men and women. They've experienced a great deal of trauma, and being able to put them back together—reconstructing them—I think you can see a very real difference in their attitude, their self-esteem and ultimately, their productivity.

What is your favorite part about being involved in Operation Mend? Since you've been doing it for four years, what's the most exciting thing for you?

The personal relationship with [them]. You get to know them very well after that many operations, and it's a relationship—a very good relationship. The kind that really means a great deal.

big fears come in small packages



Rachel Latham and her son Alex, 7.

Deployment. Depression. A 7-year-old faces grown-up problems.

BY RACHEL LATHAM

From 2008 to 2009, my husband, Ken Latham, was on his second deployment. During that time, our youngest child, Alex—then 4—became convinced that his daddy had died in combat and that I just wasn't telling him. For two weeks, he went through a mourning process, until I was able to arrange a phone call between them. The experience taught me how important it is to be aware of your child's feelings.

My husband, a sergeant first class in the Tennessee Army National Guard, deployed for the third time a few months ago. I wondered how the children would handle it. They're a little older now—Alex is 7, Angele and Patrick (twins) are 13, and Catie is 15—and I hoped their added maturity would help them adjust better this time. But I learned that deployment can be difficult for kids of any age.

A few weeks after Ken left, Alex became very sick with strep throat, scarlet fever and croup—all at once. It took a while for him to get well, but, after he had physically recovered, his personality hadn't returned. He wasn't back to his mischievous self. Over the following month, he was unhappy, had no appetite and was always tired. He told Ken via Skype that he didn't know how to "get un-sad." The fears he'd developed during previous deployments

had returned—he worried constantly about Ken getting hurt.

Ken and I weren't sure how to help him. We decided to wait one week, and if he didn't improve, we would find a counselor. During that week, I focused on his nutrition, rest, routine and encouragement. I canceled outside activities and we just spent time together—the four children, me, and Ken via Skype whenever possible. That effort helped a lot. After a few weeks, Alex was back to his spunky self.

That period led us to the third month of the deployment. I kept trying to calm their fears as necessary, and I watched for signs that they might need outside help. The kids have different ways of coping. Catie tries to keep the peace and stresses over any anxiety in the home. Angele stays focused by working on projects. Patrick is mostly even-tempered, but occasionally explodes over small things. I try to balance their needs.

Since this tour is less intense than previous tours, Ken and I are able to Skype on a fairly regular basis, and I'm able to share daily details with him. He resolved a feud between the girls via Skype. Not all military Families can do that regularly, but I would encourage it whenever possible. It keeps the kids aware that even though one parent is absent, the two parents are still a team.



Guard Family Resources

MilitaryOneSource.com
MilitaryHomeFront.dod.mil
dcoe.health.mil

Deployment affects every day of our life. One TV news flash about war (whether in the same country as Ken or not) can raise the kids' stress level for days.

I learn things from my children's prayers. Although most days, they say things like, "Dear Lord, please keep my daddy safe," one day, Alex said, "Dear Lord, please don't let my daddy get trampled by camels." He was serious. It reminded me that they think differently from adults.

While I'm concerned about their ability to handle deployments, I wouldn't be sharing the whole story if I didn't mention how resilient they are and how proud they are of their father. I'm deeply moved when the American Flag goes up at an event, and my children are the first to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance or national anthem. They say the words loudly and clearly, and mean it from the bottom of their hearts. They know the sacrifice and preciousness of freedom.

ADAM LIVINGSTON



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is a diverse division focused on the care of Soldiers and their Families. Some of the programs we handle are: Child and Youth Services, Spouse Employment and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program. We have several other programs that are equally as important, and we continue to expand our role in Soldier and Family care issues and Deployment Cycle Support.



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If you need information about these programs or have comments about *Foundations* magazine, please send them to ngb-sfss@ng.army.mil.