

# ALABAMA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT FY21



*Several Members of the 2021 Youth Council gather on the steps at the Alabama State Capital for Month of the Military Child.*

# WHO WE ARE...

## MISSION

To promote and sustain the quality of life and resiliency of National Guard families by providing secure, timely, flexible, high-quality support services and enrichment programs to National Guard children and youth.

## GOALS

**Education:** Provide developmentally-appropriate life skills education to NG youth.

**Access:** Provide information on access to federal and state/territory benefits that support NG children and families, including: counseling, education, child care, and other resources needed to foster a healthy, stable, and secure family environment.

**Opportunity:** Create partnerships for opportunities to participate in programs, events, and activities geared toward the behavioral and physical health and welfare of children and youth that are available across the spectrum of government, community, and private sector.

**Communication:** Build a sense of belonging to the ARNG community by creating secure opportunities to network with other youth, parents/legal guardians, and youth program facilitators in one's community, state/territory, and across the nation.

**Resilience:** Infuse resiliency and leadership skills and techniques into all ARNG children and youth programs.

**Outreach:** Build and sustain contact with parents/legal guardians, and children of the NG in order to create awareness of available support services and programs.

## VOLUNTEERS

58 volunteers assisted with the planning and execution of CYS events with a cumulative of 242 hours served. Volunteers assisted with our virtual events and our Camp In A Bag COVID distribution. They filled all the bags for the Operation Toy Soldier, and planned and coordinated several events for MOMC. Events would not be able to take place without the assistance of volunteers

## NUMBERS SERVED IN FY21

- 1312 ARNG Youth ages 6-12
- 479 ARNG Youth ages 13-18
- 66 ANG Youth ages 6-12
- 11 Gold Star Youth
- 12 Civilian Youth
- 247 ARNG Soldiers
- 398 Civilian Adults
- 12 Gold Star Adults



*Melissa Collins, a 2021 youth council member, participates in the MOMC recognition at the state capital.*



# HIGHLIGHTS

AN OVERVIEW FROM OCT 2020 - SEPT 2021

- 4 Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program events that served 226 ARNG soldiers and family members, 33 ARNG 6-12 year olds and 20 ARNG 13-17 year olds. During these events we discussed the effects of deployment and reintegration for the family.
- Alabama Child and Youth Services with the support of the Military Family Readiness Specialists distributed Christmas toys to 96 Alabama Army National Guard youth ages 6-12, 42 Air Guard youth ages 6-12, and 135 Army and Air youth ages 0-5 during the holiday season.
- Youth Symposium included a workshop on resilience skills & STEM activities to 16 ARNG youth ages 13-17.
- Served on the Middle District of Alabama's Human Trafficking Task Force. The task force included community resource agencies, local law enforcement, Department of Human Resources, school agencies, and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency. The benefits include trainings from local agencies that provide resources for at-risk youth. We also use the trainings to educate our families on potential at-risk behaviors during on-line usage, times of deployment, and gaming.
- 10 MOMC events that included the Governor's Proclamation signing by Governor Kay Ivey, virtual activity packs and recognition certificates, a community service project, senior recognition, Purple Up Day, and a partnered event with MCEC.
- 6 Youth Council Meetings that included 13 ARNG teens ages 13-18. Youth Council members also partnered with the Georgia National Guard Youth Council in developing a "Virtual Book Club."
- 21 Virtual Day Camps that included a drive through style "Camp In A Bag" experience, a "Wild About Summer" Series, "Say It With Music", and a "Stars and Stripes" camp.
- 1 weeklong Challenger Sports Soccer Camp for ARNG dependents ages 6-12.
- 1 Gold Star event that recognized ARNG Gold Star Families during the "Charters of Freedom" unveiling in Wetumpka, AL.
- 1 Education Outreach event with MCEC, NGR101 institute, was carried out virtually and had 17 teachers, parents, and other adults in attendance.
- 3 teens, ages 16-17, attended the Region 4 Youth Symposium hosted by North Carolina.

*"I like being a part of youth council for a few reasons. I like having an outlet to talk to other military kids about military problems that my friends just don't quite understand. I love having the opportunity to make new friends each year and overcoming challenges together. Being a part of the council gives me different types of training and volunteer experience (which can not only help your own life and others around you but it can also help you for college). Overall, youth council is just a fun and unique experience that you aren't likely to find anywhere else."*

*- Alycia Haynes, daughter of MSG Donald Haynes, 142nd MP BDE*

## YOUTH SYMPOSIUM

Alabama National Guard Child and Youth Services hosted our state Youth Symposium at the Alabama Wildlife Federation Natureplex in Millbrook, AL with sixteen teens. Teens participated in teambuilding exercises, fishing, and several STEM activities in the Natureplex Science Center. We also had ten new teens complete the two hour Resilience Skills for Teens. They were also able to learn about the CYS program, youth council, and received several partner resources. This was one of our few face to face events, and was truly a great experience being able to interact one on one with each other. The face to face connection brought teens together after a year of virtual events.



# YOUTH COUNCIL



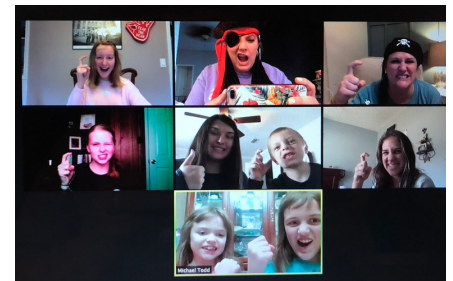
Alabama had 13 Army National Guard teens that served on the 2021 Youth Council. Youth were selected based on an application process that included an essay, letters of recommendation and GPA of 3.0 or higher. They participated in six meetings throughout the year. They discussed issues they face being geographically dispersed, ways to involve their communities and schools for support, and planning for upcoming events. They also participated in a virtual book club with the Georgia Youth Council. The outcomes were they spearheaded Purple Up! Day within their schools for Month of the Military Child. They also created a youth council officer training, and volunteered over one hundred community service hours, that included packing boxes for deployed troops, baking cookies for drill weekends, sorting toys during toy drives, and many others.

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

Due to the continued widespread number of COVID-19 cases, our virtual programming remained key to meeting our families' and kids' needs. We continued utilizing the "Virtual Activity Packs" that were created by Child and Youth programs Nationally and quickly grew in popularity as a monthly subscription event. We also continued our "Camp In a Bag" experiences, where families could pick up their bags and supplies, get a friendly smile and a wave. We hosted these pick up events in multiple parts of the state, several times a year. Each camp bag included a family recipe card, a STEM activity, an outdoor activity, an arts and craft, and other fun activities. Every camp kit contained all of the necessary supplies needed to successfully complete each activity. We would meet with the kids and families through Zoom to play games and discuss the activities from the pack. We also developed a virtual packet with North Carolina CYS coordinators, that targeted ages 6-10, titled "Hooked on Resilience". We also worked with the Georgia CYS coordinators to develop a virtual book club among our two youth councils, which prompted the two groups to work together to develop future activities. We served a total of 271 ARNG youth ages 6-12, and 69 ARNG teens ages 13-18 with the virtual day camps. The positive benefit was that we were able to reach more youth through the virtual experience than our traditional camps. Traditional camps were limited to the capacity numbers, whereas, the virtual programming did not have to have limitations. More youth were able to participate in virtual programming due to their involvement in their local communities with other youth activities.

# HOOKED ON RESILIENCE VIRTUAL CAMP

We developed with the North Carolina CYS team, an educational guide on resilience. The guide was targeted to ages 6-10 and was created for the entire CYS Team to be used to incorporate the MRT skills to our younger population. We used the guide during a virtual Zoom program where we were "Hooked on Resilience" and included a pirate STEM activity, which was led by several members of the youth council. The activity and guide were very successful in building connection between our Council and our younger youth.



# RESILIENCE TRAINING

Resilience was instrumental in our mental, emotional, and behavioral ability to cope with and recover from the impacts COVID-19 had on our program. We were able to achieve positive outcomes, adapt to change, stay healthy, and grow from the experience. We implemented a two hour MRT Training with 10 youth that included character strengths, hunt the good stuff, and goal setting.

*"I think it can be hard being a national guard kid because most of the time you do not have a close friend or classmate who has a parent serving so most do not understand what it is like. I feel like I could help others by encouraging local military kids to do fun things together and get to know each other. I feel like we could be a good support for each other all of the time not just during a deployment."*

- Braxton Strickland, son of SFC Jonathan Strickland, 115th ESB



# BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

The Alabama Army National Guard Child and Youth Services together with youth, adults, schools, civic groups, military, and private organizations have created a statewide support network. This collaboration has provided much needed support for our amazing military kids and families.

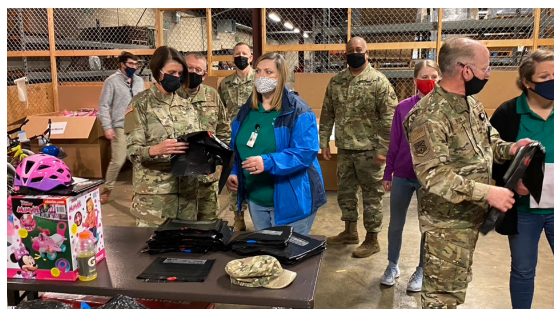


**MCEC**<sup>®</sup>  
Parent Programs

Our partnership with MCEC Parent Programs hosted two virtual "Tell Me A Story Events" in Huntsville and Montgomery. The Huntsville event had celebrity reader Nakia Burrise, the Yellow Power Ranger volunteer.



We partnered with our local MOS Consultant during our virtual Youth Council meetings. MOS provided trainings each meeting and allowed us the use of their secured Zoom platform for all of our virtual meetings.



The Adjutant General, MG Gordon, volunteers to bag toys for Operation Toy Soldier.

This partnership is known as "Operation Toy Soldier". The City of Hoover Fire Department acts as a collection center for toys that are given during the holiday season to our Service Members and their families. The toys are sorted at the Joint Force Headquarters and then distributed across the state to each Family Assistance Center where families pick up a load for their "Santa Clause" toys. New this year, families were able to receive a Christmas resource/educational guide.



Governor Kay Ivey signs the Month of the Military Child Proclamation with members of the Alabama Youth Council.

"Best part of being a military teen is the community with other military teens."

-Joshua Betts, son of  
CMSgt David Betts,  
187th FW





*Jackson Harris, son of SMSgt. Stephen and Jennifer Harris, was among the top five finalists for Military Child of the Year 2021, representing the National Guard. Jackson was selected as one of the top finalists out of hundreds of applicants throughout the country. He is a senior at Corner High School where he is ranked 1st in his class and will graduate in May with an Advanced Academic Diploma with honors and distinction.*

# CONTACT US

*Alabama Army National Guard Child & Youth Services*



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*Break time during our week long Challenger Sports Soccer Camp.*