

# ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

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

## NEWS LETTER

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## LILY JOHNSON: JOINT SERVICE TEEN COUNCIL NEWS

As a member of the Joint Service Teen Council, I had the unique opportunity to speak directly with military leadership and discuss key issues affecting military-connected youth. During a special briefing held at the Pentagon, we presented concerns, including the challenges that geographically dispersed youth face, as well as how some official documents are redacted and affect the eligibility of Gold Star youth.

The council was made of teens from military bases around the world, each bringing a diverse perspective to the table. Our collaboration leads to strong connections and teamwork.

In addition to our advocacy work, we had the privilege of exploring Washington, D.C., including a tour of the National Monuments. This experience not only strengthened our leadership skills but also our understanding of the overall impact we can have in the military community.

## JOIN THE JOURNEY: OUR NATIONAL ADVENTURE IS UNDERWAY!

**OUR NATIONAL**  
*adventure*

DISCOVER | LEARN | EXPLORE | ENGAGE



DOWNLOAD NOW

This summer, we're inviting military-connected youth from across the country to take part in Our National Adventure—a fun, free, and flexible virtual experience designed to spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and build community. Whether you're traveling, staying close to home, or somewhere in between, this adventure goes wherever you go!

Ready to join in? Visit <https://arngcys.com/our-national-adventure> to learn more and get started today. Let's make this summer unforgettable—together!

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# REGION 6 UPDATE: SERVICE, LEADERSHIP, AND SUMMER FUN

## Louisiana: Supporting Families on the Homefront

Louisiana's Teen Panel members—Reed, Emma, Brianna, and Bentlie—answered the call at one of the largest Yellow Ribbon events in recent memory, supporting the 256th Infantry Brigade as over 1,200 attendees gathered, including special guest Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry, a former LANG member himself. The Teen Panel assembled deployment bags for every family, filled with resources from United Through Reading, deployment calendars, Operation Gratitude bears, and more. They also shared their own experiences as military youth, providing encouragement and even recruiting new campers for summer programming!



## New Mexico: Lifting Leaders and Curiosity to New Heights

In New Mexico, the Teen Panel is finding creative ways to lead and serve both on the ground and in the air. At the ESGR Bosslift event, panel members guided groups, captured photos, and hosted lunch for over 80 attendees, including 39 supportive employers of Guard members. Their professionalism showcased the strength of the Guard family and the bright leadership of its youth. They are also taking STEM outreach to new heights—literally—with Dandelion's Journey, a 25-foot model hot air balloon! Teen panelists are learning the science of balloon flight and will be sharing their knowledge at Yellow Ribbon events, schools, and community gatherings, sparking curiosity about aviation, engineering, and National Guard service.



## Texas: Young Heroes Grow Stronger Together

Texas hosted its much-anticipated Young Heroes Summer Camp, blending traditional summer camp fun with a strong focus on mental health and resiliency. Campers developed and shared a special mantra reflecting their military life experiences, while the Texas Youth Leadership Council stepped up to help facilitate resiliency training, team building activities, and even shelter-building workshops. The week was full of growth, connection, and confidence-building.



## Oklahoma: Virtual Connections, Real Impact

Oklahoma proudly hosted the Region 6 Teen Panel Symposium virtually this year, with 14 teens participating. SFPD LTC Clay Fees delivered a keynote address, and the group focused on MRT topics such as goal setting and character strengths. Teens enjoyed connecting virtually, watching recorded sessions from peers, and exploring ideas for future regional activities. A highlight included exploring downtown Oklahoma City, home to the 2025 NBA Champions — Go Thunder!

## Arkansas: Building Resilience and Teamwork

In Arkansas, military youth gathered for a two-day Youth Training Day Camp filled with team building, resilience workshops, and STEAM activities. Later in June, the teens came together again for an overnight Teen Retreat, packed with outdoor adventures and more team building exercises—an energizing way to kick off summer while strengthening connections and leadership skills.

# JULY IS ANTI-BOREDOM MONTH

## LET'S MAKE IT COUNT!

School's out, the sun is shining, and the long days of summer are here — but that doesn't mean boredom has to be! July is Anti-Boredom Month, and we're here to help National Guard families make the most of the season without stretching the budget. Whether you're far from a major installation or simply looking for fresh ideas, there are plenty of fun, affordable, and even free options designed with military families in mind.


### Be a Tourist in Your Own Town

You don't need to hop on a plane to find adventure! Look into local attractions like museums, nature trails, or community festivals. Start by checking your local Child and Youth Coordinators, Family Programs office, or Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) office for discount tickets and day trip ideas. Many communities also offer military discounts for events and shows — it never hurts to ask!

### Crafting, Reading & Cooling Off

Beat the heat with indoor activities like:

- Free craft programs at your local library
- DIY scavenger hunts using household items
- Reading challenges through the library or online platforms like the DoD-MWR Virtual Summer Reading Program

 **Check with your state or territory Child and Youth Coordinators for free virtual packets, appreciation events, day camps, or pop-up activities.**

### Free Entry to Museums, Zoos & Gardens

Through the Blue Star Museums program, active-duty military families (including National Guard on active orders) receive free entry to over 2,000 museums, botanical gardens, and zoos all summer long. Just show your military ID at participating locations. It's a great way to turn a hot afternoon into a cool, educational adventure!

### Embrace the Great Outdoors

Whether you're kayaking at a state park or camping under the stars, nature is an affordable escape. America the Beautiful National Parks Passes are free for military families, and some states offer additional discounts at parks or campgrounds. Want to keep it close to home? Build a backyard obstacle course or have a glowstick scavenger hunt at night — easy, low-cost, and unforgettable.

### Military Deals on Amusement Parks

Theme parks like SeaWorld, Busch Gardens, and others participate in the Waves of Honor program, offering free or discounted tickets to military families annually. These outings create lasting memories — and big savings.

### Links:

- **Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Office:** <https://www.armymwr.com>
- **DoD-MWR Virtual Summer Reading Program:** <https://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/libraries/summer-reading-program>
- **Blue Star Museums Program:** <https://bluestarfam.org/family-life/blue-star-museums/>
- **America the Beautiful National Parks Passes:** <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/veterans-and-gold-star-families-free-access.htm>
- **Waves of Honor Program:** <https://unitedparks.com/programs/waves-of-honor/?tab=active-duty>





**ARMED SERVICES YMCA**

## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

The Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) is dedicated to strengthening military families through hands-on, innovative programs and support services — with a special focus on junior-enlisted service members and their loved ones.

From child care and youth development to food assistance and deployment support, the ASYMCA is there to help — with no membership fees or dues and low-cost programming designed with military families in mind.

For more information:  
<https://asymca.org/>

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

## CELEBRATE AMERICA WITH FIREWORKS, FUN, AND A LITTLE HISTORY!

Every July 4th, Americans gather to celebrate Independence Day with cookouts, parades, fireworks, and lots of red, white, and blue. But how much do you really know about this patriotic holiday? Here are some fun facts to share around the picnic table this summer:

**It Wasn't Actually Signed on the 4th:** The Continental Congress officially adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776—but most of the delegates didn't actually sign it until August 2!

**Fireworks Are a Tradition That Dates Back Centuries:** The first Independence Day fireworks were set off in Philadelphia in 1777.

**It's a Big Day for Hot Dogs:** Americans consume about 150 million hot dogs on July 4th alone—that's enough to stretch from D.C. to L.A. more than five times!

**Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826**—exactly 50 years after Independence Day. President James Monroe also died on July 4, in 1831. President Calvin Coolidge was born on July 4, 1872!

Whether you're watching fireworks, spending time with family, or simply enjoying a day off, we hope your Fourth of July is filled with pride, joy, and a little bit of patriotic trivia!



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