

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

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

NEWS LETTER

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REGION 7
TEENS +
STAFF



A GREAT SUMMER AND AN EXCITING SEASON AHEAD

What an incredible summer it has been for Army National Guard youth and families! Across the country, young people participated in camps, leadership experiences, STEM activities, community service projects, and opportunities to build new friendships and skills.

As summer winds down, back-to-school programs are already underway. Our Child & Youth Program teams are helping families prepare for the new school year while continuing to create meaningful opportunities for connection, learning, and support.

In this month's newsletter, you will meet Guard Teen Panel delegates who represented National Guard youth at the Army Youth Leadership Forum, learn how Region 7 teens served their community and strengthened their leadership skills, and explore resources available through United Heroes League.

We are proud of everything accomplished this summer and excited for all that is ahead!

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS MISSION: YOUTH OUTREACH

Through this initiative, eligible military-connected youth can receive a free or reduced annual Boys & Girls Club membership once each year. This stipend supports children and teens who are dependents of an active duty, National Guard, or Reserve military sponsor, giving them access to local Club programs designed to inspire, engage, and support positive growth.

Learn more at: <https://www.bgca.org/about-us/military/mission-youth-outreach-2025/>



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REGION 7 YOUTH SYMPOSIUM BUILDS LEADERSHIP, CONNECTION, AND SERVICE

Ten military-connected teens from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska gathered this summer for the Region 7 Child & Youth Program Youth Symposium. Throughout the week, they challenged themselves, built lasting friendships, served their community, and discovered that leadership often begins with listening and taking action.

Serving Others

Partnering with Meals from the Heartland, the teens packed 62,208 nutritious meals in 288 boxes, enough to feed 239 children for an entire year. The project reminded participants that even a few hours of service can create lasting change for families they may never meet.

Youth Voices That Reach the National Level

A representative from the Guard Teen Panel joined participants to facilitate the Army Family Action Plan process. Rather than simply discussing challenges, teens identified issues affecting military youth and developed practical recommendations that will be elevated to Army leadership.

One theme surfaced again and again: military teens want more opportunities to connect, but many do not know those opportunities exist. Participants called for increased awareness of State Teen Panels and Child & Youth Program opportunities through stronger outreach, school engagement, social media, and improved communication with military families.

Growing as Leaders

Participants developed leadership skills through Master Resilience Training, workforce readiness workshops, and team challenges, including the climbing wall and collaborative problem-solving activities.

"We all began socializing and communicating on day one," one participant shared, "and it made our projects go much smoother."

The greatest takeaway was not any single workshop, but the relationships built along the way. Teens from four states quickly discovered that while their stories were different, they shared many of the same experiences as military-connected youth.

In Their Own Words

In post-event surveys, participants rated the week nearly 9 out of 10, and every teen reported feeling more supported, less stressed, or *"like someone has our back."*

"I was really able to grow and make connections with people I've never met before, and we are leaving feeling like a family."

"It's so important for CYP teens to feel connected and have a support group they feel comfortable with."

"They show each other that they aren't going through things alone."

Participants also shared ideas for future programming. Several expressed interest in smaller, more frequent regional gatherings between annual events, providing valuable feedback as Region 7 plans for FY27.

Looking Ahead

Sometimes leadership looks like standing in front of a room. Other times, it looks like packing meals, listening to a teammate, or speaking up for military youth across the nation. This year's participants did all three. The teens' number one concern was awareness. Promoting State Teen Panels and Child & Youth Program events through unit channels, family readiness networks, and command communication is one of the most impactful ways to continue the momentum created during this symposium.



GUARD TEEN PANEL DELEGATES REPRESENT NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH AT ARMY LEADERSHIP FORUM

From June 26 through July 1, three Guard Teen Panel delegates represented Army National Guard youth at the Army Youth Leadership Forum in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Christian M. from Region 2, Charlee C. from Region 7, and Kendra B. from Region 9 joined Army teens from around the world for leadership development, collaboration, advocacy, and unique military experiences.

Throughout the forum, delegates discussed issues affecting military-connected youth, worked together to develop presentations for Army leadership, connected with fellow teens, and shared the experiences of National Guard youth. Christian and Kendra reflected on the moments that made the greatest impact on them.

LEARNING, LEADING, AND ADVOCATING

Written by Kendra B., Region 9 Delegate

From June 26 through July 1, I had the opportunity to represent National Guard youth at the Army Youth Leadership Forum. Forty-six Army youth from around the world attended, including three Army National Guard teens, one Army Reserve teen, and 42 Active Army teens.

On the first full day, the Army Teen Panel presented nine issues identified by Army youth worldwide. Participants then voted on the four issues they believed were most important: substance abuse, negative peer culture, a lack of soft-skills education, and limited job opportunities, especially for youth living overseas.

Over the next two days, we worked in small groups to develop creative presentations for Army leadership. I was part of the Yellow Group, and we performed a skit highlighting the importance of teaching soft skills to military youth.

We also learned from guest speakers and panels, including Kelly Pringle from the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, youth representatives who attended the 4-H Conference and Joint Service Teen Council, and Medal of Honor recipient Drew Dix.

During a visit to Fort Carson, we trained with athletes from the Army World Class Athlete Program who compete in track and field, wrestling, and boxing. We also spoke with a nutritionist and learned what life is like as a WCAP athlete.

As a National Guard teen, I had heard Active Army youth talk about the teen centers available on their installations, but this was my first opportunity to experience one. Seeing the space and programs firsthand gave me a greater appreciation for the resources available to Active Army youth.

Overall, YLF was a great opportunity to represent and advocate for the National Guard. I strengthened my leadership skills, collaborated with Army youth, and built meaningful connections with teens and Army leaders.





RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

United Heroes League helps ensure military children can participate in sports by providing free equipment, camps, tickets to professional sporting events, special experiences, and financial assistance.

Beginning August 1, eligible military families can apply for a United Heroes League Fall Sports Grant to help cover youth sports registration fees. Children may receive up to \$500 per grant and may qualify for one spring and one fall grant each year, provided the grants support different sports.

- August 1: Applications open
- August 31: Applications due
- October 1: Families are notified of approval or denial
- October 15: Grant checks are mailed

Learn more about eligibility, available programs, and the application process at unitedheroesleague.org.

Disclaimer: Sharing of resources in this newsletter does not constitute an endorsement by NGB, any contract vendor or the PM Team.

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MAKING SURE GUARD YOUTH ARE HEARD

Written by Christian M., Region 2 Delegate



On the final day of the Youth Leadership Forum, the Army National Guard teens were given the opportunity to brief the Active Army youth attending the event. We talked about how Guard teens and their families can have very different experiences from our Active Army counterparts. We felt it was important to help everyone better understand what makes life as a Guard youth unique.

We introduced ourselves, the Guard Teen Panel, the regions we represented, and shared personal remarks about what being a Guard youth is really like. We also talked about what the Guard Teen Panel accomplished during April and in the months that followed.

Even though everyone was tired after several long days, they listened and heard our message. The Guard had the stage in front of youth from across the Army. We may represent a smaller part of the Army community, but our experiences matter just as much. We use every opportunity we are given to advocate for National Guard youth across every state, territory, and the District of Columbia.

Before we left, I asked the other Guard Teen Panel representatives why they do this work.

Kendra said, *"I do it because I know that at these events I will be making a difference for youth across the 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. The opportunity is set in front of me for a reason, and I know that I will take these opportunities to make the change in the world that I want to see."*

Charlee shared, *"I do this because I want to make a difference in my life and leave behind a legacy. I have always wanted to do this, no matter how big or small. Through these programs, I am able to do that. This is why I participate in teen programs."*

And I do it because I know that somewhere, I am making a Guard teen smile. That is enough.