



# DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS

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April 3, 2014



*A B-2 Stealth Bomber out of Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., prepares to be refueled by a 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, KC-135 Stratotanker April 2, 2014. The air refueling mission provided 25 Air Force ROTC cadets from St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Pa., the opportunity to observe the mission as part of the 108th Wing's orientation flight program. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)*



# HIGHLIGHTS

## DOD SALUTES CHILDREN DURING MILITARY CHILD MONTH

By Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, – The Defense Department believes military children serve their country alongside their service member parents, DOD’s director of the office of family policy/children and youth said.

When military children serve, they do so by making sacrifices when parents are deployed, through frequent moves, starting new schools and making new friends on a continuing basis, Barbara Thompson said in a recent interview with The Pentagon Channel for the Month of the Military Child that’s being celebrated in April.

“We feel it’s important for the nation to know that military children also serve their country,” Thompson said.

To honor military children for their sacrifices and service, DOD and the services have planned activities this month that range from installation-based fairs, parades, and literacy and art events, she said.

Military Kids Day, April 15, marks the third-annual “Purple Up!” day when adults wear purple to show support of children from all the services, Thompson said.

DOD has numerous year-round programs and awareness efforts to honor military children, and Thompson elaborated on some of those initiatives.

To help children build their resilience, DOD has coordinated programs with Sesame Street to help with ongoing change in military children’s lives, Thompson noted.

“Sesame [Street] has been an outstanding contributor to the well-being of military children,” she said, naming a series of DVDs that cover such topics for military children as divorce, grief, separation and deployment, resilience skills, and visible or invisible injuries.

Sesame Street also recently launched two new smartphone applications.

“One [app] covers relocation, and another is to help children learn self-regulation skills so they become more resilient,” Thomp-

son said. “And everything is free.”

Thompson emphasized that April also is Child Abuse Prevention Month and said awareness in this arena is important to DOD.

“Child Abuse Prevention Month is particularly important because it’s a social responsibility for all of us to make sure children are safe and their well-being is protected,” she said. “Everybody has a responsibility.”

Giving parents the tools to make them strong supporters of their children and to keep them safe from predators and from violence within the family is crucial, she added.

“Parenting is tough, regardless of the situation and the age of the child. They each bring their nuances to the table, whether it’s children at [age] 2 who say ‘no,’ or a teenager who’s sometimes a little defiant,” she said.

DOD offers parenting skill resources, Thompson noted, such as the newly launched Parenting Course. The course, she explained, examines parenting from the context of the military lifestyle, which revolves around deployments and parental separations from their children at different stages of their development.

And an installation-based initiative, the new Parent Support Program, involves home visitation for new parents of children up to age 3, “to help parents reach their full potential working with and being responsible for their children,” Thompson said. The Marine Corps’ program supports parents with children up to age 5, she added.

“The New Parent Support Program is a part of the Family Advocacy Program, which has a prevention piece that offers courses and opportunities for support groups. We want to make sure we address the stressors in families’ lives before they escalate,” Thompson said.

“Sometimes [certain] things really push our buttons,” she added. “So we need to have the tools, to know how to cope with those kinds of stressors and how we react to them.”



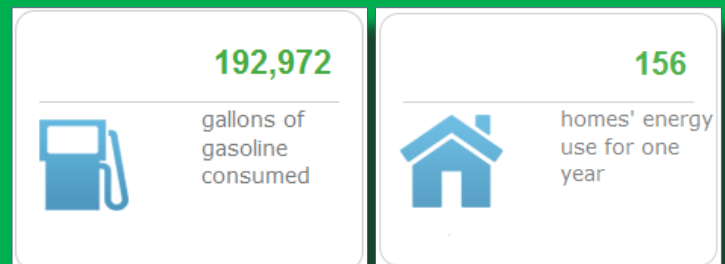
## Energy Conservation

### Energy Conservation Tip of the Week

Be proactive and turn off lights when you leave a room. Lighting accounts for 25 to 30 percent of a building’s energy use, so reducing the amount of unnecessary lighting is an easy and cheap way to make a big impact.

### Did You Know?

The New Jersey Army National Guard has installed more than 1,600 kilowatts of solar photovoltaic (PV) array systems since 2009? These solar systems provide 15.5 percent of NJARNG’s annual electricity use, help avoid more than \$200,000 in annual utility costs, and reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by more than 1,700 metric tons! This is equivalent to:



Source: <http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/calculator.html>

If you would like more information about our energy and water conservation efforts, please contact Christopher Moore, New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs energy manager at [christopher.moore@dmava.nj.gov](mailto:christopher.moore@dmava.nj.gov).



# REMEMBER RESPECT HONOR

*Gold Star Wives Day - April 5th 2014*

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THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF THEIR FALLEN SOLDIER



[www.GoldStarPins.org](http://www.GoldStarPins.org)

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**2014 Hiring Our Heroes Veterans Event – Trenton, NJ**  
**Samaritan Church**  
**531 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard**  
**Trenton, NJ 08618**  
**April 30, 2014**

**HIRING FAIR: 10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.**

**EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP: 8:30 A.M.**

This American Legion-sponsored employment event is being conducted by U.S. Chamber of Commerce; local Chambers of Commerce; New Jersey Committee, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve; The American Legion; Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training; the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development (NJ LWD), the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA), and the New Jersey State Parole Board. We are particularly grateful to American Legion Post 182; our hosts at Samaritan Baptist Church; and the Concerned Pastors of Trenton and Vicinity.

**EMPLOYERS**  
Must register for **FREE** at [www.hiringourheroes.org](http://www.hiringourheroes.org)

**JOB SEEKERS**  
*Veterans, Active Duty Military, Members Of Guard And Reserve Components, Military Spouses*  
Register for **FREE** at [www.hiringourheroes.org](http://www.hiringourheroes.org)  
Walk-ins always welcome

A workshop for veterans and other military job seekers that focuses on resume writing, tips for successfully navigating hiring fairs, military skill translation, and interviewing will start at 8:30 a.m. To register for Hiring Our Heroes Employment Workshop, visit [hohworks.eventbrite.com/](http://hohworks.eventbrite.com/)

For registration questions, please contact [hiringourheroes@uschamber.com](mailto:hiringourheroes@uschamber.com) or call 202-463-5807.





## HIGHLIGHTS



### DISABILITY CLAIMS BACKLOG REDUCED BY 44 PERCENT *Lowest level since Agent Orange cases added in 2011*

WASHINGTON – One year after the backlog of pending disability compensation claims peaked at over 611,000 in March 2013, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reduced that number by approximately 44 percent to 344,000 claims – a reduction of more than 267,000 – while at the same time improving the accuracy of the decisions being made on Veterans’ disability claims. Additionally, on average, Veterans are waiting 119 days less for a decision than they were at this time last year.

“No Veteran should have to wait to receive earned benefits. Through a combination of transformation initiatives and the hard work of our employees, we are making significant progress toward our goal of eliminating the claims backlog in 2015,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. “We still have more work to do, and no one is more committed than our Veterans Benefits Administration employees, over half of whom are Veterans themselves.”

The current backlog, defined as claims pending more than 125 days, is at its lowest point since March 2011, when the backlog spiked in part because of the need to re-adjudicate 150,000 previously decided cases involving exposure to the Vietnam-era defoliant, Agent Orange. The re-adjudication of these claims was mandated under the *Nehmer* court decision and followed the Secretary’s decision to add ischemic heart disease, certain leukemia, and Parkinson’s disease to the list of conditions presumed to be related to exposure to Agent Orange. During this same time period, VA also received and processed over 100,000 new claims for these three conditions from Vietnam Veterans and survivors newly eligible for VA benefits as a result of this decision.

“We knew taking care of this ‘unfinished business’ for Veterans of previous wars would initially drive up the number of claims in our system. But it was the right thing to do,” said Secretary Shinseki.

Since establishing the goal in 2010 of processing all disability claims within 125 days at a 98-percent accuracy level, VA devel-

oped and is implementing a plan that transforms the decades-old, manual paper claim approach into a state-of-the-art electronic process that leverages digital data transfer and automated calculators to reduce processing time and input errors.

VA has also increased the productivity of its claims processing workforce through enhanced training, streamlined business processes and other initiatives such as mandating overtime and prioritizing the oldest claims, allowing VA’s 56 regional benefits offices to exceed monthly production records four times in fiscal year 2013.

At the same time, the accuracy of rating decisions continues to improve. VA’s national “claim-level” accuracy rate, determined by dividing the total number of cases that are error-free by the total number of cases reviewed, is currently 91 percent – an eight-percentage-point improvement since 2011. When measuring the accuracy of rating individual medical conditions inside each claim, the three-month accuracy level is 96.5 percent. VA’s accuracy measures are statistically valid and the process has been independently verified by the Institute for Defense Analyses.

VA claims processors continue to prioritize disability claims for homeless Veterans, those experiencing extreme financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims (FDC). Filing an electronic FDC is the quickest way for a Veteran to receive a decision on their compensation claim (<http://www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/>).

Regardless of the status of their compensation claims, Veterans who have served in combat since Nov. 11, 1998, are eligible for five years of free medical care from VA for any illness associated with their service.

Veterans can learn more about disability and other Veterans benefits on the joint Department of Defense/VA web portal *eBenefits* at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov).

**OUR VETERANS DESERVE  
THE BEST HEALTHCARE  
IN THE WORLD**



# HIGHLIGHTS



*The J-1 Human Relations Office sponsored a Women's History Month lunch event March 28, 2014 at Joint Forces Headquarters in Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. With the theme of "Celebrating Women of Character, Courage and Commitment" three female Soldiers addressed the audience. The trio of speakers, left to right, were retired Army Master Sgt. Jane Hackbarth, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michele Thomas, and retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Janice Doss. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn P. Westhoven/Released)*



## USO PRESENTS OPERATION THAT'S MY DRESS

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2014 • NEW YORK CITY



### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Honoring children of military families for their sacrifices and courage, the USO will host one of our premier military family appreciation programs – Operation: That's My Dress! – in April, the month of the military child. Military children experience unique challenges related to military life and culture. Due to frequent moves, many military children experience disrupted relationships with friends, and must adapt to new schools and cultivate new community resources. Operation: That's My Dress! is just one of the many ways the USO makes Every Moment Count for our troops and their families.

In partnership with SHERRI HILL, international fashion designer for Hollywood celebrities and pageant contestants, the USO will provide 400+ new gowns/dresses to teenage girls just in time for the 2014 prom season. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, in NYC, this one-day event will feature a private Fashion Show with professional models and Miss USA and Miss Teen USA state pageant title holders from across the country, entertainment by the USO Show Troupe, food and so much more. A Prom Expo prior to the dress giveaway will include TV celebrity hosts, hair and makeup demonstrations, consultations with beauty pageant contestants and celebrity stylists, and accessory giveaways.

### FIELD HOUSE EXPERIENCE AT CHELSEA PIERS

Following the runway Fashion Show extravaganza, children not receiving a prom dress can spend the afternoon in the Field House at Chelsea Piers, site of Manhattan's most comprehensive and organized amateur sports programs. Kids will enjoy private instruction on the 23-foot indoor climbing wall, perfect for beginners or experienced climbers; time in state-of-the-art batting cages and a ProBatter<sup>®</sup> Simulator, which is used at Major League Baseball stadiums and training sites; time to shoot hoops on two hardwood basketball courts; and trampoline lessons at the world-class Chelsea Piers Gym complex.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, USO will publicly announce the participation and attendance of a celebrity from a top-ranked television series – stay tuned! As a special treat, Sherrri Hill will be on-site to work one-on-one with the girls to select the perfect dress for that very special night.

Since the inception of this program, SHERRI HILL and the USO have provided more than \$1 million in dresses to military families at Fort Campbell, Fort Hood and Camp Lejeune. A similar event is scheduled in Fall 2014 for Homecoming dances in the San Diego Area, more details to follow soon.

SHERRI HILL



### ATTENDEES

Children of active duty service members, regardless of geographic location, are invited to attend the event.

Teenage girls attending a Prom in 2014 are invited to receive a SHERRI HILL prom dress.

### FOR EVENT INFORMATION

Contact Ray Kennedy at [rkennedy@usonyc.org](mailto:rkennedy@usonyc.org)  
212-695-5590, ext 228

### FOR SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

Contact Jessica Herman at [jherman@usonyc.org](mailto:jherman@usonyc.org)  
212-695-5590, ext 227

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [USONYC.ORG](http://USONYC.ORG)



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**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [CAMDENCOUNTY.COM](http://CAMDENCOUNTY.COM)  
OR CALL 1-866-226-3362**



# HIGHLIGHTS



US Family Health Care, a Tricare Prime option providing a civilian based managed care network, will be holding Question and Answer sessions to provide information for servicemembers and families.

USFHP pushes forward effective Jan. 1, 2014, and they are adding an extra benefit to their already robust benefit package! Eye glasses for \$0 to low cost. To hear more about USFHP and this added benefit, come to one of their upcoming information sessions listed below:

**Fort Dix Housing Community Center**  
Bldg. 1134 Hemlock Street, JB-MDL  
April 7 / 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Contact: Josephine Grey at 347-501-2308

**JB-MDL McGuire Library**  
2603 Tuskegee Airmen Ave, JB-MDL  
April 28 / 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

**JB-MDL McGuire Housing  
Jim Saxton Community Center**  
3811 South Boiling Street, JBMDL  
April 8 / 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

**108th Wing Airmen & Family Readiness Office**  
3327 Charles Blvd, JB-MDL  
April 16 / 1 to 4 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

**Bordentown Library**  
18 East Union Street, Bordentown, NJ  
April 17 / 12 to 4 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

**Picatinny Arsenal Army Community Service**  
Bldg. 119, Dover, NJ  
April 15 and 29  
Contact Darrel Hutchinson at 646-354-0126

**Pemberton Community Library**  
16 Broadway Street, Brownmills, NJ  
April 14 / 12 to 4 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

**Mount Laurel Library**  
100 Walt Whitman Ave, Mount Laurel, NJ  
April 11 / 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Contact: Josephine Grey at 347-501-2308

**Camden County Veterans Affairs**  
3 Collier Dr., Lakeland Complex, Blackwood, NJ  
April 7, 14, 21 and 28 / 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Contact: Wil Acosta at 646-300-1312

**NJDMAVA Bldg**  
IASD Section,  
101 Eggerts Crossing Road, Lawrenceville, NJ  
April 16 / 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Contact: Josephine Grey at 347-501-2308

**177th Fighter Wing**  
Bldg. 229, 400 Langley Rd., Egg Harbor Twp, NJ  
April 3 / 12 - 4 p.m.  
Contact: Josephine Grey at 347-501-2308

**NJNG Jersey City Armory**  
678 Montgomery Street, Jersey City, NJ  
May 1, 8, 15 and 22 / 1 to 6 p.m.  
Contact: Darrel Hutchinson at 646-354-0126

**NJNG Toms River Armory**  
1200 Whitesville Road, Toms Rive, NJ  
April 10 / 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

**NWS Earle**  
Bldg. C29, 201 Highway 34 South, Colts Neck, NJ  
April 23 / 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.  
Contact: Pam Kwiat at 646-341-2545

Call 1-800-241-4848 option 3 or visit [www.usfhp.net](http://www.usfhp.net) for more information.

**DMAVA Highlights** is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, the National Guard, Veterans Affairs or the state of New Jersey. Letters may be sent to: NJDMAVA, DMAVA Highlights, Public Affairs Office, PO Box 340, Trenton NJ 08625-0340. e-mail at [pao@njdmava.state.nj.us](mailto:pao@njdmava.state.nj.us).

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