



Army Strong Community Center

Connecting Soldiers, Families, & Communities

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN BRISTOL, CT



SEPTEMBER 2013

September is National Preparedness Month Are you prepared?

Throughout September there will be activities across the country to promote emergency preparedness. More than 3,000 organizations – national, regional, and local public and private organizations – are supporting emergency preparedness efforts and encouraging all Americans to take action. Would you be ready if there were an emergency? Be prepared: assemble an emergency supply kit, make your emergency plans, stay informed, and get involved in helping your family, your business, and the community be ready for emergencies.

- **Information to Get Ready:** key steps to emergency preparedness, including: being informed, making a plan, building a kit, and getting involved. [[Click Here](#)]
- **Information for Older Americans:** information specific to Older Americans and tips on how to prepare for emergency situations. [[Click Here](#)]
- **Information for People with Disabilities:** information specific to Americans with disabilities and other access and functional needs regarding emergency preparedness. [[Click Here](#)]
- **Information for Pet Owners:** information for pet owners and suggestions for proactive pet emergency preparedness. [[Click Here](#)]
- **Family Emergency Plan:** intended to help families document information necessary after an emergency. [[Click Here](#)]
- **Emergency Supply List:** A comprehensive list of suggested materials to use in order to prepare for emergencies in one's home. [[Click Here](#)]

For more information, contact the ASCC or visit

Ready.gov

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OFFICE HOURS:
Monday–Friday, 8am–5pm



Army Strong Community Center (ASCC) is an Army Reserve Family Program



Stand Down 2013

Heroes for the Hungry

Friday, September 6, 2013 | 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

ShopRite
943 Wolcott Street
Waterbury, CT 06705

Friday, September 6, 2013 | 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Shop Rite
1200 Farmington Avenue
Bristol, CT 06010

Local Heroes Chili Cook-off, featuring Police, Fire and Armed Forces Members to kickoff regional food drive to support local food banks.

For more information, contact the Army Strong Community Center. ★

Family Fun Day

Saturday, September 14, 2013 | 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Terryville Fairgrounds
Town Hill Road
Terryville, CT 06786

Youngsters and adults will have the opportunity to explore a variety of activities at this free event.

For more information and a list of participants, visit Facebook page: [Family Fun Day: Learn Through Play](#) or visit the [CT Kids and Family](#) website. ★

Friday, September 20, 2013 | 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Department of Veterans Affairs
287 West Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Please arrive by 12:00 PM to access service. This annual, state-wide event allows Veterans, especially homeless and low income, direct access to service providers, including but not limited to medical screenings, veteran benefit information, legal and motor vehicle assistance, employment and education assistance. Free bus transportation available from designated areas.

For more information, visit <http://www.ct.gov/ctva/cwp> or you may contact the Army Strong Community Center for transportation schedule and veteran registration. ★

Honor and Remember

CT Run for the Fallen 2013

Saturday, September 21, 2013 | 6:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Snow School
299 Wadsworth Street
Middletown, CT 06457

All are invited to come out and run in honor of our fallen heroes and their loved ones. Runners will run a designated course totaling 64 KM for each of CT's 64 fallen heroes. There are activities and commemorations at the school for those non-runners.

For more information, visit [Run for the Fallen CT](#) or contact the Army Strong Community Center. ★

Veterans Charity Golf Event Honoring Tuskegee Airman

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will host the 5th annual Golden Kielbasa charity golf event on September 27th, to benefit Connecticut War Veterans.

This year's guest of honor is New Britain resident [Connie Nappier, Jr.](#), who served as a bombardier/flight navigator with the famed World War II African-American bomber group known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Mr. Nappier was a 2007 recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal along with 300 of his surviving comrades. The lessons of his inspiring journey are as important today as they were during World War II. The 2012 Hollywood film *Red Tails* immortalizes the story of the Tuskegee Airmen. Mr. Nappier said "All of us had taken an oath and all of us were true Americans. We were willing to give our lives for our country."

For more information on the Golden Kielbasa Veterans Open, contact Tournament Director Dennis Buden at dennis@goldenkielbasa.org or (860) 558-0514, or visit www.goldenkielbasa.org. ★



RSVP

Community Highlight

Greater Bristol Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a community partner of the ASCC Bristol. It serves the communities of Bristol, Plymouth/Terryville, Burlington and Plainville.

RSVP is one of the largest volunteer networks in the nation for people 55 and over. You can use the skills and talents you've developed over the years, or learn new ones while serving in a variety of volunteer activities within your community.

Service opportunities are as diverse as the communities in which volunteers serve and may include:

- Supporting local veterans initiatives
- Delivering meals to the homebound elderly and disabled
- Tutoring and mentoring youth
- Serving at local soup kitchens and food pantries
- Teaching conversational English
- Coaching developmentally challenged individuals

One of their newest initiatives is providing volunteers to work on the Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Fund in Bristol, which is housed in the ASCC Bristol.

The Greater Bristol RSVP is looking to expand their program in the way of veterans / military initiatives, and is looking for enthusiastic and qualified volunteers to work with them.

If you are interested or would like more information, contact Kathy Cayer, Director at (860) 584-9533. ★

A Veteran's Journey to Recovery Leads to Giving Back

Sergeant First Class Micah Welintukonis is an Army veteran from Coventry, CT. Micah, a combat medic, was on his third tour of duty when he was severely injured by a suicide bomb while rushing to the aid of injured American soldiers on July 9, 2012. National Geographic was in Afghanistan taping the 6 part series 'Inside Combat Rescue' at that time. Micah's rescue was featured in the premier episode of Inside Combat Rescue.

Sgt. Welintukonis was so grateful for the support he and his family received from veterans organizations during his lengthy and difficult recovery, that he wanted to give back to help others veterans. He decided to organize a 60 mile walk to raise funds and awareness for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, and Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). A number of veterans, members of local communities, ASCC Bristol, television and radio personalities, newspaper reporters, and local politicians joined Micah in the 60 mile walk. The walk began in Willimantic on July 9, 2013, the anniversary of his injury, and ended in West Hartford on July 12th. All The money raised was donated to the VFW, American Legion, and WWP.

Micah is hopeful this walk will set an example for other veterans: "That no matter what the circumstances are, we can, and will soldier on. My walk, and who ever joins me will stop at every VFW and Legion. It will start at the VFW in Willimantic CT, then to the Legion in Coventry, Vietnam Memorial, and Vernon/Rockville. It will continue to both posts in Manchester, East Hartford, Hartford Posts, and War memorial, West Hartford War memorial end in West Hartford American Legion."

Contact Micah via email at sgtkonis@yahoo.com. ★



Tax Filing Deadline for Veterans—from Bristol Assessor's Office

The following information is supplied by the Bristol Assessor's Office and should be used as a general reference for those living outside of Bristol. Please check with your own local Assessor's office for your municipality's specific rules.

Veterans

Veterans who may be entitled to a tax exemption must file their DD-214 discharge papers with the City Clerk's Office on or before September 30th to receive an exemption for the October 1, 2013 Grand List. Any Veteran who has previously filed their discharge papers and is already receiving an exemption, does not need to re-file.

Any Veteran who has recently been honorably discharged, or moved to Bristol, with 90 days or more of wartime service, must record their DD-214 discharge papers with the City Clerk's Office and the Assessor's Office on or before September 30th.

Veterans who have served anywhere after August 2, 1990 for 90 days or more of active service and have been honorably discharged, or are a member of the military currently serving honorably, are now eligible for a Veteran exemption. Active Duty Members should contact the Bristol Assessor's Office at 860-584-6240 for details on the required documentation.

Veterans who were discharged after August 2, 1990, and who previously filed their DD-214, must contact the Bristol Assessor's Office in order to activate their exemption.

Effective October 1, 2009, the dates for Operation Earnest Will were changed to the period of July 24, 1987 to August 1, 1990.

Veterans or their surviving spouse with an income less than \$40,900 (married) or \$33,500 (single) may qualify for additional benefits. Qualifying income is the adjusted gross income as determined for the purpose of the Federal Income Tax, plus Social Security and any other income not included in such adjusted gross income. An application for the Additional Veteran Exemption must be completed at the Assessor's Office no later than October 1, 2013. ★

Spouses of deceased Veterans, who have not remarried, are also eligible for the same exemption for which the Veteran was qualified.

Active Duty Military Members

As of July 1, 2008 any active duty member of the armed forces is entitled to the full exemption of one motor vehicle, regardless of the location of the vehicle.

The definition of armed forces is the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force and any reserve component thereof, including the Connecticut National guard performing duty.

Members who are actively serving should contact the Bristol Assessor's Office at 860-584-6240 for details.

Disabled Veterans

Any Connecticut disabled Veteran who receives eligibility notices directly from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs may be entitled to property tax assessment exemptions ranging from \$2,250 to \$4,500 for service related disabilities, depending upon their disability rating.

The Veteran must file form 20-5455 with the Assessor's Office prior to the Board of Assessment Appeals completion of duties, in order to receive the exemption.

New legislation only requires the disabled Veteran to file the initial form 20-5455 to activate any applicable exemptions. Unless there is a change to the Veteran's disability rating, it is no longer necessary to file the form every year. Disabled Veterans who have reached the age of 65 should notify their local Assessor's Office of their date of birth.

Veterans who need a Tax Exemption Notice may call the Newington VA Regional Office at (800) 827-1000 for a replacement form.

For additional information, contact your local Assessor's office for your municipality's specific rules. ★



Building the Resilience of Your Military Family

Long deployment separations, difficult post-deployment adjustments, frequent moves, and major life changes caused by combat-related trauma or loss are just a few sources of stress and adversity for military families. While most families do very well managing the unique demands of military life, you may have noticed that some people and even entire families seem especially strong. They seem to have a remarkable ability to keep moving forward during periods of high stress and recover from traumatic experiences. Some people are naturally more resilient than others, but there are things you can do to improve your own and your family's resilience. This information will help you better understand what resilience is and how you can work to nurture it in your family.

What is Resilience?

One popular definition of resilience is the ability to withstand, recover and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands. Being resilient doesn't mean you avoid emotional pain and suffering when faced with a crisis. Instead, it means you're able to recover and even grow stronger from the experience. Experts are beginning to discover what makes some people more resilient than others and identify things we can do to increase resilience in ourselves and our families.

Characteristics of Resilient Families

In *Strengthening Family Resilience*, (The Guilford Press, 2006), resilience specialist Dr. Froma Walsh identifies nine characteristics that resilient families share. These characteristics reveal the family belief systems, organizational patterns and communication/problem-solving skills that foster resilience in adults and children.

Finding meaning in adversity. Resilient families view crises as shared challenges that together they can understand, manage and make meaningful in some way. They see their emotions as human and understandable under the circumstances and believe in their ability to learn from their experiences and move forward.

Positive outlook. Resilient families have an optimistic rather than pessimistic view of life. Members see each other's strengths and offer encouragement to overcome difficulties or accept what can't be changed.

Transcendence and spirituality. Resilient families have beliefs and values that offer meaning, purpose and connection beyond their personal lives and troubles. They find strength and comfort in their cultural and religious traditions and experience spiritual inspiration in a variety of ways, including nature, the arts, service to others and faith in a higher power.

Flexibility. Resilient families adapt to change. They're able to adjust their family roles and rules to fit new life challenges while maintaining the rituals and traditions that provide stability in their relationships. Their flexibility depends on strong, yet nurturing leadership, guidance, protection of children and mutual respect in the marital relationship.

Connectedness. Resilient families pull together during times of crisis. They're able to function as a team and support each other while respecting individual needs, differences and boundaries.

Social and economic resources. When they can't solve problems on their own, resilient families reach out for help by turning to extended family, friends, neighbors, community services and/or counseling.

Open emotional sharing. Resilient families accept and encourage a wide range of emotional expression (joy, sadness, fear, silliness, etc.) in adults and children. Family members take responsibility for their own feelings and accept others who have different feelings. They value positive interactions and appreciate humor, even as they cope with difficult circumstances.

Clarity. Resilient families practice clear, consistent and honest communication. Family members say what they mean and mean what they say; thus, they avoid sending vague, confusing or mixed messages to each other.

Collaborative problem solving. Resilient families manage their difficulties by working together to understand a problem and identify ways to solve it. They make decisions together in ways that allow family members to disagree openly and then resolve those disagreements through negotiation, compromise and give-and-take. These families seek to repair the hurts and misunderstandings that go along with conflicts and act proactively to solve current problems and prevent future ones. They also learn from their mistakes.



Building the Resilience of Your Military Family (Continued)

Increasing your Family's resilience

If you're currently coping with a stressful situation such as the deployment of a loved one to a combat area or caring for a wounded warrior; if you're suffering from a loss or dealing with a crisis of any kind, there are things you can start doing right now to strengthen your own resilience and model resilience for your children. The American Psychological Association in its publication, *The Road to Resilience*, recommends ten ways to become more resilient when dealing with stress or adversity:

Make connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations or other local groups provides social support and can help restore hope. Assisting others in their time of need can also benefit the helper.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to them. Try looking beyond the present to brighter days a little farther down the line. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

Accept that change is part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on things you can change.

Move toward your goals. Develop some realistic goals. Do something, however small, on a regular basis that helps you move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often learn something about themselves and may find that they've grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, a greater sense of personal strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.

Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trust your instincts helps build resilience.

Keep things in perspective. Even when facing a painful event, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing it out of proportion.

Maintain a hopeful outlook. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try to visualize what you want instead of worrying about what you fear.

Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Raising Resilient Children. Different factors, including temperament and intelligence, influence children's resilience. However, no influence is more important than the parenting they receive. When parents model and teach their children the habits of resilient families, the children will already have many of the skills needed to cope with difficult situations when they occur. Still, during difficult times, children need additional support and attention from parents, even as the parents are dealing with the same difficulties themselves.

You can help build resilience in your children during times of stress or adversity by giving them as much of your time as you can. When you're with them, encourage communication by listening to their concerns and answering their questions with openness, honesty and reassurance.

For more information, visit [Military One Source](#). ★



Outward Bound—Veterans and Service Member Program

Challenge. Adventure. Camaraderie.

For over 20 years, Outward Bound has run wilderness expeditions specifically designed for war veterans. Outward Bound draws on the healing benefit of teamwork, challenge, friendship and the natural world to help with transitioning back to life at home whether you have retired from the military or are home between deployments.

Now, through generous funding, this tremendous opportunity for adventure, challenge and self-discovery is available **TUITION FREE*** to Veterans.

These programs are designed to be fun, fast and challenging. They are suited for those in good physical condition and are opportunities for Veterans and Service Members to:

- Take a break from their busy lives
- Challenge themselves in new ways
- Develop skills that will assist them in re-adjusting to life at home
- Candidly discuss obstacles faced by Veterans and Service Members
- Rediscover their physical and emotional strengths
- Enjoy a unique and inspiring adventure surrounded by fellow Veterans and Service Members in the beauty of the country for which they have served.

Instructors, permits, technical gear, food and travel for course are covered by North Carolina Outward Bound. If a participant enrolls and cancels 30 days or less from the course start a \$250 cancellation fee applies. Participants are required to place a credit card on file at time of enrollment.

Participants are responsible for providing clothing and some gear for the course.

For more information or to enroll call Matthew Rosky, Veterans Program Manager at 866-699-6262 or visit www.ncobs.org/veterans. ★

Homes for Our Troops

Building Homes—Rebuilding Lives

Homes for Our Troops assist severely injured Veterans and their families by raising money, building materials and professional labor, and by coordinating the process of building a home that provides maximum freedom of movement and the ability to live more independently.

The homes provided by Homes for Our Troops are given at **NO COST** to the Veterans.

These specialized homes go beyond ADA compliance. They feature single-level, open floor plans, roll-in showers, roll-under countertops, cook tops, and sinks, and other standard accessibility items. Depending on the severity of the injured sustained by the veteran, the homes may also include such specialized items as lift systems, keyless door entry, and voice-activation controls.

Qualifications:

Veterans must meet the following basic eligibility requirements to pursue the New Home Program (NHP) application process:

- Injured while deployed in combat theatre supporting OEF/OIF/OND
- Retired or intending to retire from the military
- Qualified for the Specially Adapted Housing Grant (SAH) through the Veterans Administration and have already received eligibility letter

Pre-Qualifying to Apply For Assistance:

Before you are able to submit an application for assistance, determination is made if you meet the basic qualifications for assistance from Homes for Our Troops.

[Click here](#) to fill out an online inquiry form. Once you complete each answer and press the "Submit" button, the information is emailed to the Intake Coordinator Cheryl Kaufman. She will contact you within 7 business days via email or phone to discuss program goals and should you qualify will send you the official application for assistance.

For more information, visit <http://www.hfotusa.org>. ★



Armed Services YMCA

Military Outreach Initiative and Respite Care

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

For eligibility requirements or to find a Y Participating in the Military Outreach Initiative, visit <http://www.asymca.org/programs/>. ★

Uniform for Success

Free Suits to Qualifying Veterans

The Gary Sinise Foundation has teamed up with Jos.A.Bank offering free suits to qualifying veterans and service members through the Uniform for Success project.

To qualify, email or fax your DD214 if you're no longer in the military or a statement of service if you are still active, and a copy of the front of your driver's license.

Email contact@garysinisefoundation.org

Fax (818) 432-8999

Make sure to include your full name, full address and best contact phone number and email address in case they need to contact you. On your forms, you may black out the sensitive info (i.e. SSN). YOUR NAME must show and match info on your driver's license.

The vouchers may be redeemed by the intended recipient only, are not redeemable for cash value and may not be used to purchase items other than a two-piece "Executive Collection" suit. All Vouchers will expire on Veterans Day, 11 NOV 13.

If you have any questions, email contact@garysinisefoundation.org. ★

Managing Financial Stress

Are you swimming in debt? So how do you work toward alleviating the stress you feel over your finances? First, come up with a plan. You may have heard the saying "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." This is especially true with personal finances.

Set realistic, flexible goals. Start with short-term goals for more immediate needs such as starting an emergency savings fund. Next, list intermediate goals such as paying off debt, saving up for a down payment on a vehicle or home, or saving for a vacation. Last, list long-term goals such as saving for retirement and funding your children's college education.

Whether you use a spreadsheet, online budgeting software, or simply write down income minus expenses in a notebook, you must find a way to identify where your money comes from and where it goes. Prioritize needs versus wants, and then cut expenses if needed, set spending limits, sell unwanted or unnecessary items, and increase income if possible.

Establish emergency savings. Even if you are only able to save \$10 a month, anything is better than nothing. Emergency funds are especially important to have for unforeseen life occurrences, such as job loss, a vehicle breakdown, unexpected medical expenses, or a PSC move requiring out-of-pocket expenses due to an increase in the cost of living.

Review insurance coverage. Review your policies to ensure that you are properly covered in the event of an emergency. Educate yourself on other types of policies you may need such as renters', flood, and GAP insurance. Shop around and ask about multiple policy (and military) discounts.

Come up with your own debt management plan. Make minimum payments on all debts until you have established your emergency savings fund. List all of your debts, the minimum monthly payments, the total balances and annual percentage rates (APRs). Decide if you want to pay off the smaller balances first or focus on the higher interest debts. You could decide to pay off debts in the order of APR. You would start with the debt that carries the highest interest rate first and work in descending order.

For more information, or to arrange for financial counseling, call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647. ★



Fun Websites for Military Youth

Sesame Street: Games, videos and more.

Military Families Near and Far: create art, make music, send greeting cards — just have fun!

Let it out! Videos, activities and magazine just for military school-age kids.

Deployment Kids: get information and resources.

Military Kids Connect: watch personal story videos, view animated graphic novels, play games and communicate with other military kids.

Tutor.com: Get homework and studying help from a professional tutor for free any time you need it.



Help for Moving Students, Families and Schools

Military Youth on the Move: Helpful ideas and advice for students and parents on everything from deployment, to moving, to finding a job.

School Quest: Students can electronically store their records, search for information on new schools, and find out about school requirements and resources by state.

Student Online Achievement Resources (SOAR): Students can take assessments aligned with state standards in preparation for a move and find out about military installations, schools, and state-specific resources and standards.

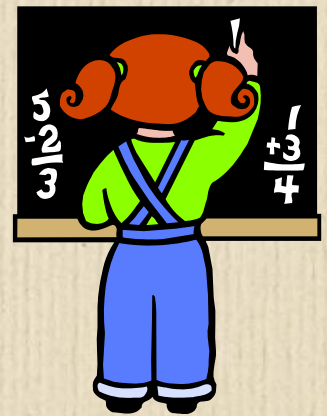
Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3): Help with resolving education transition issues for military children.

Student2Student Mentoring (S2S) program by the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) trains students in middle and high school to assist incoming military youth. ★

Coping with Going Back to School

Suggestions for your child's School Administrators:

- Strive to create a military-friendly environment
- Celebrate 'Military Child' month in April,
- 'National Military Appreciation' month in May
- Military Family Appreciation' month in November
- Plan a school-wide "Red, White and Blue Day" or
- "Thank Your Military Day" to reinforce the values of patriotism and service for your student body.
- Have everyone wear red, white and blue for a day.
- Arrange to have an assembly have speakers talk about their military experiences
- Honor military parents by hosting a luncheon.
- Help to create a school newsletter, blog or magazine to support troops and reinforce patriotism. Create a column that discusses military life and invite military teens (or school staff with military connections) to participate.
- Include deployed parents' email addresses on school distribution lists so they continue to receive newsletters, PTA announcements, sports announcements, etc.



For more information, visit www.kidsconnect.com.

