

DMAVA Highlights

Dec. 3, 2009 Volume 11 Number 42



DMAVA offices will go “A Wassailing” on Dec. 15

DMAVA will go “A Wassailing,” on Dec. 15, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Each office or directorate will participate through offering food and drink. Everyone will be able to pop in to visit the offices around the building continuing in their noshing and nibbling, sipping and nipping at the bounty of treats provided. Don't forget to wear your antlers or Santa sweater to make the day more colorful!

YMCA offers Respite Child Care to deployed Reserve families

By Samantha L. Quigley, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - It's a few hours a month, but the break the Armed Services YMCA Respite Child Care program provides parents with a deployed spouse always is welcome. And since the program's Oct. 1 nationwide expansion, many more parents will benefit.

The Armed Services YMCA, as part of a Defense Department contract, provides health and wellness opportunities, including the Respite Child Care program, for reserve-component servicemembers and their families across the country through their local YMCAs.

This means deploying Guardsmen and reservists and their families are eligible for a full YMCA membership for three months before deployment, the 12 months of deployment, and three months after, said Mike Landers, deputy national director of the Armed Services YMCA.

“This entire health and wellness contract was designed for them because they don't have the infrastructure that the active-duty families that live near major military installations have,” Landers said. “So the YMCAs, the Pentagon thought, would be a great place for them to be able to connect with other Guard and reserve families who have their same circumstance.”

The Respite Child Care program, part of that contract, provides up to 16 hours of child care for families of deployed Guard and reserve personnel. It's meant to be a “short break” for the

see Respite on page 2

Federal Trade Commission offers gift card buying tips at holiday season

By Navy Lt. Jennifer Cragg, Special to American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Because distance often separates extended and even immediate families in military life, gift cards are a popular choice for holiday gift-giving. After all, one size fits all, and the recipients can get exactly what they want from a retailer or restaurant.

But the Federal Trade Commission advises servicemembers and their families, as well as Defense Department civilians and contractors to think before they buy holiday gift cards this season, and buy from sources they know and trust.

“Avoid buying gift cards from online auction sites, because the cards may be counterfeit or may have been obtained fraudulently,” said Carol A. Kando-Pineda, counsel for the commission's consumer and business education commission. So before you shell out

your hard-earned money, you should know a few things first.

“Read the fine print before you buy,” she said. “If you don't like the terms and conditions, buy elsewhere. Ask about expiration dates and fees when you're buying a card.”

This type of information will always appear on the card itself, on the accompanying sleeve or envelope, or on the issuer's Web site. “If you don't see it, ask,” Kando-Pineda cautioned. “If the information is separate from the gift card, give it to the recipient with the card to help protect the value of the card.”

And buyers may not be aware, she added, that merchants often tack fees on to the gift cards -- for activation, maintenance or transactions, for example -- that may be deducted from the card's value at the recipient's end.

Kando-Pineda also recommends that recipients of gift cards shouldn't wait to use them. “Use your card as soon as you can,” she said. “It's not unusual to misplace gift cards or forget you have them. Using them early will help you get the full value.”

She noted that if a card does expire, the recipient should contact the issuer. “They may still honor the card,” she said, “although they may charge a fee to do that.”

Anyone who has a problem with use of a gift card should contact the company that issued it as soon as possible, Kando-Pineda said. If you can't resolve the problem at that level, she added, file a complaint with the appropriate authorities. If that doesn't fix the problem, she said, contact the Federal Trade Commission through its Web site or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) toll-free. Complaints also may be filed with your state's attorney general.



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Morris County Commerce Chamber initiates "Operation Appreciation"

Morris County Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Brighton Cromwell and the United Way of Morris County/Front Line Fund announce "Operation Appreciation."

This program will send hundreds of care packages to the U.S. troops deployed overseas. The Chamber is seeking donations of items to include in the packages which will be assembled on Dec. 11 and shipped with a personal message to individual military members whose names have been provided to the group.

Call Michele Farah at 973-539-3882, ext. 231 to arrange donation drop off or to volunteer to pack boxes.

Items needed include: scarves and gloves, toothpaste, sealed lip balm, roll-on deodorant, travel size foot powder and moist towelettes, single serve packets/boxes of hot or cold cereal, individually wrapped beef jerky, energy bars, gum, candy and more.

Respite Care

continued from page 1

parent or guardian responsible the child's care, Landers said, and not a substitute for full-time or daily care.

"The respite care was designed to be an opportunity for the mom, whose husband is deployed, or the [dad] whose wife is deployed, to be able to drop their kids off to just have a little peace and quiet, to go to the commissary, to go shopping, to do whatever they need to do," Landers said.

During the first year, however, only the families in 10 pilot states were able to take advantage of the program, which must be offered through state licensed and certified programs and is free to parents. More than 220 children were served. Since Oct. 1, when the program expanded to all 50 states, another 200 children have taken advantage of the program.

"We saw a pretty significant uptick in the demand during the month of October," he said. "There are hundreds and hundreds of YMCAs that are now signed up to do this. I think we'll see a big uptick for the remainder of the year."

Armed Services YMCA officials said they would like to see those using the program establish a monthly routine. This, they explained, makes it easier for the participating YMCAs, since most don't have much excess capacity in their child care programs.

Say "Thanks" to the troops

If you go to this web site, <http://www.lets saythanks.com>, you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to a member of the armed services.

DMAVA Green

By Tech. Sgt. Barb Harbison, Public Affairs Specialist

The holidays are here and many of us decorate our homes, office areas, and places of worship to show our spirit. Rather than going out to purchase more and more items that will end up in the landfill, why not find ways to decorate cheaper and greener?

According to Earth911.com, "The gift wrap industry is a big business – consumers spend almost \$2.6 billion annually on the paper, bags and trinkets that adorn our presents. According to Eco-Chick.com, if every American family wrapped just three presents in reused materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields."

Old cards: cut to use as gift tags; use doublestick tape and glue to the front of plain gift bags from the craft store; attach to a small piece of folded cardstock for a place card.

Wrapping paper: Iron gently with a warm iron to use again; use things like newspaper or old maps; color or stamp brown paper grocery bags.

Green your dinner table by using cloth napkins, tablecloths and placemats instead of paper. Throw them in the wash and reuse them repeatedly over the season and year after year. Purchase complimentary colors and patterns so you can mix and match your table settings so each party looks different.

A few easy decorations: hang cookie cutters from pretty ribbons; string popcorn with occasional whole cranberries for color on fishing line (after the holidays you can hang it outside for a feast for your feathered friends); bowls of nuts or fruit on the table for a centerpiece – pretty for now, snacks for later; bring in branches of evergreen, berries, acorns, pinecones, dried flowers, moss and bark to decorate the table or mantle, accentuate it with ribbons, crystals, small mirrors, stones, candles and other things that you find around the house.

Truly the season for keeping green!

Quotes

A bore is a man who deprives you of solitude without providing you with company.

--Gian Vincenzo Gravina

Death is a distant rumor to the young.

--Andrew A. Rooney

The intelligent man finds almost everything ridiculous, the sensible man hardly anything.

--Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Reading is sometimes an ingenious device for avoiding thought.

--Sir Arthur Helps

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Wounded Soldier and Family
Hotline
1-800-984-8523

Families

Organizations work together to create program for life, parenting skills to military

The Somerset Council has received a grant from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Addition Services and will be working with the National Guard Family Program to provide a multi-session family program that will provide parenting skills for parents and life skills for their children ages 6-14 years old.

The Military Family Nights FREE Program includes: family dinner at each session; babysitting services available for younger siblings; gifts/incentives for participating; it is based on the nationally researched program, Strengthening Families; for military families only, all branches welcome; for families with at least one child: 6-11 years old: 14-session program, 10-14 years old: 7-session program.



The Military Family Nights Program provides skill-building sessions and fun family activities that will help parents and caregivers encourage good behavior and protect against substance abuse; help youth deal with stress and handle peer pressure; and help the families build family communication and understand family values.

To sign up for the Military Family Nights Program or for more information, contact Anthony Ferrera at 908-722-4900 or e-mail at Anthony.Ferrera@somersetcouncil.org. Space is limited.

Reunion Brief for Aviation units at Lawrenceville Dec. 13

On Dec. 13, there will be a reunion brief at the Lawrenceville Armory at 10 a.m. for the returning Aviation units. This will take place prior to the Holiday party. Return dates may change and this may be the only briefing the Family Programs Office does, so they ask that everyone please make an effort to attend.

State Family Programs

101 Eggert Crossing Road, Lawrenceville
Toll-free number 1-888-859-0352
Family Assistance – 609-530-6834/6884
State Youth Coordinator – 609-530-6836
Military Family Life consultants – 609-530-6835/6886
Yellow Ribbon Program – 609-530-6846/6853/6859
Military OneSource 1-800-342-9647; NJ 609-530-6867
Fax – 609-530-6871

Adopt a Family open to military for holiday season

From the desk of Marie Durling, Family Programs Specialist

If you or someone you know is in need of toys or assistance for the upcoming holiday, please e-mail or call me as soon as possible – marie.durling@us.army.mil or 609-530-6884. I am compiling a list and ALL information will be in confidence unless I ask you if it's okay if the donating organization works with you directly. If not, they will go through me. I have quite a few organizations that are willing to "Adopt a Family" for the holidays. Please let me know if one of them can assist you. I will do all I can to assist any service member in need.

Military children's artwork to be featured in publications

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) seeks to promote the Arts by featuring the great works of military children. Each year children are asked to submit work that can be utilized in the MCEC's publications, conferences, and other activities. Included in the request for work from military-connected children, kindergarten through high school, are artwork, film, and writing (essays, poetry, and short stories).

Artwork in the visual arts is featured at the MCEC's national conference each year. It is utilized in the *On The Move* magazine, the annual calendar, the conference program, and other MCEC publications.

Writing, including essays, poetry, and short stories, is featured in the national conference program, the *On The Move* magazine, the annual calendar, and other MCEC publications.

Film is considered for the "Reel Military" Youth Film and Video Festival at the national conference each year.

For a complete set of the 2010 *Call for the Arts* rules and forms for all categories (Artwork, Writing, and Film & Video), click on <http://www.militarychild.org/child-student/arts/>.

ASYMCA holding annual art, essay contest

The Armed Services YMCA is holding its annual art and essay contest for children and teens of active duty or retired members of Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard or National Guard/Reserve families.

To find rules and entry forms, visit <http://www.asymca.org/Programs.aspx?pgmID=27&mid=27>.

Check out Blue Star Flag Program

Grantham University's Blue Star Flag program has been providing Blue Star Flags to Service members and their families since 2006. Grantham University is also offering scholarships and grants to Servicemembers and veterans. For further information about the Blue Star Flag program, please go to: <http://www.mybluestar-flag.com>.

Sports

Jets tickets available for Jersey Guard members

Since the start of the season the New York Jets have been offering discounted tickets to all members of the NJARNG. They are enhancing the offer even further. The Jets will be offering \$15 tickets to all members of the NJARNG for their 2 remaining home games. There is no specific distinction in the number of tickets you can request. However, to allow for participation for the greatest number of soldiers, there will be a limit of 6 tickets per soldier per game.

If you wish to request tickets, call Ken Seal in the marketing office at 732-974-4883. Or call Shaun Smith at 732-974-4882 or Sgt. Biggins at 732-974-5945.

Game date	Opponent	Request suspense
Dec. 20	Atlanta	Dec. 11, noon
Jan. 10, 2010	Cincinnati	Dec. 23, noon

Once you have made a request for tickets, you are obligated to pay for them, regardless of whether or not you are able to attend the game. The only exception to this is if you cancel your request prior to the suspense for that particular game.

Payment for the tickets will be cash or money order ONLY. We will collect all the money and write one check to the Jets.

Picking up of tickets will be the responsibility of the requestor. The two pick up locations will be Sea Girt or Fort Dix. You may request tickets for any of the games at any time, prior to the suspense. Depending on the number of requests for any given game, it is POSSIBLE that we could exceed our allotment of tickets so it is not recommended that you wait to make your request if you know which game(s) you wish to attend.



The First Tee announces program for military kids

The First Tee offers golf instruction combined with character and life skills education to children of National Guard and Reservists living across the country. This is part of an initiative with the DoD. The goal is to welcome at least 6,000 school-aged participants from military families to The First Tee to the no-cost programs. No equipment or prior golf experience is necessary.

New sessions start throughout the year and dates and times vary by locations. For chapter information or to download a voucher, visit www.thefirsttee.org.

New Jersey has five chapters: The First Tee of Essex County (Newark), The First Tee of Greater Atlantic City (Galloway), The First Tee of Greater Trenton (Hamilton), The First Tee of Middlesex and Somerset Counties (Somerset) and The First Tee of Monmouth and Ocean Counties (Wanamassa).

Here's your opportunity to see the Nets play b-ball

NETS Tickets are available - \$40 per tickets, at the IZOD Center. There are only four tickets per game available, located in section 116, row 15 and seats 7-10; tickets will only be sold in pairs. Check the seating chart at <http://www.izodcenter.com/seatingchart.aspx?disp=1&id=192>

Opponent	Dates and Times
Charlotte Bobcats	Dec. 4, 8 p.m.
Golden State Warriors	Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.
Oklahoma City Thunder	Dec. 28, 7:30 p.m.
L.A. Clippers	Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee Bucks	Feb. 10, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto Raptors	Feb. 19, 8 p.m.
Washington Wizards	Feb. 28, 6 p.m.
Sacramento Kings	March 24, 7:30 p.m.
Detroit Pistons	March 26, 8 p.m.
San Antonio Spurs	March 29, 7:30 p.m.

Contact Fort Monmouth Tickets N' Tours directly at 732-532-3077 or stop by building 1010.

More tickets to see the Jets

From Picatinny Arsenal: Tickets for both dates can be ordered by phone and put on either a MasterCard or Visa or you may stop by the "Take Off" Center, Bldg 34, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.; 973-724-4014. The tickets come in blocks of 4 seats together. If you have more than 4 people, we will try and seat you in the same section but more than 4 seats will not be exactly together. There are a limited number of tickets available. There are at least 100 for each game.

Jets vs. Atlanta - Dec. 20 - tickets are upper level, \$17 each; parking is not included. (Most parking is now off site due to construction of the new stadium.) Tickets go on sale on Dec. 3. Deadline is 3 p.m., Dec. 11 as long as tickets remain available. You will be e-mailed when tickets are available for pickup - probably on Dec. 16-17.

Jets vs. Cincinnati - Jan. 3 - tickets are upper level, \$17 each; parking is not included. Tickets go on sale Dec. 3. Deadline is 3 p.m., Dec. 22. You must be available the week after Christmas to pick up your tickets. They should be in around Dec. 29.

Interesting info!!

Were you one of the members of the military or a veteran who stopped by an Applebee's on Veterans Day and had a free meal on the restaurant? You were one of many. Applebee's served more than 1 million free meals on Nov. 11 to the veterans and current military members who lined up at their 1,900 restaurants across the country. The most popular item of their special menu for the day? The 7 ounce house sirloin!

Veterans & Military

National Guard asked to spread the VA "word"

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - The National Guard can play an important role in helping to spread the news about the Veterans Affairs Department's new programs to veterans in their communities, VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki told a National Guard conference just outside the nation's capital today.

Despite a long list of successful new programs this year, only about one-third of the nation's veterans have taken advantage of the services, Shinseki told more than 2,400 participants in the National Guard's first Joint Senior Leadership Conference at the National Harbor.

"We want them to know that VA is here," Shinseki said. "If you have the opportunity to talk about what VA offers, I appreciate some help here, and if you need help getting a VA representative to speak with veterans in your communities, call and we'll provide someone to do that. But I do need your help."

Shinseki highlighted some of VA's efforts this year to enhance education benefits through the Post 9/11 GI Bill and the department's efforts to end homelessness among veterans and to reduce veteran unemployment. VA has the nation's largest integrated medical system, with 153 health care centers with affiliations with 102 university medical schools, the secretary said. VA's electronic health care records also are networked with nearly 800 community-based outpatient clinics in the United States, and VA operates 232 veteran centers, including mobile clinics, to reach veterans in rural areas, he added.

Nearly 300,000 civil servants manage VA's health, benefits and national cemetery administrations to provide care and services for those who've served, Shinseki told the group.

In addition, he said, VA is the eighth-largest life insurance enterprise, with more than \$1 trillion in coverage to more than 7 million clients. In education, VA is behind only the Department of Education in education benefits provided to Americans, with an annual payout of \$9 billion a year. Also, VA guarantees about 1.3 million home loans with a balance of \$175 billion.

But of the 23 million veterans in the United States, Shinseki said, fewer than 8 million are enrolled in VA programs. "In purely business terms, that would describe a 30 percent market penetration," Shinseki said. "Veterans are our clients, so caring for veterans and providing them the services and benefits they have earned is VA's sole reason for existing, yet 70 percent of our market chooses to go elsewhere for support, or they do without."

With support from the National Guard, Shinseki said, he is certain more veterans can learn about what VA has to offer. It's the business of VA to make sure veterans get the benefits and services they've earned, he said. "It's our intent to go after that 15 million part of the population that are not enrolled with us," he said.

VA contacting recently retired, discharged military members

The Department of Defense notifies VA when service members are released from active duty. VA then sends a letter with information about VA benefits and assistance to aid the former service members' transition to civilian life. You can find additional information to help with personal and family concerns, and community readjustment issues here. Visit <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>.

There are also toll-free numbers, VA Web sites, and brochures to help you get the information you need.

Benefits Information 1-800-827-1000

Health Care Eligibility Information 1-877-222-8387

VA launches new Web site

VA recently launched a big website renovation project that will better serve our nation's veterans. The conversion began on Nov. 8, and was completed by Veterans Day, Nov. 11. VA asks visitors to the website to understand that as the new design is implemented across more than 500 VA websites there may be minor errors on some of the 80,000 pages. VA will monitor its web pages after the conversion and make appropriate corrections. Check out www.va.gov.

Stockton College offers training, education programs

Are you an unemployed or underemployed veteran? If you are interested in enrolling in short-term training/education programs, there will be a eligibility meeting at Richard Stockton College, Jimmie Leeds Road, Pomona, N.J., on Dec. 15, from 10 a.m.-noon in Main Campus F Wing, Room 222.

Call Susan Jones at 609-626-5569 or e-mail susan.jones@stockton.edu to register; lunch will be provided to the attendees.

Paperwork to bring with you to the meeting includes: proof of age, social security card, DD Form 214, income and family income (last pay stub, pension record, social security benefits) and birth certificate.

All applicants are required to take a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) unless you have a Bachelor's degree. Your score on the test will determine your eligibility for some programs. Please bring proof of the degree to the meeting.

Course selection: The Department of Labor and Workforce Development web-site lists the classes that are available for funding at <http://lwd.state.nj.us/labor>; click "Career Development" then "Find the Right School". Once there, you would click "Vocational/Technical Education" and click "Get started and Search for Training". By using the drop down menu under Select Occupations, you will see the available training options and the institutions that offer these classes. Familiarize yourself with the available options. Being prepared will allow you to speed-up the process.

Calendar

*Mark your calendar
for February 13.*

*Valentine's Day Weekend Company
Grade and Warrant Officer Mixer
Details coming soon.*

Register for Guard/Reserve retirement seminar Dec. 5

Mark your calendars for a free seminar on Reserve and Guard retirement benefits. It will be held on Dec. 5 at the Timmerman Center, building 5441, 8th Ave., Fort Dix, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is for all Guard, reserve, retirees and spouses.

If you are unsure of what benefits are available to you while you are waiting to receive your retirement check – if you are a “gray area” retiree – this is the seminar for you.

Presenters at the seminar will include military service centers, Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, and various military transition organizations that will cover topics from a Guard/Reserve perspective.

If you are interested in attending, contact Chief Everett Currie at 757-444-7295, ext. 2005 or e-mail Everett.currie@navy.mil.

MTA running train for USMC Toys for Tots Dec. 12-13

On Dec. 12-13, the Military Transport Association (MTA) will run a special train in Northern New Jersey to collect donated toys for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation. Along the route, the train will stop at ten locations where members of the public can drop off toys, board the train to see Santa Claus, experience a variety of working railroad equipment, and meet members of the Marine Corps and MTA.

Members of the public are encouraged to drop off new, unwrapped toys at various collection points along the route in the first two weeks of December. At each stop, one or more businesses or organizations has a large collection box. The web site, <http://www.njoperationtoytrain.com>, lists all the toy drop-off locations and the schedule for the train.

The train will stop in Flanders, Ledgewood, Dover, Rockaway, Maywood, Hawthorne, Wortendyke (Midland Park), Wyckoff, Franklin Lakes, Pompton Lakes, and Butler.

The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November, and December each year and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in the community where the campaign is conducted. The Toys-for-tots website is: www.njtoys-fortots.org.

Veterans Outreach Campaign schedule

The DMAVA Veterans Outreach Campaign has kiosk displays at malls throughout the state and other special events to help veterans and their family members discover and apply for the benefits they are eligible to receive.

January 5*, 6, 7 Cherry Hill Mall

February 2*, 3, 4 Monmouth Mall

*Medal ceremony at 10:30 a.m.

Book fair being held at Picatinny Arsenal Dec. 8

Come enjoy the Books Are Fun book fair held at Picatinny Arsenal Building 34 (by the conference room), Choices Cafeteria on Dec. 8, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

With over 250 great titles at unbelievable prices, you are sure to find something for everyone on your list!

Categories include: children's story books, cookbooks, general interest books, New York Times best sellers, stationery and scrapbooking, music collections, gifts for all ages, early learning products and children's educational products.

First run, top quality products from the world's leading publishers.

Sixers offer Guard nights with “cheap seats”

The Philadelphia 76ers are holding two New Jersey National Guard nights. Come watch the Sixers in the Wachovia Center.

Dec. 9 the Sixers are playing the Detroit Pistons. Ticket prices are \$30 for lower level corners and \$15 for mezzanine center.

To reserve your tickets, fax the order to 215-339-7658, attention Dave Reed, corporate sales manager. Or call 215-218-7822 or e-mail dreed@comcast-spectacor.com.

For more information, contact Marie Durling at 609-530-6884 or e-mail marie.durling@nj.ngb.army.mil.

Deadline

Want to place an event or article in DMAVA Highlights?

Deadline for articles is noon Wednesday.

Send submissions to barbara.harbison@njdmava.state.nj.us.