

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

It's More Than A Program...It's A Promise!

NEWS LETTER

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CELEBRATING MILITARY YOUTH AND 35 YEARS WITH BGCA

This year marked an exciting milestone as Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) and the Military Services celebrated 35 years of partnership. As part of that celebration, Army National Guard leaders and staff had the opportunity to attend the BGCA National Military Youth of the Year (NMYOY) celebration.

The event brought together military leaders, families, partners, and supporters from across the services. Army National Guard attendees included CSM Raines, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Mrs. Raines; LTC Platt, HRP Division Chief, Personnel Services Division, Army National Guard G1; LTC Wade, Branch Chief, Soldier and Family Support Branch; Ms. Belinski, ARNG CYS Program Analyst; Richard Mabry, LCYPC Arizona; Mark Richards, LCYPC Georgia; and Gaizka Vazquez Lam, CYPA. Their participation reflected the Guard's continued commitment to supporting military-connected youth and families.

This year's National Military Youth of the Year program featured five outstanding teen finalists representing the Navy, Army, and Air Force. Each demonstrated exceptional leadership, character, and commitment to their communities. At the conclusion of the event, Jacob, a Navy dependent, was named the 2026-2027 National Military Youth of the Year.

The celebration was especially meaningful for the Army National Guard as we look toward expanding opportunities for our own youth. Through the Keystone Pilot Program, Arizona and Georgia will have the opportunity to participate in the pathway toward National Military Youth of the Year. This is an exciting step forward and another way to recognize, develop, and celebrate the remarkable young people within our Guard communities.

Through our continued partnership with BGCA, we look forward to strengthening ARNG Child & Youth Services, creating new opportunities for Guard youth, and ensuring their voices, achievements, and leadership are recognized. Thirty-five years of partnership is an accomplishment worth celebrating, and we are excited for what the future holds for Army National Guard youth.



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REGION 8 SPOTLIGHT: A SUMMER OF LEADERSHIP, ADVENTURE AND CONNECTION

Region 8 had a busy summer filled with leadership, resilience, outdoor adventure, and opportunities for military youth to connect.

Montana hosted three summer camps serving youth from age 6 through high school seniors. Fort Harrison Day Camp welcomed 38 campers for STEM, team building, workshops, and a Black Hawk fly-in. Teen Adventure & Leadership Camp brought together 40 teens for leadership, life skills, and planning activities for Camp Runnamucka. The summer wrapped with Camp Runnamucka, where 155 campers and 26 volunteers enjoyed five days of learning, teamwork, and fun.

South Dakota celebrated its 25th summer of Youth Camp with 87 campers and Junior Counselors. This year's Mission Possible: Secret Spies theme included team challenges, resilience activities, hiking, archery, mindfulness, reveille and retreat, and a scavenger hunt at Mount Rushmore. One camper-turned-Junior Counselor shared, *"This camp is the one thing I look forward to every year, all year!"*

North Dakota hosted a Back to School Bash focused on firearm safety and resilience. Youth learned how to respond safely if they encounter a firearm, while families received resources including gun locks. The event also featured laser tag, giving youth a fun way to practice teamwork, communication, problem solving, and staying calm under pressure.

Wyoming's summer camp in the Lower Tetons gave youth a more rustic outdoor experience, including wall tents, outhouses, and outdoor shower houses. Teen Panel members served as Junior Counselors, mentoring younger campers and modeling resilience, adaptability, and leadership throughout the experience.

Colorado hosted a residential camp at La Foret in Black Forest for youth ages 10–18. Campers built resilience, teamwork, public speaking, and community skills while also completing 4-Lenses training. Staff saw youth work more effectively together as they gained a better understanding of the different strengths each person brings to a team.

Across Region 8, summer programming gave Army National Guard youth opportunities to try new things, build confidence, develop leadership skills, and create lasting memories.





MOVING THE TIDE: ARMY NATIONAL GUARD TEENS LEAD, LEARN AND CONNECT AT KEYSTONE

Army National Guard teens from Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, and Puerto Rico joined young leaders from across the country July 23–25 for Boys & Girls Clubs of America's 2026 National Keystone Conference. This year's theme, "Move the Tide, Raise the Temp," challenged teens to grow as leaders, build meaningful connections, and consider how they can create positive change in their communities.

For Oregon Army National Guard teens Madi and Addie, one of the most meaningful parts of the experience was connecting with people whose lives and experiences were different from their own.

Madi shared that the conference pushed her outside of her comfort zone and helped her build confidence while learning from the people around her.

"The National Keystone Conference was an incredible and meaningful opportunity that allowed me to grow both personally and professionally," she said. "I also learned valuable life lessons from the people I met and the experiences we shared throughout the conference."

Hearing others talk about their paths to success gave Madi new ideas and motivation for her own future. She left the conference with new connections, greater confidence, and lessons she said she will carry with her for years to come.

Addie was equally inspired by the diversity of teens who came together through Keystone.

"Teens with different backstories, life experiences, and personalities all get to come together with kids who share one thing in common, something they connect to and are a part of," she said.

As one of the first teens from Oregon's Keystone Club to attend the national conference, Addie said the opportunity was especially meaningful. She gained new skills, created lasting memories, and saw firsthand where the work her group had put into building its Keystone Club could lead.

Puerto Rico Keystone Club member Desiree also left the conference with a renewed sense of confidence and purpose. In addition to sessions focused on mental health, self-discovery, and achieving goals, Desiree participated in a community service project creating bags filled with essentials and activities for children.

The project showed her that even small acts of kindness can make a difference.

"Being able to attend made me feel very proud to be part of Keystone and helped me understand the importance of using our voices as teens to make a difference in our communities," Desiree shared.

For Madi, Addie, Desiree, and the other Army National Guard teens who attended, the National Keystone Conference was more than a few days away from home. It was an opportunity to discover their strengths, learn from one another, and return home ready to put those lessons into action through their Keystone Clubs, State Teen Panels, and communities.

OUR MILITARY KIDS

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Our Military Kids® provides extracurricular activity awards for eligible children and teens ages 1–18 whose parent is serving in the deployed National Guard or Reserve, as well as children of veterans and service members from any branch who are receiving treatment for post-9/11 combat-related injuries or illnesses.

These awards can help cover the cost of activities that give military youth opportunities to learn new skills, build confidence, stay connected with friends, and simply enjoy being a kid during challenging periods for their families.

Funding can be used for a wide variety of activities, including sports, fine and performing arts, camps, tutoring, driver's education, STEM programs, and more. Families can choose the activity that best fits their child's interests and needs.

For more information:
<https://www.ourmilitarykids.org/>

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MINNESOTA TEENS SEW SUPPORT FOR DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS

Minnesota National Guard teens put their teamwork and service skills into action this summer, creating 132 cooling collars for deployed service members during the Minnesota National Guard Child and Youth Program Teen Summit.

The service project gave Minnesota Teens an opportunity to work together on a hands-on project with a direct connection to the military community. To help bring their idea to life, the teens received support from Eileen Scott, an Air Force veteran and longtime volunteer with Minnesota Army National Guard Child and Youth Programs.

Scott, a member of the American Sewing Guild, recruited six fellow guild members to help prepare materials ahead of the summit. During their May meeting, the group cut and prepped the fabric needed for the cooling collars. Scott then brought sewing machines and sewing kits to the Teen Summit in June and worked alongside the teens as they completed the project.

"When you do this a few times, you get to know people and their lives beyond the event at hand," Scott said of volunteering with Child and Youth Programs.

By the end of the summit, Teen Panel members had completed 132 cooling collars to support deployed service members.

The project is one example of how Minnesota's Child and Youth Program gives Army National Guard teens opportunities to lead, serve, build new skills, and make a difference in their community. With support from volunteers and community partners, teens were able to take an idea and turn it into a meaningful act of service.



ARMY NATIONAL GUARD TEEN PANEL

LEAD WITH PURPOSE

ABOUT GUARD TEEN PANEL

The Guard Teen Panel (GTP) offers a chance for Army National Guard youth to represent their peers on a national stage. If you're prepared to take on a leadership role, serve your community, and create a meaningful impact, this is your moment!

OPEN REGIONS FOR APPLICATION

- ➔ **Region 1** - Two Vacancies
- ➔ **Region 2** - One Vacancy
- ➔ **Region 3** - One Vacancy
- ➔ **Region 5** - Two Vacancies
- ➔ **Region 7** - One Vacancy

NEED HELP WITH YOUR APPLICATION?

Reach out to your local State/Territory Child & Youth Coordinator or contact: gaizka.c.vazquez-lam.ctr@army.mil

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

- ✓ **SERVE A TWO-YEAR TERM**
- ✓ **ATTEND NATIONAL MEETINGS**
- ✓ **PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUAL CALLS**
- ✓ **SUBMIT QUARTERLY REPORTS**

WHO CAN APPLY?

- Dependents of Army National Guard Soldiers (currently serving)
- Active leader on your State/Territory Teen Panel
- Will be in 9th–11th grade in Fall 2026

HOW TO APPLY?

- Application Window: August 21 - September 25, 2026
- Where to apply: <https://arngcys.com/teens-on-the-move>

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