



Army National Guard

Child & Youth Services

20
24

MILITARY FAMILY APPRECIATION MONTH

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY PACKET
FOR EDUCATORS WITH MILITARY
CONNECTIONS

WWW.ARNGCYS.COM



JOIN US IN CELEBRATION

Since 1996, November has been declared **Military Family Appreciation Month**. A month where individuals and communities, across the country and around the world, are encouraged to acknowledge the unique sacrifices military families make.

This year, the Army National Guard (ARNG) Child & Youth Services (CYS) Program invites educators and classes across the country to join us in recognizing our military families, and especially our military and military-connected youth. To get everyone started, we developed this classroom activity packet, which includes information, activities and initiatives all connected to Military Family Appreciation Month.

Educators play an important role in providing support to our military families, and we thank you for all that you do!

~ARNG CYS Program and Staff



A MONTH OF CELEBRATION

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
					R.E.D. FRIDAY (Remember Everyone Deployed by Wearing Red)	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	MAKE A CONNECTION MONDAY (Take Time to Meet and Get to Know Someone New)	TERRIFIC TUESDAY (Hunt the Good Stuff and List Three Positive Things in Your Life)	WE CARE WEDNESDAY (Do Random Acts of Kindness for Others)	THANKFUL THURSDAY (Identify Something or Someone You Are Thankful For)	R.E.D. FRIDAY (Remember Everyone Deployed by Wearing Red)	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	VETERAN'S DAY (Honor Those Who Have Served in the Military)	TERRIFIC TUESDAY (Hunt the Good Stuff and List Three Positive Things in Your Life)	WE CARE WEDNESDAY (Do Random Acts of Kindness for Others)	THANKFUL THURSDAY (Identify Something or Someone You Are Thankful For)	R.E.D. FRIDAY (Remember Everyone Deployed by Wearing Red)	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	MAKE A CONNECTION MONDAY (Take Time to Meet and Get to Know Someone New)	TERRIFIC TUESDAY (Hunt the Good Stuff and List Three Positive Things in Your Life)	WE CARE WEDNESDAY (Do Random Acts of Kindness for Others)	THANKFUL THURSDAY (Identify Something or Someone You Are Thankful For)	R.E.D. FRIDAY (Remember Everyone Deployed by Wearing Red)	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	MAKE A CONNECTION MONDAY (Take Time to Meet and Get to Know Someone New)	TERRIFIC TUESDAY (Hunt the Good Stuff and List Three Positive Things in Your Life)	WE CARE WEDNESDAY (Do Random Acts of Kindness for Others)	THANKSGIVING (What Are You Thankful For?)	R.E.D. FRIDAY (Remember Everyone Deployed by Wearing Red)	



WEEKDAY CELEBRATIONS EXPLAINED

MAKE A CONNECTION MONDAY: Research has shown that positive relationships and connections with others play an important role in resilience and well-being. On these days, youth are encouraged to introduce themselves to those they may not know and make new connections in their lives. This could include meeting a new classmate, someone new in their school, or someone new in their community.

TERRIFIC TUESDAY: The Army's Master Resilience Program includes a skill referred to as **Hunt the Good Stuff or HTGS**. HTGS encourages intentional reflection by causing youth to pause and think about positive things which have happened to them - whether that be during a class, throughout the day, or within the week. After identifying their HTGS moments, youth are encouraged to share their HTGS items with others...further building positive connections.

WE CARE WEDNESDAY: Empathy plays an important role in life, impacting how we establish relationships and connections with others. On these days, youth are encouraged to do **Random Acts of Kindness** for people in their lives. When youth do kind things for others, they often experience increased well-being, resilience, a sense of safety and overall happiness.

THANKFUL THURSDAY: Being thankful, or showing gratitude, has been shown to increase general positivity and combat negative thinking patterns or negative thinking traps. Negative thinking has a direct connection to reduced resilience and well-being. It is important for youth to understand there are many things to be thankful for in life, and those things need not be big or elaborate - even the smallest things in life are worth identifying and celebrating.

R.E.D. FRIDAY: Believed to have originated in April 2015, **Remember Everyone Deployed (R.E.D.)** is a way for everyone to honor the United States Service Members currently deployed or on active duty. This includes those deployed overseas, as well as those completing missions within the U.S. On Fridays, individuals are encouraged to wear red to show their support for all troops and members of the military community.



WHERE IN THE WORLD



The map above lists many of the countries where the United States currently operates military bases. As one can see, there is truly a world-wide presence, with U.S. bases located in many different countries. In addition to troops living in these locations, so too do their family members. Depending on the specific military mission, or branch of military service, families may find themselves living in foreign locations for multiple years at a time.

While living in these foreign countries, families often find themselves learning about each country and the people who live within each country. This includes learning about customs and traditions, types of music and foods, education and even transportation.

Help youth gain a better understanding of the unique experiences military families have by encouraging them to learn about one of the countries listed above, and what it would be like to live in another country for a year. You can use the worksheet on the following page to get everyone started exploring. Have youth present what they learned and how they might feel living in a foreign country.

PURPOSE: To help youth gain a deeper understanding of what military families might experience living in a foreign country.

MATERIALS:

- Handout
- Books and media for researching
- Software, paper and/or writing utensils for capturing facts

QUESTION PROMPTS:

- What do you think would be the most challenging part of living in another country? Why?
- What do you think would be the best part of living in another country? Why?
- If you could pick another country in which to live, which country would you pick? Why?
- What challenges do you think military children your age might experience while living in a different country?
- What positive things do you think military children your age might experience while living in a different country?

COUNTRY: _____

COUNTRY FACTS

CAPITAL CITY: _____

LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN: _____

POPULATION: _____

CURRENT LEADER: _____

CURRENCY: _____



LOCATION

CONTINENT: _____
Place an X on the map where this country is located.

FOODS



FLAG

THINGS TO SEE!

FAMOUS PEOPLE

CUSTOMS OR TRADITIONS



A COMMUNITY OF HEROES



Not all superheroes wear capes; however, television, movies and social media often portray heroes as those individuals flying through space and saving the day with feats of monumental strength. In reality, local communities across the country are filled with superheroes: firefighters, police officers, medical providers, educators, and those in the military, to name a few. These individuals give their time, talents and efforts to help those in need - whether that be locally or around the world. They form a community of superheroes.

It is important for youth to understand capes and superhuman powers are not required to have a positive impact on others. By providing youth with exposure to these local superheroes in educational settings, youth build a greater awareness of their community, as well as the important role each individual plays in keeping people safe, healthy and secure. Additionally, these interactions allow youth to begin identifying their own personal interests and what they might want to be when they grow up.

Throughout the month, consider reaching out to local individuals and/or organizations and inviting them to come into the classroom and talk to youth about what they do and how they serve their community. Within the Army National Guard (ARNG) Community, there are Youth Coordinators across the country who can help support some of these classroom visits by working collaboratively to identify service members available to visit classrooms and coordinate introductions and some logistics. Contact information for your local ARNG Child & Youth Services Team is available by visiting:

<https://arngcys.com/my-local-cys-program>. Also, while on the Website, be sure to review resources available to educators supporting military and military-connected youth. Consider extending the learning by having youth identify their own superhero strengths and how they can use them to help others - the handout on the following page can be a great place to start this conversation.

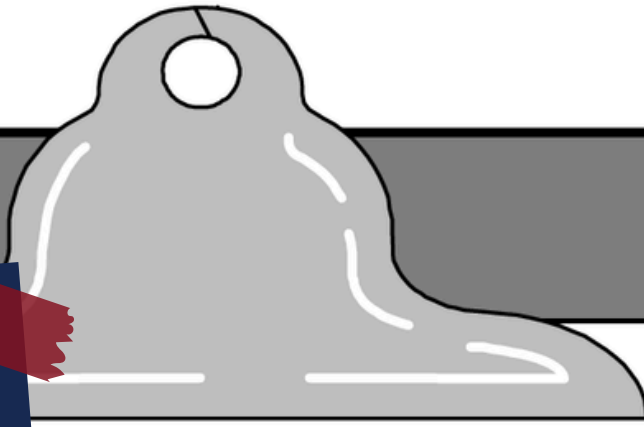
PURPOSE: To help youth acquire a greater awareness of the 'superheroes' in their community and how they help keep everyone safe and protected - how they give of themselves to help others.

MATERIALS:

- Handout

QUESTION PROMPTS:

- What are your personal strengths or superhero powers?
- How could you use your personal strengths or powers to help others?
- Why is it important to recognize the heroes in our community?



MY NAME: _____

MY GRADE: _____

MY COMMUNITY: _____

**THREE THINGS I AM GOOD AT OR
DO WELL:**

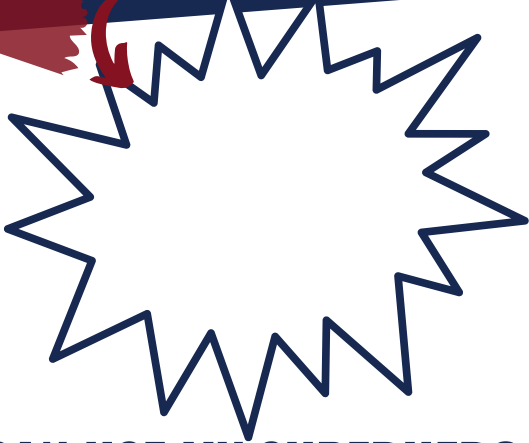
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

A picture of me helping others.

My superhero logo.



I CAN USE MY SUPERHERO STRENGTHS TO HELP OTHERS BY:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CLASSROOM WISHING TREE



PURPOSE: To help youth better understand and practice empathy and showing kindness to others.

MATERIALS:

- Colorful pieces of paper
- Something to serve as the tree
- Ribbons, writing utensils

QUESTION PROMPTS:

- Think of someone you care about, what is one wish you would make for that person?
- Think of someone in this school, what is one wish you would make for that person?
- Think about your fellow classmates, what is something you would wish for them?
- Think about the wish you wrote down, what could you do to help make some (or all of it) come true?
- How could you take the idea of a wishing tree and use that at home or with those you care about?
- Why is it important to show kindness and wish positive things for those in our lives?

For years, there has been a tradition within the military community of tying yellow ribbons around the trunks of trees to indicate someone the family loves is deployed or away from home - this could be an immediate family member or other relative. To this day, the yellow ribbon remains a prominent symbol associated with deployment and the eventual return of the service member from deployment. When the service member returns home, the yellow ribbon is typically untied and removed from the tree.

In recent years, the idea of tying ribbons on trees has grown in popularity, with many families now creating wishing trees at home. Historically, wishing trees have been found in different cultures around the world since the 1700s. The long-held belief is that when a wish is written out and attached to a branch of a wishing tree, the wish stands a better chance at being heard by the universe and coming true. In the learning environment, creating a classroom wishing tree can be a great way to not only tie-in yellow ribbons and their connection to the military community, but also helping youth practice empathy and kindness for others by writing out and attaching their own wishes for those around them to the tree.

The classroom wishing tree idea can be a short classroom activity or something sustained throughout the entire academic year. As youth become more comfortable around each other, encourage youth to share with their classmates the wish(es) they wrote down.

MY LIFE POCKETBOOK

PURPOSE: Help youth build connections with each other through unique and shared life experiences.

MATERIALS:

- Handout
- Printed copies of handout
- Colored pencils, markers and/or crayons

QUESTION PROMPTS:

- What is something about you and your life that makes you unique?
- What is something about you and your life you might share with those around you?
- How could learning about those around you be a positive thing?
- When we learn about others, we might discover things we have in common. Having things in common can help us build connections with others. Why do you think building connections with others is important in life?
- What are things you can do to build positive connections with others?

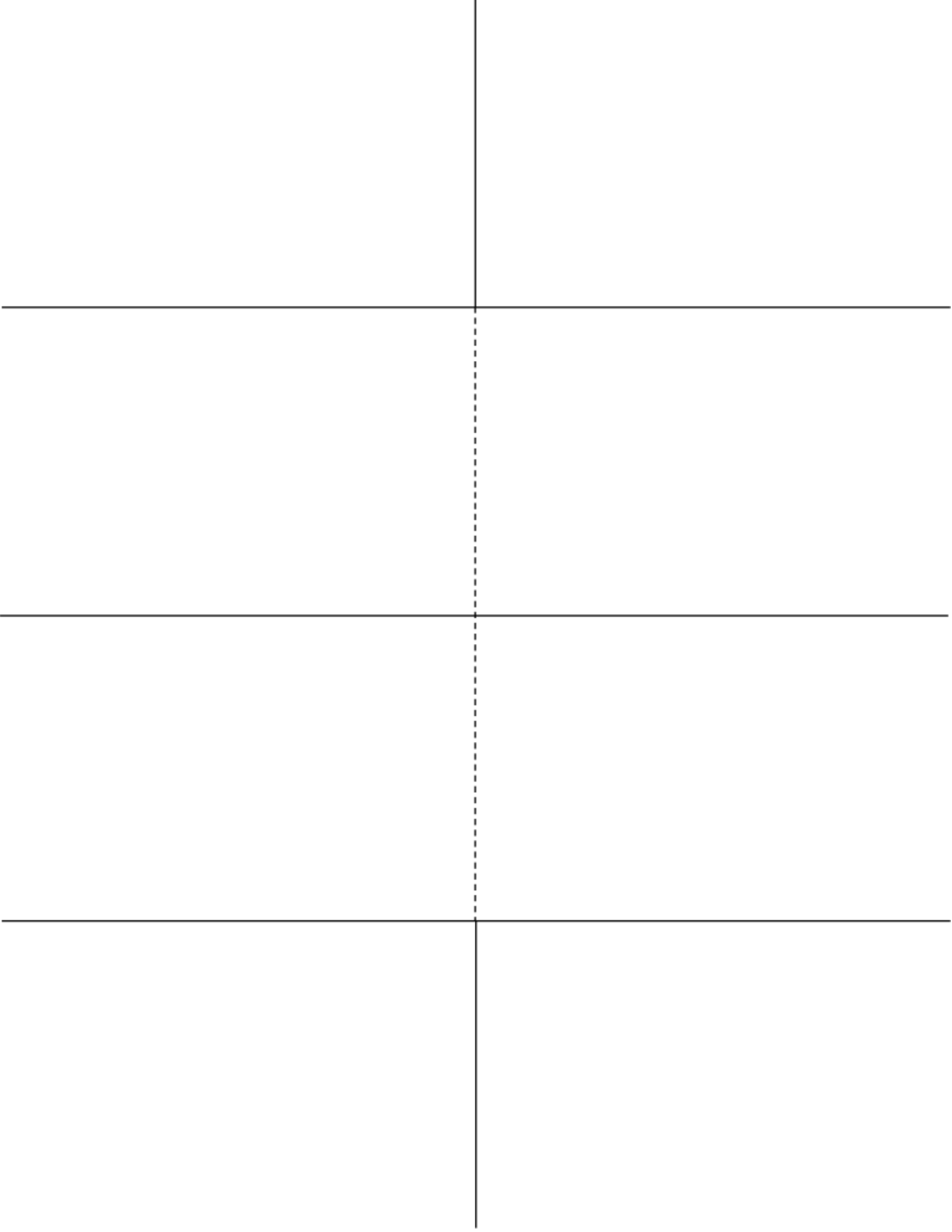


Utilize this QR code to watch a video on how to fold the flipbook template to create the actual book.

All youth have unique and interesting life experiences - this is especially true with military and military-connected youth. That said, while some experiences may be unique to each youth, there are likely many shared experiences. A great way to help youth build connections, and get to know each other, is through development of pocketbooks, in which youth tell their life story. Once completed, youth can then share their stories with those around them to help others build greater understanding of each life story, as well as identify connections they share.

For this activity, youth are encouraged to use the handout on the following page to author and illustrate their life story - unique experiences they have had, interests they have, activities they enjoy doing and important people in their lives. This activity lends itself well to utilization at the beginning of the academic year, or at various points throughout the year. Pocketbooks can also be utilized to reinforce learning across multiple academic areas, and can be done both individually or in teams.

Within the ARNG CYs Program, we utilize flipbooks with youth and families to generate awareness of available resources, steps for increasing personal resilience, and to provide a general overview of the ARNG CYs Program. Youth, families and educators are encouraged to reach out to their local ARNG CYs Team to request some of these materials.



WEATHERING A PERSONAL CHALLENGE



PURPOSE: To help youth foster personal resilience by identifying a time they overcame a challenge in life.

MATERIALS:

- Handout
- Writing utensils
- Colored pencils, markers and/or crayons

QUESTION PROMPTS:

- What does it mean to overcome a challenge?
- How did you feel when you overcame a challenge?
- Why is it important to remember those times when we have overcome challenges in the past?
- What is a challenge you are currently facing?
- What have you done to overcome that challenge?
- What else could you try to overcome your challenge?

Everyone experiences challenging or difficult times in life. This can be especially true of military and military-connected youth. Their loved one's service in the military may cause them to experience deployment, prolonged separations, missed holidays and special occasions, and anxiety over the safety of their loved one. Military families living on or near a military installation usually have quick access to resources and support; however, National Guard Families may find they are the only military family in their community. This, in and of itself, can create many unique challenges. In those moments, having protective measures in place can prove invaluable.

In the military community, one protective measure is that of developing and fostering personal resilience - one's ability to bounce back from adversity. One strategy that can help youth increase their personal resilience during challenging times is to have them reflect back on past challenges in life and how they overcame those challenges. When youth are reminded of how they overcame challenges in the past, they are more inclined to confront current challenges and persevere.

For this activity, youth will select an experience that was difficult or challenging for them, draw a picture of themselves on one-half of the handout showing the challenge, then draw a picture of themselves on the other half of the handout, showing themselves overcoming the challenge. Encourage the youth to add captions to each illustration, describing how they made it through the challenging or difficult time.

MY CHALLENGE

ME OVERCOMING MY CHALLENGE

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EVERY FAMILY IS UNIQUE, EVERY FAMILY HAS A STORY

Every family - whether given or chosen - is unique and has a story. Customs, traditions, adventures and interests all combine to shape each life within the family, as well as the family as a whole. Military families often experience events and situations most non-military families will never know, making their shared stories quite unique.

National Guard Families are unique within the military community, as they do not live in or around military bases, but rather in communities throughout the country. These families walk with one proverbial foot firmly planted in the civilian world, and the other in the military world. This duality can pose challenges regarding access to resources and services, and feeling as though those around them are able to process and understand challenges faced based on them being part of the larger military community.

One way to help generate increased awareness of the unique lives National Guard Families live is to invite them to share their story. It is through sharing that non-military youth and families are afforded opportunities to deepen their understanding of the military and military-connected families in their communities.



PURPOSE: To help youth increase a shared understanding of the lives of both military and non-military families

MATERIALS:

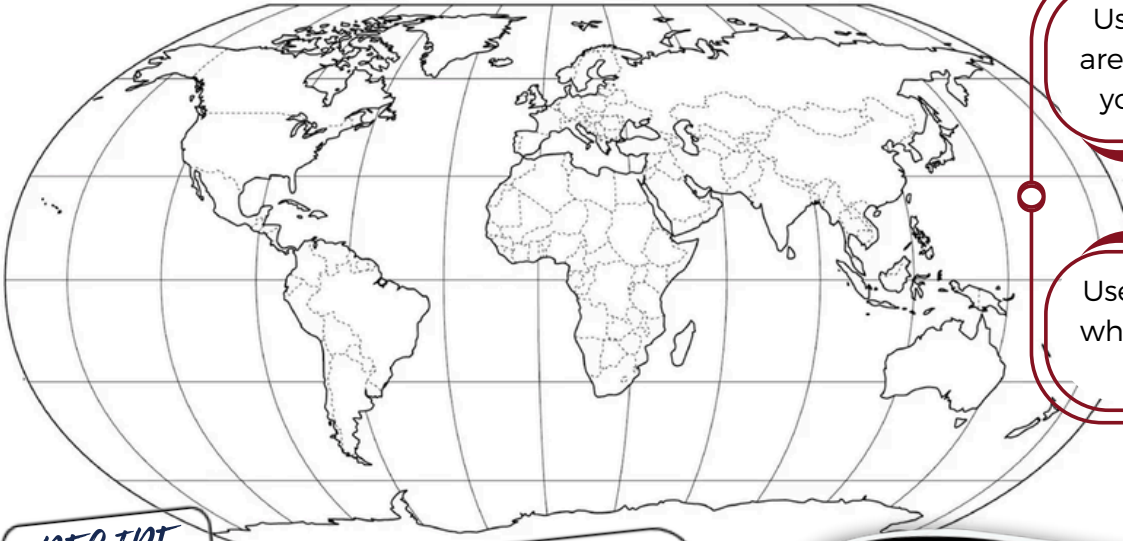
- Handout
- Writing utensils
- Colored pencils, markers and/or crayons

QUESTION PROMPTS:

- What does the word 'unique' mean to you?
- When you hear someone say the word 'family,' what do you think of?
- Do members of a family always have to be related, or can family include other people in our lives?
- When we talk about sharing the unique story of our family, what might that mean or include?
- Do all families have the same story, or do families have different stories?
- What is something that makes your family unique from your peers?

MY FAMILY STORY

A family story tells others about the unique history, culture and traditions our family celebrates. These stories not only help us better understand our own family, but also help us understand other families. What is your family's story? Use the spaces below to begin telling your family's unique story!



Using the map, color the areas of the world you and your family have visited.

Use another color to show where you and your family live now.

RECIPE

One food my family always likes to eat is...

A favorite memory I have of my family is...

What makes your family unique?
Share a story about your family below!

Continue writing your unique family story on a separate sheet of paper if you run out of space!

MOMC AND PURPLE UP

While this activity packet was developed in support of Military Family Appreciation Month (celebrated every November), there is another month with additional youth and military significance, April's Month of the Military Child (MOMC). Established by former Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, in 1986, the designation of April as the Month of the Military Child acknowledges the significant role military youth play in their communities. Military and military-connected youth face many challenges which are unique to their situation, such as having a loved one deployed, frequent moves, new schools, and leaving friends. Their ability to adapt and overcome these challenges deserves respect and recognition.

For 2025, the MOMC theme for the National Guard is: ***"National Guard Kids: Your Adventure Starts Here."*** This theme was selected due to the fact National Guard Youth often encounter experiences and situations their active duty peers do not. An example of this being that in many cases, National Guard Youth may be the only military or military-connected youth in their classroom, school or community - resulting in them having to overcome additional challenges to remain healthy and resilient. That National Guard has also selected **April 11, 2025, as Purple Up Day**, a day when individuals, businesses, groups and organizations are encouraged to wear purple in support of all military youth.

The color purple was chosen to represent military youth, as it is a culmination of colors from individual service branches: Army green, Marine red, and Coast Guard, Air Force and Navy blue. Additionally, the dandelion was selected as the flower to represent military youth because just like military youth, who may move multiple times in their life, dandelion seeds are often carried in the wind, yet still find the ability to grow and thrive - so too do military youth.

Be sure to connect with your local ARNG CYS Team to receive the latest updates and information on programming planned for your area. You can locate your Team's contact information by visiting the My Local CYS Program page of the ARNG CYS Website (<https://arngcys.com/my-localcys-program>).



Dandelion

The dandelion is a symbol of what it means to survive.
Often carried by the wind to places far and wide.
Whatever the obstacle, nothing stands in its way.
A determination to live, to reach for the sun each day.
Much like the humble dandelion, wherever it may roam,
Military Children are resilient, always finding a place to call home.

We honor their strength, their service and pride.
For like the dandelion, they show us what it means to thrive

IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING MOMC

PURPLE UP DAY: Encourage those around you to wear purple on April 12th as part of Purple Up Day.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Post and share pictures of people wearing purple and use the hashtag #NGMOMC24.

LEADER ANNOUNCEMENT: Ask local community leaders to show their support of military kids on social media and online.

WALL OF HEROES: Create a wall of heroes by having kids hang pictures on the wall of their heroes.

WHERE IN THE WORLD: Learn about all of the places around the world where military kids and families are located.

PATRIOTIC THEMED ACTIVITIES: Develop lessons and activities that teach kids about patriotism and flag etiquette.

GUEST SPEAKERS: Invite Service Members and veterans to come and speak about their experiences in the military.

SHARE STORIES: Invite military kids to share their stories about being part of the military community.

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT: Provide opportunities for military kids to connect and engage with their military peers.

ADOPT SERVICE MEMBERS: Reach out to deployed Service Members and send cards, letters and care packages.

RECOGNITION: Present military kids with a certificate of appreciation for their service to our country.

DRESS-UP OR THEME DAY: Designate a day or week where everyone dresses with a patriotic theme.

GET CREATIVE: Have kids create patriotic-themed art to share.

POWER OF PURPLE: Challenge others to wear purple throughout the month to show their support for military kids.



MILITARY-THEMED BOOKLIST

Another great way to show support for military families and youth is to incorporate books with military themes or messages. In some cases, themes and lessons presented through these books can translate over to non-military youth who might be experiencing their own separation from a loved one.

My Story

By Michelle D. Sherman, PhD, DeAnne M. Sherman
Published by Beaver's Pond Press, Inc.

You and Your Military Hero

By Sara Jensen-Fritz, Paula Jones-Johnson, and Thea L. Zitzow
Published by Beaver's Pond Press

America's White Table

By Margot Theis Raven
Published by Sleeping Bear Press

My Hero: Military Kids Write About Deployment

Edited by Allen Appel and Mike Rothmiller
Published by St. Martin's Press

My Mommy Wears Combat Boots

By Sharon G. McBride
Published by Author House

We Serve Too

By Kathleen Edick and Paula Johnson
Published by Wee the People Publishing

The Hero in My Pocket

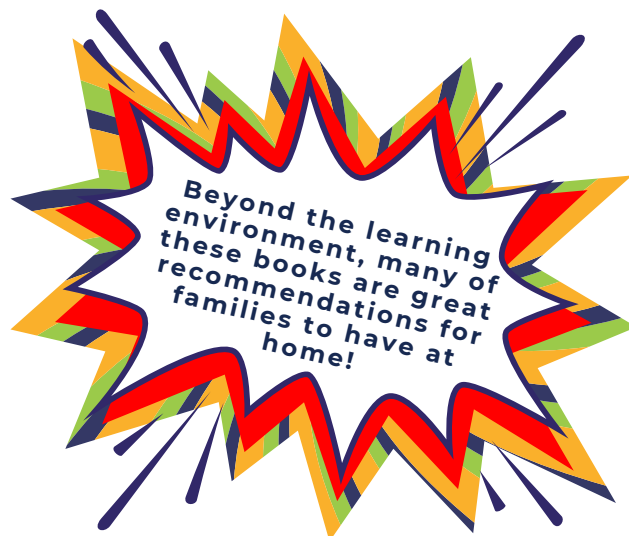
By Mariene Lee
Published by Early Light Press, LLC

Thumbs up to RED, WHITE & BLUE!

By Michelle Bain
Published by Pixie Stuff™ L.L.C.

Daddy Got His Orders

By Kathy Mitchell
Published by T.J. Publishing Company



When Dad's at Sea

By Mindy Pelton & Robert Gantt Steele
Published by Albert Whitman & Co.

I'll Lend You My Daddy

By Becky King
Published by Starts With Us

Soldier Mom

By Alice Mead
Published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux

My Daddy is a Soldier

By Kally Mayer
Published by CreateSpace Ind. Publishing

While You Are Away

By Eileen Spinelli
Published by Hyperion Book CH

The Bravest of the Brave

By Shutta Crum
Published by Knoph Books for Young Readers

My Red Balloon

By Eve Bunting
Published by Astra Young Readers

MILITARY-THEMED BOOKLIST

Daddy You're My Hero

By Michelle Ferguson-Cohen

Published by Little Redhaired Girl Publishing

Mommy You're My Hero

By Michelle Ferguson-Cohen

Published by Little Redhaired Girl Publishing

To Keep Me SAFE!

By Sarah R. Jones, M.S.

Published by State of Growth Publishing

A Year Without Dad

By Jodi Brunson

Published by Ithaca Press

The Kissing Hand

By Audrey Penn

Published by Child Welfare League of America

Love, Lizzie: Letters to a Military Mom

By Lisa Tucker McElroy

Published by Albert Whitman & Co.

Night Catch

By Brenda Ehrmantraut

Published by Elva Resa Publishing

The Next Place

By Warren Hanson

Published by Waldman House Press

The Impossible Patriotism Project

By Linda Skeers

Published by Puffin Books

The Soldier's Night Before Christmas

By Trish Holland and Christine Ford

Published by Golden Books

The Wishing Tree

By Mary Redman

Published by Elva Resa Publishing

I Miss You

By Beth Andrews

Published by Prometheus

Heroes

By Ken Mochizuki

Published by Lee & Low Books

The Soldier's Tree

By Stephanie Pickup

Published by T A O Army Kids Pub.

I'm Still Scared

By Tomie DePaola

Published by Putnam Juvenile

On The Wings of Heroes

By Richard Peck

Published by Puffin Books

A Good Day

By Kevin Henkes

Published by Greenwillow Books

Tear Soup

By Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen

Published by Grief Watch

A Very Long Time

By Jeri Timperley and Nikki Arro

Published by Interface Media Partners

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES & EDUCATORS

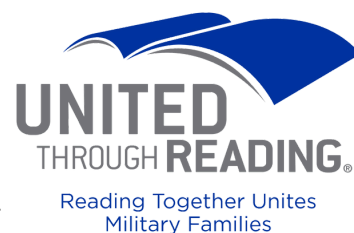
As an educator, you play a vital role in helping support military and military-connected youth. In those times when youth are experiencing many changes at home, educators provide the safety, consistency and security youth often need. Beyond this, educators force-multiply the ARNG CYS Program's efforts to connect military youth and families with available resources. The following resources are available to military families and may prove beneficial as we all work together to support our military youth.

UNITED THROUGH READING

United Through Reading knows that hearing a parent's voice and seeing their face is a truly unique experience that cannot be replaced. That's why our story time video recordings are able to be watched on-demand with their own copy of the book, whenever the child misses their service member.

Being read to by a parent helps military children feel like their parents are closer to home, reducing stress and anxiety levels and making it easier to cope while their parents are away. United Through Reading provides benefits for all military family members, not just children. Through these story time video recordings, servicemembers are also able to maintain close emotional bonds with their families at home, reducing feelings of separation or loneliness and helping them reintegrate to home life when they return. United Through Reading's free program is available to all branches of the military, regardless of duty status, including Veterans.

WEBSITE: <https://unitedthroughreading.org/>



TUTOR.COM

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



MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is a professional coalition with a diverse community consisting of public school districts, private schools, colleges and universities, as well as businesses and organizations all coming together to provide services to military youth, their families and the educators who support them.

MCEC is dedicated to ensuring inclusive, quality educational experiences for all military-connected children affected by mobility, family separation and transition.

WEBSITE: <https://www.militarychild.org>





THANK YOU!

There are approximately 1.2 million school-aged children with a military parent or guardian in the United States. Of this number, an estimated 90% of those children attend school in non-military school settings*. This is why educators play such a vital role in providing military and military-connected children with the support necessary for their overall well-being and resilience.

On behalf of military families and the Army National Guard Child & Youth Services Program we thank you for your commitment to teaching, inspiring and supporting all children in your classroom and district. You truly are a valuable member of our collective network of support. THANK YOU!!

* Department of Education and Department of Defense Education Activity

Disclaimer: Sharing of resources in this document does not constitute an endorsement by the National Guard, its staff or contractors.





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ARNG CYS: IT'S MORE THAN A PROGRAM, IT'S A PROMISE