

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

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

NEWS LETTER

IN THIS ISSUE:

- MN Teen Panel Shines at the State Fair
- Region 9 Update
- Eat Better Together Month
- Cooking with CYS
- Resource Spotlight
- Feedback Form



MINNESOTA TEEN PANEL SHINES AT STATE FAIR

The Minnesota National Guard Teen Panel had a powerful presence at the Minnesota State Fair's Military Appreciation Day. Hosting an interactive table, the teens introduced themselves, explained who they represent, and highlighted ways the public can support military youth. They also provided resiliency resources and connected with military families, sharing strategies to build strength and community.

As part of their service project from the 2025 Teen Summit, the Teen Panel unveiled a special "Thank You" banner at the fair. Created by all 51 Teen Summit attendees, the banner featured personalized messages of appreciation to soldiers and their families. Displaying it at Military Appreciation Day gave the public a chance to see the heartfelt gratitude of military-connected youth across the state.

The event also provided the perfect stage to recognize two extraordinary volunteers who have supported Minnesota's Child & Youth Services programs for years. Teen Panel members Isaac J., Jona S., and Nicole V., together with State Family Program Director Jon Lewis and Child and Youth Coordinator Nicki Schneider, presented certificates of appreciation to Nick Hirdler and Marisha Randall.

- Marisha Randall began volunteering at a Teen Summit more than a decade ago with her mother. Since then, **she has given over 300 hours to the program** and remains a steadfast ally to military youth.
- Nick Hirdler **has contributed more than 200 hours**, bringing creativity, humor, and dedication to events such as Purple Up, Teen Summits, the Teen Leadership Forum, Ice Fishing Family Day, and Teen Panel activities.

By engaging the community, recognizing long-time supporters, and proudly displaying their banner of gratitude, the Minnesota Teen Panel showed the powerful impact of military youth. Their efforts at the fair served as both a celebration of service and a reminder of the resilience and strength found in Guard families.



WWW.ARNGCYS.COM

#GUARDFAMILIES

#ARNGCYS

REGION 9 UPDATE: ADVENTURE STARTS HERE!

From July 18–22, 2025, the Guam Child & Youth Program hosted the Region 9 Youth Symposium, embracing the FY25 theme Adventure Starts Here! Teens from Guam, California, Hawaii, and Nevada came together for four days of learning, leadership, and cultural connection. In total, 18 youth leaders participated in this year’s event.



The symposium kicked off with introductions and a scavenger hunt at Ypao Beach, designed to build peer-to-peer networking skills. While there, participants also gave back to the community through a service project, picking up trash at the beach park. Later that day, the youth heard from Capt. Borgonia, Commander of SECFOR VII, who shared the importance of Guam as a strategic hub for the military, followed by a presentation from an MFLC on building healthy relationships.



The following day, teens explored Guam’s rich culture during a tour of the Valley of the Latte. They learned about traditional uses of coconut trees for food, shelter, and clothing, the significance of the Latte Stone, and sampled local cuisine. Returning to the hotel, participants worked on the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) process, a bylaws workshop, and joined in MRT (Master Resilience Training) and STEM activities.

Day three started early with an unforgettable experience—marching in the 81st Liberation Parade alongside Guam National Guard soldiers and campers from the Guam Summer Camp. The rest of the day included energizers led by California youth, more STEM activities, and resilience workshops that kept participants engaged and motivated.

Abbi H., California Teen Panel President, reflected on her experience at the Regional Symposium:

“Representing California at the Region 9 Symposium in Guam was a great opportunity to connect with other military youth and make a positive impact on our communities. I learned that while our backgrounds may differ, **military youth share a common bond** over the trials of having a parent in the armed forces. During this symposium, **we acknowledged our shared challenges and explored ways to enhance the lives of military children** in our states and territories who face the hardships associated with military life. It taught me that we are stronger together and we possess the ability to make lasting and meaningful impacts on our fellow military youth.”



The Region 9 Youth Symposium gave participants the chance to build friendships, grow as leaders, and celebrate their shared resilience as National Guard youth, all while experiencing the vibrant culture of Guam.



OCTOBER IS EAT BETTER TOGETHER MONTH

October is Eat Better Together Month, a time to celebrate the simple but powerful act of sharing meals with others. Whether it's breakfast before school, a quick lunch with friends, or dinner at home, sitting down together strengthens relationships, builds resilience, and encourages healthier habits.

For military families, mealtimes can be especially meaningful. With the busy schedules, trainings, and deployments that come with military life, finding time to gather around the table provides comfort, stability, and connection. Even small moments—like asking about each other's day or sharing a favorite story—can leave a lasting impact.

Here are some fun conversation starters to try at your next meal:

- What's one thing that made you smile today?
- If you could invent a new holiday, what would it be?
- What's your favorite memory from this year so far?
- If you could eat only one food for the rest of your life, what would you choose?



This October, we encourage families and community partners to embrace Eat Better Together Month by creating opportunities for connection around the table. Every shared meal is a chance to strengthen bonds, build resilience, and remind our military youth that they are supported and valued.

GIGI MARCOCCIA'S HEARTY ITALIAN LASAGNA

Submitted by Elizabeth H., Age 7 – Indiana Army National Guard Family

Hello, my name is Elizabeth and I am 7 years old. I like to cook with my Nana, and every Christmas we make lasagna together with sausage, garlic bread, and sometimes salad (which I don't like too much). My dad has been in the Army National Guard for about 12 years, first in Texas and now in Indiana, and making lasagna with my family is my favorite.

Serves 12 | 30 min prep | 60 min cook | 90 min total

What You'll Need:

Ricotta Filling

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ½ medium white onion, diced
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic (about 2–3 cloves)
- 2 Tbsp Italian seasoning
- 32 oz whole milk ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup shredded parmesan cheese
- 2 large eggs
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper

Meat Sauce

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 lb ground pork
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 5 cups Marinara

Lasagna Layers

- 3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¾ cup shredded parmesan cheese
- 9 oven-ready lasagna noodles (or homemade pasta sheets)



Hey young chefs—before you get started, make sure to ask an adult for help! Whether it's turning on the stove, using a knife, or handling hot pans, having a grown-up nearby keeps cooking safe and fun.

GIGI MARCOCCIA'S HEARTY ITALIAN LASAGNA, CONTINUED

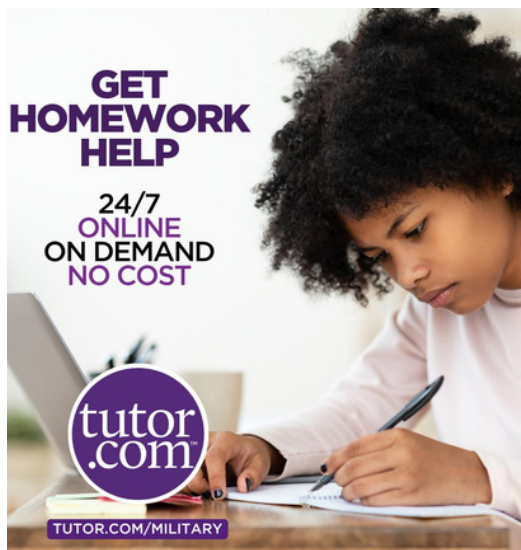
How to Make:

• Meat Sauce

- Preheat the oven to 375°F.
- In a large skillet or pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add ground beef, ground pork, salt, and pepper. Cook until browned.
- Stir in marinara sauce and simmer on low for 10 minutes.

• Ricotta Filling

- In a medium skillet, heat olive oil and sauté onions for 3–5 minutes until soft.
- Add garlic and Italian seasoning, cook for 1 minute, then transfer to a large bowl.
- Add ricotta, parmesan, eggs, salt, and pepper. Mix well.



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Struggling with homework or just need some extra help?

Tutor.com is here for military families with 24/7 on-demand tutoring in more than 250 subject areas.

Whether it's math, science, writing, or test prep, your student can connect with an expert tutor anytime, anywhere.

Explore how Tutor.com supports learners at every age

<https://military.tutor.com/home>

• Layering the Lasagna

- In a small bowl, combine mozzarella and parmesan.
- Spread 1 cup of meat sauce on the bottom of a deep lasagna pan.
- Layer 3 noodles, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ricotta mixture, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the shredded cheese, and half of the remaining meat sauce.
- Repeat with 3 more noodles, the second $\frac{1}{3}$ of ricotta mixture, the second $\frac{1}{3}$ of shredded cheese, and the last of the meat sauce.
- Top with final 3 noodles, remaining ricotta mixture, and last of the shredded cheese.
- Cover tightly with foil and bake for 50 minutes.
- Remove foil and bake 10 more minutes to brown. For crispy edges, broil for 1–2 minutes.
- Let rest 10–15 minutes before slicing.

TIPS FROM ELIZABETH:

- You can substitute Italian sausage for the beef and pork.
- Make sure to use ricotta cheese (DO NOT use cottage cheese!).
- Want to try something different? Use bowtie pasta instead of lasagna sheets for more of a pasta bake.

FEEDBACK FORM

Fall is here—and we're listening. Whether you've participated in a CYS program or want to see more options in your area, your feedback matters. Take the Child & Youth Feedback Form today and help shape what's next:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ARNGCYS-Feedback-FY26>

DOWNLOAD OUR APP!



Search "ARNG CYP"