

family focus



Yonna Diggs
Force Ombudsman

Meeting the ever-changing needs of the Reserve families can often times be challenging for the Reserve Ombudsman. Support groups are a great resource in building coalitions between the community and the military. People helping people has always been the American way.

Support groups can be in the form of spouses helping spouses or good samaritans in the community that have a desire to help. Have you ever thought about how you can help? Here are some ideas on how to get started:

1. Contact your local Ombudsman to get information on how you can work to assist him/her in supporting the families. Let them know what talents and resources that you have readily available and you would like to share.
2. Talk with others in your community about the needs of military members and their families. Engage your church, private party, retired military community, or civic organization.

Many people are looking for ways they can serve our country and everyone can impact the Department of Defense's mission, by donating their time and talents to help those that risk their lives everyday for our freedom. You could establish:

1. Local Food or Clothing Closets - These types of services help tremendously, during times of crisis. Families could be invited to come in and pick out the items that they need.
2. Alliance of Local Tradesman - Tradesman partnerships could provide help in home or car maintenance and repairs at no cost or discount rates to families of deployed Sailors.
3. Partnership of Businesses - Discuss with the local businesses about how they can assist families with donations of items that would benefit the families

You may have other ideas on how you can help. There are many groups that already exist, so do your homework and do not try to re-invent the wheel.

Fighting the War on Terror is a commitment that must be made by all Americans. By utilizing all our resources as a team, it makes the fight, just a little bit easier.

families of reservists

Each month "The Navy Reservist" provides a resource guide for the families of our Reservists. In association with the "Family Focus" column by Yonna Diggs, Navy Reserve Force Ombudsman, a listing of Web sites with specific resources for families is offered. Here are three resources to keep handy in supporting our families:

Keeping up to date on the benefits available to mobilized Reservists and their families is a challenge. However, one Web site has combined a variety of resources to enable Reservists and their families to have one location to link to all available benefits. Benefits Information for National Guard and Reserve Personnel is available online at www.vba.va.gov/EFIF/res_guard.htm and combines dozens of Web sites with benefits information. There is also an e-mail address provided to address specific questions regarding benefits.

The Department of Defense has a great Web site offering information for military members and their families in preparation for a deployment. Deployment Connections at www.deploymentconnections.org provides pre-mobilization and pre-deployment checklists for service members and their families as well as links to a wide assortment of support agencies.

Reservists are among those eligible for extensive discounts for vacation rentals through the Armed Forces Vacation Club. Through a partnership with Morale, Welfare and Recreation, the Armed Forces Vacation Club makes timeshare accommodations from around the world available to military members on a space available basis at greatly reduced prices. To review available accommodations and review the rules regarding use of these facilities, go to www.afvclub.com.

If you know of specific Web sites that are useful for Navy Reserve families, e-mail them to "The Navy Reservist" at nvresfor_tnr@navy.mil.



Photo by PH2 Chad J. McNeeley

An Aviation Boatswain's Mate prepares to rig an arresting gear wire in preparation for early morning flight quarters aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). The aircraft carrier with embarked Carrier Air Wing One One (CVW-11) is underway in the South Atlantic Ocean circumnavigating South America on her way to her new homeport of San Diego, Calif.

Naval Reserve Response to Civilian Employment Information Survey Gaining Momentum

WASHINGTON D.C.—Almost 20 percent of the Naval Reserve Force has responded to the mandatory Reserve component Civilian Employer Information (CEI) survey.

According to LCDR Melanie Kreckovsky, chief of Navy Reserve's assistant for manpower policy, as of July 1 2004, 11,314 Navy Reservists provided their data to the Department of Defense-wide system designed to capture and understand who employs the 1.2 million members of the seven Reserve components.

CEI requires Guard and Reserve members to register information about their civilian employer and job skills in order for the Department of Defense (DoD) to meet three different requirements defined in law.

The DoD is required to give consideration to civilian employment necessary to maintain national health, safety and interest when considering members for recall, ensure members with critical civilian skills are not retained in numbers beyond those needed for those skills and inform employers about the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA).

"Participation in the CEI program is mandatory for all Naval Reservists," said Kreckovsky. "A member of the Ready Reserve who knowingly fails or refuses to provide required employer-related information may be subject to administrative action."

SELRES - Navy Selected Reservists will enter their employer data at <https://nsips.nmci.navy.mil>.

IRR - Navy Individual Ready Reserve can begin entering their employer data on a new Defense Manpower Data Center Web site, at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/Guard-ReservePortal>

a look back



40 years ago

1964 - This was the year the Aviation Reserve Officer Candidate program was established, offering naval aviator training to college students, provided they were at least 17 years of age.



20 years ago

1984 - Fourteen Seabees from Naval Reserve Mobile Construction Battalions 16 and 17 participated in a special 17-day training exercise in Peru. They worked with the Peruvian navy to clear and repair storm damage at a base in Callao.



10 years ago

1994 - To provide Reserve air crews with the best possible training, VFA-305 hosted Lobo Flag '94, a Naval Air Reserve Carrier Air Wing 30 exercise designed to create realistic air combat scenarios.

what's new

A key feature is that the system sends a copy of the risk analysis to the user's supervisor, so that both people can discuss risks and plans, and figure out ways to reduce the risks.

Users can get to ASMIS via the Army Safety Center's home page at <https://safety.army.mil>. Clicking on the banner near the top center of the page that says "Register and log in today ARAS RMIS ASMIS-1" and "Click here to sign-in to our Web-based tools" presents an option of two buttons. The button on the right is for users who aren't Army and who don't have an Army Knowledge Online (AKO) account.

—Derek Nelson, Naval Safety Center Public Affairs

"USA Cares" helps military families in financial need

WASHINGTON – Deployments can put unexpected financial hardships on military families – sky-high telephone bills, unanticipated travel costs, loss of income for Guardsmen and Reservists called to active duty for extended periods are among them.

USA Cares, a nonprofit organization run entirely by volunteers, is committed to helping families who've run into financial troubles while their family member serves the country.

Farah Overman, one of the group's volunteers, said the help provided runs the gamut, from advice about where to go for assistance to outright payments for housing, food, vehicle repairs or other necessities.

For a military wife whose husband was wounded in Iraq, USA Cares paid for a round-trip plane fare so she could be by his side

during surgery in Germany – something the military couldn't do because his injuries weren't life threatening. The group paid for another military wife's hotel room while her husband was being treated for inoperable cancer diagnosed while he was on a National Guard deployment. Before USA Cares stepped in to help, the wife had spent three nights sleeping in her car in the hospital parking lot.

And for another National Guard soldier, a truck driver in civilian life, USA Cares helped stop foreclosure on his truck after his unit was deployed in support of the war on terror.

USA Cares helps direct families to military and other charitable organizations or corporate sponsors looking for ways to support American troops, Overman said. Sometimes the group acts as an intermediary, getting landlords or bill collectors to agree to reduce payments during the deployment or helping the family get a loan to cover expenses. USA Cares has 10 outstanding requests from needy military families that it hopes to support as funding becomes available, she said.

For more information, call (800) 773-0387 or visit the organization's Web site at www.usacares.us.

—Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service