

THE DISPATCH

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DECEMBER 2018

HUNT THE GOOD STUFF

RESOURCES FOR TEXAS GUARDSMEN TO
STRENGTHEN THEIR RESILIENCE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



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(ON THE COVER) A Soldier with the 36th Infantry Division returns from Afghanistan Oct. 20, 2018. (Photo courtesy of the 36th Infantry Division Facebook page)



36th Infantry Division Soldiers fire cannons as part of the change of command ceremony for Maj. Gen. Patrick H. Hamilton who assumed command of the division at Camp Mabry, Texas, Nov. 17, 2018. The ceremony included a traditional inspection of the troops, performances by the 36th Infantry Division Band, and the passing of the 36th Infantry Division flag, which symbolized the transfer of responsibility for the division's estimated 16,000 Soldiers within the Texas Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo By: Staff Sgt. Mark Scovell)



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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

FROM THE TOP

COMMENTARIES FROM TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT LEADERS



COL. JOHN D. LAING
STATE CHAPLAIN OF TEXAS

LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL RESILIENCY FROM A WESTERN MOVIE

I recently watched the 2017 western film, "Hostiles." The story follows several people as they struggle with their pasts. Christian Bale plays Capt. Joseph Blocker, a veteran of the Indian Wars, known for his success and his ruthlessness in battle, who is charged with escorting Cheyenne Chief Yellow Hawk (played by Wes Studi), a former adversary in those wars, back to his ancestral lands in Montana where he is expected to soon die as a result of terminal cancer.

Blocker initially refuses, but when threatened with court martial and the loss of his retirement benefits, reluctantly accepts his mission. Rosamund Pike plays Rosalee Quaid, a frontier woman whose entire family—her husband, two daughters, and baby—is slaughtered by a Comanche raiding party. She is found by Blocker's detail and travels with them.

Rory Cochrane plays 1st Sgt. Thomas Metz, who served with Blocker in the Indian campaigns, and clearly struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder and guilt. Ben Foster plays Sgt. Charles Willis, also a veteran of the plains wars with Blocker's former unit, but he has been charged with murder, and is being transported back to Fort Pierce (from which he deserted), where he will be tried and hanged for his crimes, if found guilty.

Each of the characters deals with his/her past and loss in very different ways. Metz has struggled with nightmares from the horrors of war, has sought to alleviate his anxiety with alcohol and has, on more than one occasion, tried to discuss his feelings with Blocker, who has been less than receptive and largely keeps to himself. It is eventually revealed that Metz feels guilty about how the native peoples were treated by the American government and his own role in the effort to remove them from the west. Unfortunately, he finally gives in to his struggles, and tragically kills himself.

Willis murdered a family with an axe, and appears to have no remorse, presumably because he has learned to dissociate himself from his own actions. This was a coping mechanism he perfected during the frontier wars, but failed to manage or stop using when he returned home. Neither Metz nor Willis dealt with the past in psychologically or spiritually healthy ways. They both appear to be trapped in the past, unable or unwilling to set it aside and live in the present.

As noted, Willis continued to separate himself from his actions, and that dissociative attitude robbed him of his humanity. Metz's self-medication, epitomized

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mized in his constant use of alcohol, was intended to provide a healing balm, but it actually magnified his depression. He was certainly right to reach out to another in order to talk through his struggles, but unfortunately, Blocker was not in a position to help him because he had not yet begun to deal with his own emotions.

Quaid initially struggles to differentiate the Cheyenne she travels with from the Comanche who killed her family. Over time and as a result of numerous interactions, some in which save her life or provide her comfort, she begins to recognize not only the differences in the tribes, but also the individuality of each person. Eventually, she takes parental responsibility for Little Bear, Yellow Hawk's grandson, after both his parents are killed. She represents both those who lump peoples together under corporate guilt in order to demonize them, a psychological coping mechanism that can make military operations easier, but which violates our moral sensibilities and just war theory. But she also represents those who overcome these tendencies and in so doing, recapture the souls they thought they had lost to the violence or horror.

Yellow Hawk could be seen as largely a background figure, representative of what the other characters vilify and hate though grow to respect, but he also has an inner strength and struggles of his own. So in some ways, his character represents the enemy we view as less than [ourselves], but as the story develops, he transforms into the character many of us strive to become. He has a somewhat stoic view of life, an acceptance of the way things are and a recognition of the limits of his own power to change them, yet more importantly, he has a spiritual strength that enables him to embrace his new situation, to forgive the many evils perpetrated against him—even in the present—and to look to the future with hope despite his own deteriorating physical condition.

Blocker's character is perhaps the most complex, or at least the most developed. Over the course of the journey, he transforms from despising his former enemy, to accepting him, to respecting and (perhaps) even appreciating him. That is, he moves from a psychological state wherein he appears locked in the past, to accepting the present—even though he clearly does

not like it—to embracing a new future. He does not forget the past and he acknowledges that it has contributed to where he is now, but he does not allow it to define who he is or who he will be. Both Blocker and Yellow Hawk, and to a lesser extent, Quaid, ultimately developed what we now refer to as spiritual resiliency.

This is something we all need to cultivate in ourselves in order to deal with the normal struggles of life, but especially so in order to process the unusual circumstances/experiences and challenges that military service entails. As the senior chaplain for the Texas Military Department (TMD), I can say with confidence that our Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, and Texas State Guard religious support personnel stand ready to help each of our TMD service members and their families to develop that kind of inner strength and resiliency. We are professionals who offer non-judgmental listening ears for confidential and/or privileged discussion, and if desired, we stand ready to offer advice from the sage wisdom of our spiritual and religious traditions. We are not only committed service members, but are also individual citizens like you, we love and appreciate you, and we pray for you regularly.

The holiday season often includes times of immense joy, and the season speaks to faith, hope and family (in my own tradition, we celebrate God's love and forgiveness offered to humanity), but it can also include emotional challenges. With the end of one calendar year and the beginning of a new, we often reflect on the past year, and look with hopeful expectation to the next, but sometimes the reflection can leave us with struggles mixed with that forward promise. **-D**

If you need to talk with someone, or would like someone to pray with you, please feel free to contact your unit chaplain, or call the TMD chaplaincy hotline at 866-822-7685, option #7.

- FROM THE TOP-

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The Final Countdown

Six things to know about the Blended Retirement System

Story By: Kyle Burns

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

The year is coming to an end and on Dec. 31, 2018, the opportunity for eligible service members to opt-in to the Blended Retirement System (BRS) will close. Texas Military Department (TMD) financial counselors were asked about what that actually means and they brought up some pretty interesting points to consider before 2019.

1. Everyone is different and has different goals. Talk to a TMD Personal Finance Counselor (PFC). They will review your financial goals, run through different career scenarios and help you feel more comfortable about deciding on whether to opt in to BRS. Their goal is to provide you with information to make an informed decision.

2. Don't forget about the wait period. Unlike active duty, there is generally a delay before you collect your National Guard retirement. More than likely, you'll be 60 before you start seeing the fruits of your labor. So, if you joined the National Guard relatively young and retire at the 20-year mark, you'll be roughly 40-years-old. That's a 20-year wait. With BRS, the money you allocate to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) will be actively working for you over the course of that 20 years and could actually earn you more overall.

3. Consider BRS if you're unsure about your future in the National Guard. If you're not sure you'll be making it to 20 years, the BRS might be the best choice for you. Your TSP contributions can be transferred to other retirement plans once you leave the National Guard.

4. BRS gives you greater control of your TSP investment options at a much lower cost. The BRS accounts through the TSP, have a significantly lower maintenance fee compared to other retirement accounts. The BRS puts the power in your hands to decide how aggressively or conservatively your money is invested and you decide how your money grows.

5. Three income sources? Yes, please. As Guardsmen we have a unique situation. Some of us may have another civilian profession in which we have a retirement plan. If that's the case, you could contribute a larger portion of your National Guard check (maybe all) toward the low-cost investment accounts in the TSP. The end result? Three sources of retirement at age 60: your National Guard retirement pension, your BRS/TSP account, and your civilian retirement account.

6. The BRS is mandatory for new recruits in 2018. Every new recruit will be auto-enrolled into the BRS. This means leaders need to understand how it works so they can properly educate their junior members on the different accounts, how National Guard retirement works with BRS, and the answers to common questions. **-D**

For more information go to
[http://militarypay.defense.gov/](http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement)
BlendedRetirement

BRS Conversion Questions?

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Your Retirement System National Guard & Reserve

Building Retirement Savings with the Blended Retirement System

The Blended Retirement System (BRS) is a modernized retirement plan for all new entrants into the Uniformed Services on or after Jan. 1, 2018, and eligible service members who opted into BRS. Features of the BRS include a **defined contribution**, consisting of government automatic and matching contributions, to a service member's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), a **defined benefit** (also known as a pension or monthly retired pay for life), after at least 20 years of service, a mid-career bonus called continuation pay and a new lump sum option at retirement.

Key Aspects Under BRS

1 Defined Contribution Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

New entrants on or after Jan. 1, 2018

- Automatically enrolled at 3% of your basic pay in an age appropriate TSP Lifecycle Investment Fund.
- Your Service automatically contributes the equivalent of 1% of your basic or drill pay to your TSP after 60 days of service.
- You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 years through the completion of 26 years of service.

All Service members are fully vested in the automatic 1% contribution – it's yours to keep--after completing 2 years of service

2 Defined Benefit

Received after completing 20 qualifying years of service and attaining age 60*

$$2\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$$

Calculate your **retired pay base** by averaging the **highest 36 months** of basic pay
 Calculate your equivalent years of active service by dividing your accumulated retirement points by 360

*or earlier based on qualifying active service

- 3 Continuation Pay** Received between 8, but not more than 12 years of service
- 4 Lump Sum Option** A choice of how to receive your defined benefit

Maximize Your TSP

The Power of Compounding

Compounding is powerful because it allows you to make money, not just on the money you contribute to your TSP, but also on the money that it earns. Think of it as having a snowball effect—so the sooner you start saving, the more years you have to save, and the more effective compounding is in building retirement savings.



(*calculation using the planning tools at TSP.gov, based on an annual growth rate of 7% with monthly contributions)

Resource Websites

- TSP.gov
- DFAS.mil
- MilitaryOneSource.mil
- SEC.gov
- MilitaryPay.defense.gov/Calculators
- MilitaryPay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement

You can find additional information on #BlendedRetirement at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>
 Source: Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, sections 631, 632, 633, 644, and 635

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CREATING LIFELONG LEARNERS

Story By: Caitlin Rourk

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

Every Texas Army National Guardsman defines education differently. For some, education refers to on-the-job training. For others, it is postsecondary education and the myriad of financial benefits available to fund such endeavors. Still, for others, it means the professional military education they need to advance their military careers and grow into the next rank and role.

The Texas Army National Guard Education and Incentives Office views education as a healthy mix of all three elements, and its staff focuses on highlighting opportunities therein. In fiscal year 2019, the office is focused on creating lifelong learners and educating Texas National Guardsmen about how education can improve readiness and strengthen the force.

Yvette Gonzalez, an education services officer, and her colleagues, get an extra dose of motivation when they hear a Soldier say, "I wish I had known," making them realize they need to market and promote programs better. The office's new initiative, "Advance Your Education - Enhance your Readiness and Opportunities," is intended to do just that.

"Education is not only key to Soldier readiness but also resiliency," Gonzalez said. "We want our service members to become lifelong learners and to take advantage of these new programs. That means working with service members to ensure they have the information and tools in their toolkit to take the next step toward career progression and growth. It's all about empowerment."

Education benefits are a major draw for Army National Guard recruits. According to the College Board, during the 2016-2017 school year, the cost of tuition, fees, room and board topped \$7,560 for two-year community colleges, \$14,210 for public colleges and \$26,100 for private non-profit colleges. National Guardsmen are entitled to a variety of education benefits that significantly reduce the cost of college or graduate school.

The Education and Incentives Office is actively promoting a recent change in federal tuition assistance, which Gonzalez believes is in service members' best interest. It removes the time-in-service requirements to take advantage of federal tuition assistance allowing service members to become eligible for federal tuition assistance after completing initial entry training.

The Army Credentialing Assistance Program is one of the newest opportunities available to Texas Army Guardsmen that has been, according to Gonzalez, underutilized. After its initial roll-out in August, the program is only available to active-duty and National Guard Soldiers in Texas, with plans to expand across the Army in the future. The program pays for books, materials and test fees so service members can transfer their military training to earn credentials transferable to civilian employment. To date, only 14 service members have inquired about the Credentialing Assistance Program and are in the process of preparing their application packets.

Lt. Col. Brian Hildebrand, officer-in-charge of the Education and Incentives Office, highlights the benefits of experiential learning, on which the credentialing program capitalizes. "One learns from every experience and so in this sense, all Soldiers should be lifelong learners," Hildebrand said. "Learning from situations and hunting the good stuff propels Soldiers into opportunities for growth and endurance. Growing Soldiers builds readiness for each particular Soldier and for the unit as a whole."

In the coming months, the Education and Incentives Office will launch a tour visiting new Soldiers in the Recruit Sustainment Program and distributing wallet cards that list key education benefits facts and figures and contact information. Instituting such a program early in Soldiers' careers, across the force, promotes education at every rank.

"Education is a discipline that many Soldiers believe ends once they leave the hallowed corridors of their high school or alma mater. In reality, however, one's education never ends," Hildebrand said. **-D**

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Chief Master Sgt. Michael Cornitius
Command Senior Enlisted Leader

Command Senior Enlisted Leader Suggested Reading List



I want to take a moment to share the following works for your reading pleasure, should you choose to do so. These books have personally impacted me and helped shape the basis of how I perform both as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader and in civilian life.

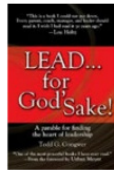
Civilian in Peace. Soldier in War...of security and honor for three centuries I have been the custodian...I am the Guard!

At Concord's bridge, I fired the fateful shot heard 'round the world. I bled on Bunker Hill. My footprints marked the snows at Valley Forge. With Washington on the heights of Yorktown, I saw the sword surrendered... I am the Guard. These things I know - I was there! I saw both sides of the War Between the States - I was there! The hill at San Juan felt the fury of my charge; the far plains and mountains of the Philippines echoed to my shout. In France the dark forests of the Argonne blazed with my barrage; Chateau-Thierry crumbled to my cannonade.

I am the Guard. I bowed briefly on the grim road at Bataan. Through the jungles and on the beaches I fought the enemy... beat, battered, and broke him. I scrambled over Normandy's beaches - I was there! I flew MiG Alley to the Yalu - I am the Guard! I fought in the skies above Vietnam - I was there! In the skies and on the ground, I made the Arabian desert feel the fury of the storm. I am the Guard!

Civilian in peace, soldier in war... the stricken have known the comfort of my skill. I have faced forward to the tornado, the typhoon, and the horror of the hurricane and the flood. I saw the tall towers fall - I was there!

I am the Guard. For three centuries the custodian of security and honor, now and forever... I am the Guard.



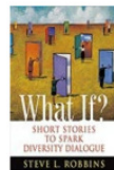
"Lead for God's Sake" – Todd G. Gongwar

Challenging oneself to think deeply about who you are as a leader:
The lives of an intensely-driven basketball coach, an ultra-successful CEO, and an unassuming janitor all intersect in this captivating parable about leadership.



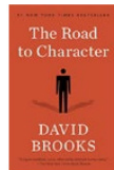
"Extreme Ownership" – Jocko Willink and Leif Babin

Leaders own the good and bad within their organization and take accountability for it: A compelling narrative with powerful instruction and direct application, Extreme Ownership revolutionizes business management and challenges leaders everywhere to fulfill their ultimate purpose, to lead and win.



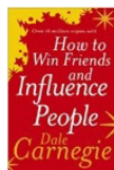
"What If?" – Steve L. Robbins

Working around diversity and inclusion in today's world:
When Steve Long-Nguyen Robbins was growing up, his mother routinely told him, "Long, you walk on a path cleared by others, so it is your responsibility to clear the path for others." Her guidance are the forces that drive Robbins's work for diversity.



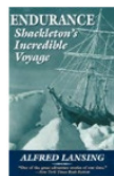
"The Road to Character" – David Brooks

Telling the stories of people through history who have exemplified the different activities that contribute to a deeper existence:
Provides an opportunity for us to rethink our priorities, and strive to build rich inner lives marked by humility and moral depth.



"How to Win Friends and Influence People" – Dale Carnegie

Will teach you techniques for handling people, ways to make people like you, how to win people to your way of thinking and how to change people without offence or resentment:



"Endurance" – Alfred Lansing

Teaches how inner fortitude can overcome even the most dire situations and how to keep those around motivated towards the mission:
the definitive account of Ernest Shackleton's fateful trip, a brilliant narration of the harrowing and miraculous voyage that has defined heroism for the modern age.



"Unbroken" – Laura Hillenbrand

Story of survival, resilience and redemption:
Olympian Louis Zamperini is driven to the limits of endurance during World War II when his bomber goes down in the Pacific Ocean. Captured by Japanese forces as a prisoner of war Zamperini must face mental, psychological and physical torment to survive.

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The
Stronger

**Story By: Maj. Harold B. Bender
Operations Chaplain, Joint Force Headquarters
Texas Army National Guard**

I read an online news article about an Ohio couple who started their marriage by getting married at the starting line of a half marathon. They took their vows in race attire and kissed, giving one another a high-five before sprinting away with about 3,000 other runners. It was a memorable ceremony that reflects what marriage is like.

“The vows and ceremony are the easy part,” the article’s author wrote. “The road ahead is long and involves strain, fatigue, and pain—but the journey is worth it.”

Strong Bonds is the Army Chief of Chaplains’ program designed to strengthen the structure of Army Families, enabling the relationship resilience required for the marriage journey, ensuring that the journey really is “worth it”

making the journey richer, more enjoyable while lessening the amount of strain, fatigue, and pain.

This is accomplished through relationship education and skills training that help couples achieve the high levels of functioning required to prevent marital problems from developing. Training topics include: improving communication skills, effective conflict management, nurturing commitment, maintaining friendship, the role of sensuality, and win-win problem-solving. The response from attendees who have offered after action report feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

“Strong Bonds helped save my relationship,” one participant said. “I feel motivated to be the best version of myself again on deployment and at home. Strong Bonds is very, very helpful.”

Another participant stated, “Amazing weekend. Thank you for serving us. We really needed this weekend to reevaluate our marriage. The tools they have provided are excellent. I just wish it wasn’t for just the weekend.”

In addition to improving marriages, Strong Bonds seeks to enrich family wellness as well. This is particularly important in the National Guard context because the military presents challenges and issues that affect every member of the family. Family wellness seminars touch on building strong relationships based on mutual trust and preparing each member of the family to better deal with the difficult circumstances of life. The seminars walk families through the process of defining top priorities and the results they would like to realize in their relationships, how to achieve balance and increased productivity through weekly and daily planning, and how to put an end to self-defeating behavior to gain the necessary security required for change.

A mother who attended a Strong Bonds workshop said the workshops are engaging and essential for military families. She added that the information was relevant, useful, well-presented and that the material was very applicable and presented in a non-judgmental manner.

Strong Bonds also has something to offer single and single again Soldiers to prepare for the relationship journey ahead. Single Soldier events are available and relevant for Single Soldiers and Single Again Soldiers of all ages,

st Bond

not just young ones. Strong Bonds is intended to teach single Soldiers how best to run the relationship race and what to look for in potential running mates. It is not a place to look for running mates.

The purpose of the program is to develop skills and attitudes required to put the odds of engaging in healthy relationships ever in the single Soldier's favor. The course offers instruction on how to ask the right questions to inspire meaningful, revealing conversations with your partner. It also teaches how to judge character based on a person's compatibility, relationship skills, friends, and patterns from family and previous relationships. It also covers how to resolve personal emotional baggage to engage in healthy relationships.

"This workshop helped me see what I am doing wrong as a girlfriend," a Single Soldier attendee said. "I learned that I need to communicate better to my partner. My partner and I have gone through a lot and are working on improving it and this workshop made me realize what I need to do."

In fiscal year 2019, the Texas Army National Guard is offering Strong Bonds programs at 16 events throughout the state. Soldiers are put on orders for the weekend and most expenses are paid to include lodging, childcare, mileage, and some meals. An additional bonus is that this year events are not held in lieu of drill. Soldiers may attend both drill weekend and a Strong Bonds event.

Regardless of your stage or level of satisfaction with your relationships, Strong Bonds has something to offer everyone. Information may be found at <http://strongbonds.jointservicessupport.org/> Find an event tab and enter your category, location, and dates desired but make sure to look for Texas Army National Guard events only.

The Strong Bonds point of contact for the Texas Army National Guard is Spc. Alexandria Velasquez and she may be reached at 512-782-6697 or Alexandria.n.velasquez.mil@mail.mil.

Relationships can be challenging, but Strong Bonds equips people to overcome those challenges and shows how to put joy in the relationship journey. **-D**



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COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Texas Military Department (TMD) has a wide array of resources available to all Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard and federal and state civilian personnel and their families. These resources not only provide useful programs and cost-saving opportunities, but they also help service members navigate and utilize their benefits. The TMD Family Support Services branch is the umbrella organization for all of these programs.

In coordination with community partners, TMD Family Support Services strives to prepare and empower service members and their families to be resilient now and in the future.

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

Strong Bonds serves single and married Soldiers alike. Led by trained chaplains, the program helps participants improve and strengthen their relationships. Ask your chaplain for more information about the program.

www.strongbonds.org

SUPPORTING KIDS AND YOUTH

The Texas Child and Youth Program supports the youngest members of the Texas Military Department through educational and recreational programming, including leadership training, college preparedness, service opportunities and events for both.

512-782-1231

FINANCIAL & RETIREMENT PLANNING

Don't be afraid to ask for help if you're struggling to pay your bills. Many programs exist to provide financial support to service members through tough times.

512-595-9138

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Worried about retirement? Wondering if you should be doing more to plan ahead? Service members have access to experienced counselors who can help plan for retirement and manage money.

1-800-252-8032



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TRANSITIONING FROM SERVICE

Transition assistance advisors help transitioning National Guardsmen and their families navigate the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs systems to understand—and take full advantage of—the many benefits available.

512-963-2390

512-782-1201

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

The Citizen Soldier Financial and Employment Readiness program helps service members with resumes, interview skills and forging connections to military-friendly employers.

www.casy.us

COUNSELING SERVICES

Need to talk? The TMD Counseling Team offers free confidential counseling services. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays, weekends and after hours.

512-782-5069

STRONG FAMILIES

The Texas National Guard Family Support Foundation works closely with the TMD Family Support Service to provide emergency financial assistance, family medical support, youth support and more.

512-454-1318

ADVISING SERVICES

Military OneSource offers extensive training and resources, from helping military spouses find employment to advising families with special-needs members. Services are available around the clock with professionally trained consultants.

1-800-342-9647

ALL RESOURCES

Contact the State Family Program Office—24 hours a day, seven days a week—for more information about all the available resources for Texas Military Department service members and their families.

(English) 1-800-252-8032
(Spanish) 1-888-443-2124

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Resilience: Personal Readiness Quick Tips For The Force

*Story By: Capt. Rita C. Miller
Texas Army National Guard, Ready and Resilient Officer-in-Charge*

Take a step back to consider your investment of time and money in the below areas: social, family, physical, psychological, and spiritual. Which areas have you been productive or counterproductive? Which areas consume most of your energy and/or finances? How can you create more positive changes for the betterment of your well-being? Try some of the below tips to transition into a more holistic, balanced approach to life.

SOCIAL

- Balance your work life. Leave work at work. Set a firm boundary with yourself when you get off of work so that it does not transfer into your personal and home life. Turn your work phone to silent and put it away.
- Show kindness. A simple hello or compliment can make a difference in someone's day. Make them feel special and say it with a smile.
- Invite a friend to lunch or to your next workout. Reach out to your network. Spending time with others can help foster relationships and enhance performance.
- Listen actively and effectively. When communicating with others, focus on understanding and respond with interest and enthusiasm.
- Make time for family and friends. Cultivate healthy relationships by communicating frequently with them. Call, text, e-mail, or send a personalized e-card. Building connections with those around you can positively influence personal and unit readiness.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

FAMILY

- Talk about your day. Sharing what you do at work, when applicable, can help your loved ones feel connected and make your relationships stronger. Hunt the good stuff with your family while eating dinner.
- Participate in your children's activities. It can help boost their self-esteem, spark conversation and help your kids feel more connected. Check out local recreational activities and community events for your family to participate in.
- Make and stick to a budget. Naming your savings account such as "Rainy Day Fund" or "My Vacation" can motivate you to save.
- Care for your pets. Research has shown that pets can improve your health and wellness. Check out the milPetEd app for tips.
- Know when to say "no" and "yes." Consider how limited your time is and say "yes" only to necessary activities that add value to your life. Intentionally spend time with people who rejuvenate you, rather than toxic individuals that break you down mentally.

PHYSICAL

- Know your body mass index. Use an online calculator and use it to refer to your service branches specific physical fitness requirement.
- Have a mental game plan for timed physical tests. Keep track of your pace when practicing for timed physical tests. Sometimes a preplanned thought or image can give you the extra boost you need.
- Achieve a well-balanced diet. Visit www.choosemyplate.gov to see what portion sizes should look like and daily recommendations based on your age.
- Sleep seven to eight hours daily. Create a wind-down routine 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime. Visit the Performance Triad (p3.amedd.army.mil) for more tips.
- Seek medical care when dealing with an ache or pain. Addressing problems early can help ease future concerns. Use the TRICARE search tool to find the nearest military treatment facility.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Express gratitude. Visual cues, like a photo of your favorite person, can help you remember to be grateful for the good things in life.
- Take your mind off counterproductive thoughts. Think of something that brings you joy like a favorite song.
- Practice self-control. Think before you act. It can help minimize impulsive behaviors and improve decision making, leading to better outcomes.
- Try deep breathing techniques. Close your eyes and breathe in and out for six seconds each. Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Repeat.
- Reconnect with yourself. If you are feeling run down and your health is being impacted, it may be time to reconnect with yourself. Spend some time alone. Time spent in a quiet reflection is critical for lowering stress and improving overall well-being.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

SPIRITUAL

- Volunteer your time and talents. It can enhance your self-esteem and your sense of connection with others.
- Know your personal values. They play an important role in your life as they guide your behaviors and influence your decisions.
- Increase your sense of purpose and identity. Take actions that renew energy and reinforce a commitment to yourself and others; engage your spirituality, try something you have always wanted to do, listen to uplifting music, spend time with a mentor, volunteer for a cause you believe in.
- Be responsible. Asking and accepting help when needed makes you stronger and enhances resilience.
- Have integrity. Do what's right. Live the Texas Military Department values and the values of the Army, Air Force and State Guard. This act builds strong character, fosters a culture of trust and supports unit cohesion.

The journey through life can at times be confusing, undeniably demanding, and leave us off balance. This is okay because we can control the way we handle our setbacks. Take a moment and be present with yourself. Make small adjustments to your life. These positive, effective tweaks can make all the difference in sustaining a sense of balance and well-being.

If you do need help along the rocky roads of life, the Texas Military Department offers counseling just a phone call away at 512-782-5069. The team provides free, confidential counseling to service members and their families via phone or in person. The counseling team is located throughout the state and sessions can typically be scheduled immediately.

For life coaching, contact your master resilience trainers (MRTs) located at unit levels to work on one of 14 resiliency skills centered on the six competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, mental agility, strengths of character, and connection. If you would like additional resiliency and performance enhancement training, contact the state resilience coordinator at 512-782-1462. **-D**

**CHECK OUT THE NEW
TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT
MOBILE APP!**

SEARCH TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Available on the Google Play App Store

**Statewide
ALERTS**

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NEWS**

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TMD service member retirement ceremony
Uploaded on September 16, 2016

Texas Guardsmen sling load Apache helicopter with Chinook
Uploaded on September 8, 2016

Texas Guardsmen attend the Chisum Mountain School course

**DUTY
HONOR
TEXAS**

YELLOW RIBBON

Story by Sgt. Amberlee Boverhuis 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

AUSTIN, Texas— As several National Guard units across Texas prepare for deployments, representatives from the Texas Military Department's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program reach out to the service members and their families to better prepare them for the upcoming journey.

"The mission of the Texas Army National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is to prepare Texas military families for all phases of the deployment cycle and create an atmosphere that connects service members and families," said Shandra Sponsler, branch manager for the Texas Military Department Family Support Services and State Family program.

Each National Guard and Reserve component conducts Yellow Ribbon events before, during and after deployments that are tailored to meet the needs of Soldiers and their families.

"There are several different meetings and seminars that are held for the families and the Soldiers to orientate them to the things that are available to them. Including benefits, how to access TRICARE, who to contact in case of an emergency and other things that all military families—especially in the Guard—aren't always familiar with," 71st Troop Command's Brig. Gen. Charles "Chuck" Aris said.

The program began in 2008 and since then more than 23,000 service members and 30,000 family members of the Texas Army National Guard have benefited from the resources provided at Yellow Ribbon program events, according to Sponsler.

Sgt. Sheryl Johnson is one of the many Soldiers who benefited from the program.

"I was deployed in 2010, for my second deployment. At the time, I had two young children and had just moved to Texas from the state of Florida. The Family Readiness Group and Yellow Ribbon were able to assist my family in establishing a connection within the Austin community and made sure my family understood what benefits were available for them," Johnson said.

The numerous resources provided by the program not only prepare and navigate Soldiers and families through the hardships of deployment but also support service members to successfully reintegrate back into their families, communities, and careers.

"Every person that participates in the Yellow Ribbon benefits. It covers a broad spectrum of support, from the worst to the best. It also makes the Soldiers feel better to know that their families are being taken care of back home," Aris said.

Soldiers and their families receive information on how to access family support resources through the Yellow Ribbon events. Resources include therapists for both Soldiers and family members, career counselors, support in finding a job, financial management assistance, financial counseling and if needed, other venues of financial support.

"Upon redeployment, the transition assistance that I personally received was phenomenal," Johnson said.

As many Soldiers across the state mentally and physically prepare themselves for the upcoming deployments, their minds and hearts can rest easy knowing that the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is readily available to them and their families during trying times.

"The National Guard is like a three-legged stool. It is composed of your civilian job, your military job, and your family. All three must function properly to be successful in the Guard and accomplish the mission. The National Guard recognizes this, and the program was made to provide the support needed for all three aspects to function smoothly," Aris said. **-D**

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Texas State Guard **BENEFITS**



*Story By: Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael E. Marotta
Texas Maritime Regiment, Public Affairs Officer*

Members of the Texas State Guard (TXSG) receive a wide range of support services from the Texas Military Department (TMD). In all, Service members may access up to 17 programs that focus on mental health, family support and fiscal stability.

18 TheDISPATCH DECEMBER 2018

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT**CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES**

According to Bob Hankins, lead Child and Youth Services coordinator for the Texas National Guard, State Guardsmen may send their 12- to 15-year-old children to the YMCA Camp at Twin Lakes free of charge. Hankins called children “the silent heroes” because they are left behind when the TXSG is called up for emergency response.

“Family Support Services is the umbrella organization for programs that provide a continuum of care and support services to service members and their families during deployment and sustainment operations,” said Shandra Sponsler, branch manager for Family Support Services. These include state family programs, the resilience program, a counseling team, and transition assistance advisors.

“The family readiness and command team training provides family readiness group training to commanders throughout the state,” Sponsler said. “State Guard personnel are welcome to attend these trainings, offered regularly throughout the state.” The only restrictions are that TXSG members “cannot receive printed materials, travel, lodging, or per diem reimbursements. However, if requested training materials can be e-mailed to TXSG participants after attending training.”

FINANCIAL COUNSELING

The local Office for Financial Readiness can deliver free confidential, short-term counseling designed to identify immediate and long-range measures to increase income, reduce household expenditures, and avoid additional financial burdens.

The office can help a family set up a spending plan, a household budget and show an individual or family how to get their credit scores. They can also offer guidance to help members understand their personal credit reports. Although the counselors cannot offer specific advice on investments, they can help outline the pros and cons of alternatives on the market. In addition to basic money management techniques and planning for retirement, they have information about student loan and tuition assistance, and youth financial education.

The financial counselors can respond to units that request training on financial topics by delivering presentations with approved materials. Financial counselors can be reached at: (512) 595-9138 (Central Texas), (210) 238-1161 (South Texas), and (682) 216-6876 (North Texas).

OVERCOMING HARM

Harassment and assault exist along a spectrum, according to Amy Allen, the Joint Force Headquarters sexual response coordinator for the TMD. “We are fully open to Soldiers, Airmen, DoD civilians, state employees, and the Texas State Guard. We are available for every employee of the Texas Military Department,” Allen said.

“Our job is two-fold. We are about service and change. We provide a full range of training on policies and procedures,” Allen said. “We are here to help,” she said.

They also offer a hotline that is staffed 24 hours per day, seven days per week and they can be reached at (512) 565-4410. It is free and confidential. In response to the need for change, they can deliver to any unit a full range of training materials targeted across gender and orientation.

PERMANENT PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

TXSG are now considered permanent part-time employees of the state of Texas. If they are injured on State Active Duty orders they are covered under workman’s compensation.

In addition, many serve as full-time employees on SAD. Among those mobilizations have been Operation Border Star and Operation Drawbridge which can offer TXSG members many full-time benefits including healthcare. For example, any TXSG member who serves 60 consecutive uninterrupted days is eligible for paid healthcare. After 60 days, state employees can choose to enroll for full benefits.

“State HR is always willing to help SAD members,” said Amanda Fletcher, assistant human resources director for the TMD. “We are happy to serve members with all their benefits needs, and are available as a resource to answer all of their questions.” **-D**

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PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



**Photo By: Petty Officer 2nd Class Behnam Benjamin
Joint Counter Drug Task Force**

Walmart store manager donates the "World's Largest Christmas Stocking" to Texas State Guard Toy Drive in Katy, Texas.

Photo By: Maj. Joshua Amstutz

Members of the Texas Military Department Joint Force Headquarters attend a U.S. Northern Command training course to discuss and prepare for response during a large scale disaster.



Photo By: Sgt. Maj. Jason Morrow

Command Sgt. Major Christopher Dyer, senior enlisted leader of the Texas Army National Guard speaks at the Master Fitness course graduation.





5 QUICK TIPS

Personal Readiness Dimension *Family Preparedness*

- 1 Talk about your day.**
Sharing what you do at work can help your loved ones feel connected and make your relationships stronger.
- 2 Participate in your children's activities.**
It can help boost their self-esteem, spark conversation and help your kids feel more connected.
- 3 Bring back family game night.**
Check out your local MWR calendar for upcoming recreational activities and community events.
- 4 Make and stick to a budget.**
Naming your savings account such as "Rainy Day Fund" or "My Vacation" can motivate you to save.
- 5 Care for your pets.**
Research has shown that pets can improve your health and wellness. Check out the milPetEd app for tips.

The five dimensions of Personal Readiness are Physical, Psychological, Social, Spiritual, and Family Preparedness.



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**YOU ARE A LINK IN THE CHAIN THAT
CAN END SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**

STAY STRONG!



SPEAK UP
DON'T TOLERATE
INAPPROPRIATE
BEHAVIOR

INTERVENE
RECOGNIZE THREATS
AND PREVENT THE
ASSAULT.

REPORT
ALL INSTANCES
OF HARASSMENT
AND ASSAULT

**WERE YOU SEXUALLY ASSAULTED?
NOT SURE WHO TO CALL?**

TMD Sexual Assault Support Line: 512-565-4410



DoD Safeline: 1-877-995-5247 available 24/7

www.safehelpline.org



**SEXUAL ASSAULT
PREVENTION & RESPONSE**

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



Col. MATTHEW BARKER

Commander, 147th Attack Wing, Texas Air National Guard

EXPERIENCE:

Col. Barker commissioned through the ROTC program in 1992 and spent four years as a Minuteman III missile launch officer. He became a combat-ready air battle manager in 1998, and has amassed more than 2,100 flying hours (including more than 500 combat hours) in the E-3B/C AWACS (airborne warning and control system), E-8C Joint STARS (surveillance target attack radar system), EC-130E, and RC-26B supporting Operations Northern Watch, Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Guardian Support. He has commanded a range control squadron and served tours on the Air staff and the Joint staff. He also served two years in Germany as the deputy chief of combat operations for the 603rd Air Operations Center, and as the executive officer to the commander of U.S. Air Forces Europe/Africa. His last assignment before transferring to the Texas Air National Guard was director of the Joint Staff's Joint Interoperability Division and Training Center at Fort Bragg, N.C.

EDUCATION:

Barker holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the George Washington University, a Master of Science in Space Studies from the University of North Dakota, a Master of Military Operational Art & Science from the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, and a Master of Science in National Defense Resource Strategy from National Defense University at Fort McNair.

DID YOU KNOW:

Barker and his wife, Pam, will celebrate their 25th anniversary in 2019. They raise and train therapy dogs to visit and raise morale in schools, work centers and healthcare facilities (Jean-Luc Cameron the Newfoundland is currently in training).

IN HIS WORDS:

"It is an honor to take on this new role in our family business and work for the citizen-Airmen of the 147th. My office is 11 miles from the San Jacinto battleground, where the fighting spirit of ordinary Texans carried the day and secured the future of this paradise we call home. I strive to be worthy of that example and legacy every day. Being associated with this team, and the larger TMD team, is the greatest pride I've found over my 26 years in uniform."



Col. WILLIAM WEAVER

Commander, Texas Medical Command

EXPERIENCE:

Since 2010 in a civilian capacity, served as the supervisory physician assistant at Darnall Army Medical Center in Fort Hood, Texas. In a National Guard capacity, since 2013, served as the deputy commander for Texas Medical Command and in 2010 served as the battalion commander for the 111th Multi-functional Medical Battalion. Commanded the 249th Main Support Medical Company in 2003.

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Science, University of Oklahoma; Master of Science, University of Nebraska; Command General Staff College; Intermediate-Level Education.

DID YOU KNOW:

He and his wife, Margaret, own a working cattle ranch as well as a community restaurant in Bruceville-Eddy, Texas. One child plays quarterback at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, another son and daughter attend Texas State University with daughter Olivia currently enrolled in Army National Guard ROTC.

IN HIS WORDS:

"I am grateful for the opportunity to command this great unit and serve shoulder to shoulder with the medical professionals keeping Texans ready to engage the enemy or provide aid and assistance during state emergencies."

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