



Army Strong Community Center

Connecting Soldiers, Families, & Communities

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN CORAOPOLIS, PA



MARCH 2014

Women Veterans Retreat

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

March 21-23, 2014 | Duncansville Comfort Inn
130 Patchway Road | Duncansville, PA 16635

Second Annual Women Veterans Retreat hosted by Department of PA VFW Women Veterans Committee. To honor and celebrate Women Veterans - Guest speakers, women Veteran topics and issues, entertainment, prizes and camaraderie. VA Medical Center staff will be present to offer information regarding eligibility/enrollment and women Veteran programs.

Registration: March 21, 2014 3pm to 5pm at the Comfort Inn - \$20 Registration fee includes all activities, meals and two nights hotel (double occupancy). Program begins at 6pm at the Duncansville VFW Post 8724.

RSVP by March 4, 2014 by emailing PAWomenVets2013@gmail.com. Only the first 100 RSVP's can be accepted. A confirmation letter will be sent with additional information.

For verification, bring your DD214, VA ID, Military ID or Veteran Service



Women's Military History Month

"Let the generations know that women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom. That our resolve was just as great as the brave men who stood among us..."

—WWII Army Nurse



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316th ESC Teen Council

Is your child age 12 – 17? Does your child want to become a better leader? Would your child like to travel 2 – 3 times a year? Have them consider applying for the 316th ESC Teen Council!!

The goal of the 316th ESC Family Programs Office is to provide Teen Council Members with opportunities to enhance their leadership qualities, build resiliency, share ideas, participate in service learning projects and motivate members to give back to their communities.

If your child is interested in applying, please contact:
Ms. Vicki Buck @ vicki.j.buck.ctr@mail.mil or call

YMCA Camp Soles – Big Adventure – Big Fun!!!

YMCA Camp Soles is a 263 acre YMCA resident camp in the Laurel Highland Mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania. YMCA Camp Soles offers high quality and affordable day, resident, and family camp programs. Our campers have the opportunity to try their hand at a variety of activities such as swimming, arts and crafts, rock climbing, archery, zip lining, and much more.

While camp activities are an important part of a summer camp, they are actually the tools we use to teach campers how to build meaningful friendships, create opportunities for life long memories, and lead in the development of a stronger character. Our focus is to instill the core values of Honesty, Caring, Respect and Responsibility among each and every camper.

OPERATION CAMP SOLES July 6 – 11, 2014

This week of friends and fun is an opportunity for campers to have fun in the outdoors, enjoy making new friends, and challenge themselves with new activities all to enhance self-confidence and personal growth. Campers will be able to meet other children and youth

who are going through some of the same issues and be able to learn from each other. Campers are assigned to cabin families based on age and gender.

Our enthusiastic and kid-loving camp staff led our campers' experience to ensure everybody has an emotionally and physically safe summer camp experience. They come from all over the US and all over the world to be part of something great!

Activities will include climbing wall, zip line, low ropes course, nature center, arts and crafts, archery, fishing and boating, swimming, sports, group games and so much more.

Join us for a summer of Big Adventure, Big Fun!!!

Location: YMCA Camp T. Frank Soles 134 Camp Soles Lane Rockwood, PA 15557

Eligibility: Campers must fit these requirements in order to be considered for camp:

Ages: 7-15 years old

Family Military Service: Open to currently serving military personnel and DEERS registered family members of Wounded Warriors and Fallen Soldiers, direct dependents of military personnel with service related death and Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn.

Registration Fee: There will be a \$25 registration fee per camper (max of \$75 per family). Checks can be made out to YMCA Camp Soles. If you cannot afford the fee please contact Ryan Hove for financial assistance. In the event that your camper is not accepted, we will return the registration fee.

Registration is now open!!! To register download the 2014 Operation Camp Soles Registration Packet at their website www.campsoles.org. Please contact the camp office for more information by email at camp-soles@ymcapgh.org or by phone at 814-352-7217.



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Heroes on the Water

WHAT?

Heroes on the Water (HOW) helps our Nation's injured active duty and veterans by providing healing and rehabilitating kayak fishing outings that are physically and mentally therapeutic through our nationwide community of volunteers and donors.

Our unique kayak fishing program allows the participants a chance to decompress from the stresses associated with combat and the physical rigors of rehabilitation. Warriors enjoy these benefits while on guided fishing trips. What looks like a day trip of paddling and fishing is in fact something much deeper and long-lasting.

WHO?

Heroes on the Water serves all injured active duty and veterans from all branches of the United States military and their families.

WHERE?

Chapters are located throughout the country and right here in Western Pa.

WHY?

"Spend a day on the water with a group of soldiers, and you will understand the passion behind this program," commented Jim Dolan, HOW national coordinator. "The injured soldiers are literally captains of their own kayaks – moving around on their own at their own pace, experiencing nature up close, and earning bragging rights for their catch for the day. Kayak fishing is therapeutic for anyone, but particularly for military personnel recovering from injuries and trauma. Our mission is to give these heroes a chance to enjoy a challenging outdoor sport that allows them to decompress from the stresses related to combat and from the physical and mental rigors of rehabilitation and join the kayak fishing band of brothers."

2014 Events

Kayak Safety Training

The Kiski School Saltsburg, PA
Sunday, March 23rd

Lake Arthur

Butler, PA
Saturday, May 31st

Presque Isle Bay

Erie, PA
Saturday, July 26th

Keystone State Park

Derry, PA
Saturday, September 6th

Contact Josh Edmiston, Chapter Coordinator,
Western PA at westernpa@heroesonthewater.org.

For more information and great photos, go to
<http://www.heroesonthewater.org/>



TRICARE Update on Automatic Payments

An electronic fund transfer (EFT) is an easy, low-maintenance option for managing TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) payments. While TRS beneficiaries are required to setup an EFT to pay their premiums, it is not foolproof and missed payments can result in a loss of health care coverage.

One major reason for missed payments is an expired credit card. Check the expiration date on the credit card used for TRS EFTs, and update the regional contractor with any new or pending account information.

Failure to pay any overdue premium amounts will result in suspension of coverage.

Learn more about TRS premiums and EFT options at
www.tricare.mil/Welcome/Enroll/TRS/Premiums.



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Marketing Yourself as a Military Spouse

Searching for a new job can be a daunting task for anyone. Being a military spouse can often make the process even more challenging. Explaining gaps in employment can be difficult, especially if you are concerned about identifying yourself as a military spouse. However, there are many organizations that recognize the value of employing military spouses, particularly companies that participate in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership.

What is MSEP?

MSEP is a part the Department of Defense's Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program. The goal of MSEP is to help military spouses establish employment connections to find a rewarding career by partnering with corporations, many of them Fortune 500 Plus companies. There are currently 162 MSEP Partners.

Applying for a job through MSEP

Spouses can apply for jobs with MSEP Partners through the MSEP Career Portal. You must register to access the portal, by providing:

- Contact information
- Employment preferences
- Work experience
- Educational background

Once you have created an account, you can generate up to five resumes, allowing you to tailor your resume to specific openings or fields. After creating a resume, you are ready to start searching for jobs. A basic search will allow you to search by job title or geographic location. An advanced search can be conducted by company, industry and job type.

Indicating your military spouse status

In the past, you may have wanted to conceal your status as a military spouse from potential employers. When applying for positions with MSEP Partners, please be sure to identify yourself as a military spouse! MSEP Partners recognize the skills that military spouses possess like flexibility, adaptability, and organizational and leadership skills.

A great place to identify yourself as a military spouse is in your cover letter. Your cover letter should expand upon the skills listed on your resume, but it's also a great place to highlight life experiences that can translate into on-the-job skills. Think about your experiences as a military spouse. Maybe you've had to move frequently. Perhaps you've been a "single parent" when your spouse has been deployed. These types of experiences often help you develop qualities and skills a potential employer values, such as:

- Organizational skills
- Resilience, flexibility and adaptability
- Multi-tasking abilities
- Problem-solving skills
- Cultural awareness
- Networking and communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Strong work ethic

If you find yourself in need of a new job, particularly one that is potentially flexible and portable, look no further than the MSEP Career Portal. MSEP Partners value the skills and abilities of military spouses and recognize their challenges as well. Be sure to identify yourself as a military spouse when applying for positions with an MSEP Partner. It can only work to your advantage!

For more information, visit
<https://msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil/>.

New Online GI Bill Comparison Tool

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an online GI Bill Comparison Tool to make it easier for veterans, service members and dependents to calculate their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and learn more about VA's approved colleges, universities and other education and training programs across the country. The GI Bill Comparison Tool provides key information about college affordability and brings together information from more than 17 different online sources and three federal agencies, including the number of students receiving VA education benefits at each school.

The GI Bill Comparison Tool can be found at <http://benefits.va.gov/gibill/comparison>.

What's up with that?

75% of people who join the military list education as the main reason they joined. Yet, about 75% of the people who leave the military do not have a degree. What's up with that?

It is hard to make the choice to leave the status quo of your everyday life and do something different – something that requires work. The three main reasons people do not go to school are Money, Time and Fear.

The military helps the member with tuition costs and the Student Loan process is available to anyone. These help overcome the MONEY fear.

Some colleges and universities are very military-friendly and offer programs that are designed to work with you to eliminate the TIME barrier. You can complete your degree entirely online and do it when your schedule allows.

The remaining obstacle – FEAR – is one of the hardest to overcome; mainly, because it relies on self-motivation to conquer the fear of going back to school.

Sometimes the fear stems from not knowing what to expect or how hard the work will be. Those students who take the first step to learn about school find out that they are not alone – everyone else in the class has the same fear. And, college students sometimes are the ones who earn quicker promotions or are selected for the better jobs. College is not easy – if it was, everyone would be doing it. Here are some things to help you understand college a little better.

10 important considerations when selecting your college:

- Does the school have the major you want?
- Is the school accredited? (Regional accreditation is the highest)
- Will the school accept all of your military credits and other school credits?
- Does the school understand military needs? (TDYs, deployments, PSC)
- Understanding costs. There is more to school than tuition (fees and books)
- Are scholarships and grants available?
- Do you want to go in-class or online? Do you know the difference?
- Does the school offer adult, flexible learning formats?
- Does the school offer credit for life experiences?
- How does the school prove it is military friendly?

If you would like help understanding how college fits for you personally, I can provide you a courtesy evaluation of what you already have earned and show you how it would apply to a degree. I call it your roadmap to education success – since I already know where you want to go, all I have to do is evaluate where you currently are (educationally), then draw a roadmap for your completion.

“Education is something that no one can take away from you.”
 – Francisco Gasmen

For more information contact: Willie Woolford, Assistant Director, Bellevue University by email willie.woolford@bellevue.edu; or by phone (402) 557-7632.



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CSF2

The U.S. Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program has released the next edition of the quarterly newsletter. Some great info and stories in here for Soldiers, Family members and Army Civilians.

To download the Newsletter, go to <http://csf2.army.mil/downloads/CSF2Newsletter-Issue6.pdf>.

Resilience Tips

Physical – Weekly exercise can protect your brain from the aging process and delay the onset of neuro-degenerative disease. Hence, not only does exercise improve and maintain your physical health, it can improve and maintain your psychological health.

Emotional – The brain and nervous system respond best when given structure. Creating a routine for an important task can focus the brain and body on the necessary steps to achieving success, while lowering counterproductive levels of stress that inhibit emotional balance.

Family – 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.

Social – Effective communication with peers and leaders requires effort and practice. Remember to use the IDEAL model when you are faced with a challenge or conflict.

Spiritual – Some would contend that interacting with animals builds the spirit. Research in the human-animal bond support the idea that animals make us more human. Spending time with your pet is probably good for both of you.



Find Warming Centers Using Your Cell

When the mercury dips, many communities open warming centers to help people with heating problems escape the frigid weather. Warming centers can be found in your area library, police station, senior center or school. Operating hours and accommodations at warming facilities vary, so check with the facility before you go.

Many open centers coordinate with the federally mandated phone information system to communicate availability information. Locate a warming center near you by calling 2-1-1 or 3-1-1. Another way to find shelters is through FEMA's [text message program](#). Just text SHELTER and your zip code to 43362 (4FEMA).

For more information, visit <http://www.ready.gov/>.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

The Affordable Care Act requires you to maintain basic health care coverage—called minimum essential coverage. Beginning in 2014, if you do not have minimum essential coverage, you will have to pay a fee for each month you are not covered. The TRICARE program is considered minimum essential coverage.

For more information, visit <http://www.tricare.mil/aca>.

Pay Information

To request pay information, visit <http://www.dfas.mil/> or if you need your W2 or a Form 1099, visit <http://www.dfas.mil/contractorsvendors/taxinfo.html>.

United Healthcare Military and Veterans

If you've recently received a letter from **United Healthcare**, and have questions about your policy, primary care managers, automated payments, etc., go to <http://www.uhcmilitarywest.com> or call (877) 988-9378.



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milConnect

milConnect is a web application provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) that offers sponsors, spouses, and their children (18 years and older) access to their personal information, health care eligibility, personnel records, and other information from a centralized location.

Available since December 2008, this application allows beneficiaries to review personal, health care, and personnel information from one reliable source, the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).

Currently, sponsors and eligible beneficiaries, who are age 18 or over, are able to perform the following functions:

- Update contact information in DEERS
- View current health care enrollments
- Manage TRICARE enrollments
- Locate the nearest Military ID card issuing facility
- View personnel information
- Transfer education benefits to eligible family members under the Post 9/11 GI Bill
- View ID cards
- View Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance information (except Marines and Coast Guard)
- Obtain proof of insurance if currently in a TRICARE managed program
- Find answers to frequently asked questions about health care eligibility and more

For more information, visit <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect>.



6 Tips to Prepare for Blackouts

1. Follow energy conservation measures to keep the use of electricity as low as possible, which can help power companies avoid imposing rolling blackouts.

2. Fill plastic containers with water and place them in the refrigerator and freezer if there's room. Leave about an inch of space inside each one, because water expands as it freezes. Chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold during a temporary power outage, by displacing air that can warm up quickly with water or ice that keeps cold for several hours without additional refrigeration.

3. Be aware that most medication that requires refrigeration can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours without a problem. If unsure, check with your physician or pharmacist.

4. Keep your car tank at least half full because gas stations rely on electricity to power their pumps.

5. Know where the manual release lever of your electric garage door opener is located and how to operate it. Garage doors can be heavy, so know that you may need help to lift it.

6. Keep a key to your house with you if you regularly use the garage as the primary means of entering your home, in case the garage door will not open.

For more information, visit <http://www.ready.gov/>.

Involve Your Kids in Military Saves!

It's never too early to teach the importance of saving to your children, and Military Saves Week is a great way to get children involved in savings! Along with teachable moments like having children save their tooth fairy money, or encouraging them to save a portion of their allowance in piggy bank, Military Saves Week can be a fun, teachable experience for your child to learn about the importance of financial planning.

For more information, visit <http://militarysaves.org>.



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The Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program launches new social media platform for Soldiers, their Families and Army Civilians



ARLINGTON, Va. — Today the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) program launched a new social media platform, called ArmyFit™, for Soldiers, their families and Army Civilians.

ArmyFit™ is designed to offer members of the Total Army with tools and resources that will help them be more self-aware, and therefore have the ability to begin the process of self-development and self-improvement.

“Being Army fit is a state of mind in addition to having a strong physical capability,” said CSF2 Director, Col. Kenneth Riddle. “The ArmyFit™ online platform is designed to build one’s comprehensive fitness across all areas of strength: social, emotional, spiritual, family and physical. ArmyFit™ will help our Army Family be Army Strong both physically and psychologically.”

Understanding that self-awareness is key to self-improvement, the user begins by taking a scientifically-validated self-assessment survey, known as the Global Assessment Tool (GAT 2.0). Once the user receives his/her results in the five areas of strength on the GAT 2.0, they then receive recommended tools and resources tailored to them within the ArmyFit™ environment.

ArmyFit™ is tailored to an Army audience, making the platform one-of-a-kind. Recognizing that Soldiers, their Families and Army Civilians face unique challenges as part of Army life, CSF2 wants to ensure members of the Total Army have what they need to be successful throughout their careers. “The tools and capabilities of ArmyFit™ enable Soldiers, their families, and civilians to take control of their self-development in all dimensions of strength,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Trice, CSF2 Program Manager at Fort Carson, Colo. “I’ve provided Resilience Training to Soldiers at my unit, and I know that ArmyFit™ is an excellent supplement to formal resilience and performance training.”

“In addition to online tools and resources, ArmyFit™ also provides an opportunity for our Soldiers and their Families to connect virtually,” said Riddle. “With constant moves and deployments, it’s often hard to connect with others that understand what you may be going through. Being able to share improvements in the various areas of fitness, compete against each other in friendly competitions, and be part of this community, will help our Soldiers and their Families feel connected.”

CSF2 plans to keep adding new content and functions to ArmyFit™ over the coming months. These include the ability to synch a personal activity monitor’s data with the site to chart a person’s daily physical activity, and use that data to compete with other users. CSF2 is developing a geo-targeting capability that will allow users to locate experts and resources in their immediate area, and to turn virtual communities into local face-to-face group activities.

“The launch of the ArmyFit™ online platform is just the start,” said Trice. “As Soldiers, their Families and Army Civilians engage more with the platform, the more ready and resilient they will be.”

For more information on ArmyFit™, visit <http://csf2.army.mil>.