

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

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

NEWS LETTER



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WELCOME TO THE NEW GUARD TEEN PANEL MEMBERS

The Guard Teen Panel (GTP) is proud to welcome its new delegates for the year: Isaiah Morgan (Region 1), Lucy Toe (Region 4), Sadie Foote (Region 6), and Kendra Borja (Region 9). Lily Johnson, previously the Region 5 delegate, now serves as an Army Director Teen Panel member, joining returning members Malaika Wande (Region 3), Kamryn Stauffacher (Region 8), Justus Spaulding (Region 10), and Camille Welch (Army Director Teen Panel).

This youth-led initiative amplifies the voices of Army and Air Guard teens, providing valuable perspectives to National Guard Leadership. This year, the GTP will update their log, refine bylaws, expand youth resources in their regions, and collaborate with partners like 4-H and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. They will also engage in events that connect military youth worldwide to address shared challenges.

We're excited to see the positive impact this passionate team will make as they empower Guard teens and inspire change!

FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH MONTH

Healthy habits start at home, and as parents, community partners, and volunteers, we have the power to help children develop habits that will set them up for a healthy future. This February, focus on encouraging kids to move more, eat healthier, and get enough sleep.

The American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8 offers valuable resources to support families in building strong, heart-healthy foundations for kids. Let's work together to empower children to lead healthier lives and thrive.



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REGION 2 UPDATES



New York recently hosted two fantastic events: the annual Trunk or Treat and the Holiday Military Family Appreciation event. This year's Trunk or Treat was the largest yet, with 34 adults, 37 kids, seven community partners, and two teen council members helping to make it a success. Highlights included a USO trailer packed with activities, therapy dogs from Operation at Ease, and interactive visits with police and fire trucks. Families had a blast, and the kids, unsurprisingly, loved the candy the most! In December, the state celebrated with popcorn, hot cocoa, and even bike raffles, courtesy of the USO. Operation at Ease therapy dogs were a hit once again, and Santa made a special appearance to delight the kids. Families enjoyed icebreakers, a showing of *The Grinch*, and learning more about our programs and volunteer opportunities.

The **Virgin Islands** Child and Youth Program played a key role in the Living Drug-Free Kite Festival on October 19, hosted by community partner, Access to Racial & Cultural Health Institute, Inc. (ARCH), during Red Ribbon Week. Five State Teen Panel members volunteered at the event, which numerous Guard youth and service members attended. Attendees pledged to live drug-free lives, decorated kites, and competed for prizes like highest flown, first flown, and most creative kite. ARCH also hosted a Family Summit with workshops on topics such as drug awareness, healthy habits, supporting children with differences, and the family's role in academic success.

Teen Panel member Edwin Collins stood out as a leader. Mentorship over the past two years has transformed him, helping him grow into a confident speaker who addressed a room full of adults with poise and insight. His journey is a powerful reminder of how guidance and support can empower youth to become impactful leaders. Moments like these highlight the importance of investing in our future leaders.



In November, the **New Jersey** Child and Youth Program CYP celebrated Month of the Military Family with an action-packed Field Day. Families enjoyed kickball, flag football, obstacle courses, and creative activities like face painting and bracelet making. Attendees also explored military vehicles, including a Humvee and HEMTT, and connected with resource specialists like Military OneSource and the Department of Veteran Affairs. The day concluded with a tour of the NJ National Guard Militia Museum, offering families an educational glimpse into Guard history. In January, nearly 25 families celebrated the holiday season with a Harry Potter-themed event. Families practiced active listening skills with interactive games, such as a Left-Right story game and a holiday music quiz. Activities like these fostered engagement while adding a magical twist with themed treats and a surprise visit from the North Pole.

This past quarter, the **Puerto Rico** National Guard Child and Youth Program collaborated with the State Teen Council and volunteers to prepare for exciting events like Month of the Military Child and summer camps, with plans to include more adventurous activities. In December, the program hosted a Christmas Workshop Day Camp, where participants enjoyed arts and crafts, team-building, and resilience activities. They explored "Hunt the Good Stuff," discovering ways to incorporate positivity into their daily family routines.

I ♥ TO READ MONTH

Reading is one of the most valuable skills children can develop, and February's I Love to Read Month is the perfect time to encourage young readers. Whether you're a parent, educator, or volunteer, there are plenty of ways to foster a love of reading at every stage of a child's development. Here are some age-specific tips to help inspire a lifelong passion for books:

For Elementary School (6-10 years)

- Make reading interactive: Discuss the story, ask questions, and create fun activities like drawing scenes or acting out parts of the book.
- Set a reading goal: Challenge kids to read a certain number of books each month or participate in reading challenges to make it more exciting.

For Tweens (10-13 years)

- Explore a variety of genres: At this stage, kids are ready to dive into chapter books, series, and graphic novels. Encourage them to try fantasy, mystery, historical fiction, or nonfiction topics that interest them.
- Set aside quiet time: Establish a designated reading time each day, like before bed or during free time, to help them create a reading routine.

For Teens (13-18 years)

- Respect their choices: Teen readers often want to read what interests them, whether it's fantasy, young adult fiction, or graphic novels. Let them pick their own books and support their choices.
- Connect books to life: Relate reading to their personal interests or current events, and encourage them to explore books that relate to their hobbies or future goals.

For All Ages:

- Model reading habits: Let kids see you reading, whether it's books, newspapers, or magazines. Your enthusiasm for reading can be contagious.
- Make it fun: Reading should feel like an enjoyable activity, not a chore. Incorporate games, rewards, and shared reading experiences to keep it exciting.

Encouraging a love of reading in children not only helps them academically, but also enriches their imagination, empathy, and understanding of the world. Whether you're reading to infants or discussing novels with teens, your efforts can have a lasting impact on their love for books.

Resources:

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: Free Books for Kids

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library sends a high-quality, age-appropriate book each month to registered children, addressed directly to them, at no cost to their family. This wonderful program fosters a love of reading and makes books accessible to children from birth to age five. To learn more and check availability in your area, visit their website: [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#).

PBS for Parents: Literacy

Age-by-age tips, articles, and activities related to literacy. To learn more, visit their website: [PBS for Parents: Literacy](#).

National Center for Families Learning: Cultivating Readers

The Cultivating Readers Family Guide offers practical tips to help children build reading skills from birth to age eight. Available in both English and Spanish, the guide includes helpful strategies and book recommendations to support early literacy development. Explore the guide and booklists on their website: [Families Learning: Cultivating Readers](#).



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

United Through Reading connects military families through reading. We do this by providing military service members with the opportunity to record and save storytime moments for their families to enjoy, no matter the distance. Each recording comes with a free copy of the book for your family to read along with your storytime recording. We also provide reading resources with tips and tricks to start a daily reading routine at home.

For More Information:
<https://unitedthroughreading.org/>

GET READY FOR MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD IN APRIL!

April is just around the corner, which means it's almost time to celebrate Month of the Military Child! This annual observance highlights the resilience, strength, and contributions of military children in our communities.

Mark your calendars for Purple Up! Day, happening on April 11th, when we wear purple to show our support for military kids and their unique sacrifices.

Be sure to explore our website, <https://arngcys.com/momc-2025>, for information on national initiatives and resources dedicated to honoring military children. **Connect with your local programs** and stay tuned for announcements about exciting local events and activities in your area.

Let's unite to celebrate and support the incredible children of our military families!

CYS CONNECT



Would you like to share how the CYS program has made an impact on you and your family? Tells us more at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/ShareYourCYSstory.



Lets us know how we are doing. Provide feedback on your experience with your local program over the last year at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Soldier-Parent25>

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