



SMSD Information and Resources

Service Members and Military Families

May 18, 2020

Military Spouse Appreciation Showcase

We once again pause to recognize the guidance offered by exceptional military spouses. Matthew Delaney, spouse to SSG Susan Delaney. He is very supportive and proud of Susan who has been in the military 14 years and is working on her 20. John Conlin is married to SPC Myriah Conlin. John is a veteran, serving 16 years in the Army and Army Reserves. He was deployed 6 times to Bosnia, Kosovo, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. Alli Ryan is married to 1SG Austin Ryan with the 457th Chemical Company. CSM Georgett Hall (not pictured) serves with the 426th Regiment, while her husband SFC Brian Hall is part of JFHQ.

What does it mean to be a military spouse?



Matthew and SSG Susan Delaney

Matthew: It means being open, flexible and understanding at times they are not there. It's their job and who they are and what they signed up to be. Deployments are difficult. I've been fortunate, we've only had to deal with one back in 2012. It was nearly a year, and it was a very difficult time for both of us. Thankfully we made it through, and were able to pick everything back up once she returned. It isn't so easy for everyone, and every relationship is different.

John: Being a military spouse means being there for your spouse. Keeping things positive over the phone, taking care of the house when they are gone.



John and SPC Myriah Conlin

Alli: My role as a military spouse often involves a lot of patience, a willingness to foster communication, and the ability to meet new challenges with curiosity. It means recognizing and embracing "This too shall pass." It will pass when it's hard and it will pass when it's good. I'm proud to ride those waves together as a family with a deepened sense of gratitude.

Georgett: I think my perspective on being a military spouse is far different than the typical spouse for two reasons. First, I was the sole military member for quite a few years and deployed while my husband stayed home and kept our family moving. Second, I'm still serving so now we are a dual military family. That said, there is a huge sense of pride knowing my husband serves. Our son is growing up watching his sense of duty, the persistence and focus needed to do well, and the service to others mentality.

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Alli and 1SG Austin Ryan

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Georgett (Continued): He hears the conversations about being a leader and what that means for Soldiers. These are things that you don't get in a non-military family. I truly enjoy knowing that my husband is making a difference in the lives of those around him and he stands ready to conduct whatever mission is required.

What advice would you give a new military spouse?

Matthew: New military spouses have to be able to take "I don't know" as an answer. That's something I struggled with, and sometimes still do. In the military soldiers are sometimes given orders without also getting the full picture, so when I ask my wife for specifics, and she tells me she doesn't have any answers, I have to be OK with that. Neither the military nor my wife are being sneaky or malicious, but what they are doing is important. Be supportive and understanding. Know that you will be alone for quite some time because your spouse will be gone for drill weekends and missions which can be 2-3 months at a time. You have to be your own person. You can be strong and have a loving marriage even while apart.

John: Don't worry! Do your own thing, take care of yourself. Because that is what they are doing. They have it under control. You only need to worry when someone tells you to worry.

Alli: Learn how to use the snow blower! In all seriousness, I would tell a new military spouse/partner to get comfortable asking for what you need. It's hard to have your soldier unpredictably absent. It's ok to need a community of folks around you to step in, offer a listening ear or help with a meal/childcare/clearing the driveway. Sometimes I felt incredibly proud that my guy was working hard to protect and serve our country. Other times, I felt frustrated and worried. Make space for all those feelings and create a chosen family that get it.

Georgett: There is nothing that will prepare a new military spouse for their new role -it's the hardest job in the military. As soon as you think you've got the hang of it, something will come along and throw you for a loop. You have to know what resources are available or who to call first. It's always nice to know that you're not alone in any situation. Make friends with the spouses and service members around you. During your service member's deployment, ask for and accept help. People generally don't like to do this because they don't want to be a burden. Trust me, you're not a burden. You are part of a much larger family and help is what we do. You'll have an opportunity to pay it forward during somebody else's deployment or time of need. Most important, stay flexible. There will be late nights, early mornings, and periods of absence and there won't always be advance warning. We need the support of our families to do what we do.

Pure Joy

Jesse Klement | Soldier and Family Readiness Specialist in Wausau

What can I write that gives you inspiration, guidance or a feel-good article? I am a jack of many trades but master of none. Is that how the saying goes? It's a good one to describe me. I love people and animals. Is there anything better than being around happy people? I mean deep down in your soul happy. Where their eyes sparkle and their smile is genuine. Don't get me started on a good laugh. That's just icing on the cake, which I happen to enjoy also! What brings you joy or makes you happy? Close your eyes and think deep. Take a breath and seriously think about it. Don't just think of easy ones like family or spending time with friends etc. When I close my eyes I can hear soft music. I enjoy all kinds of music depending on my mood and activity. The sight and smell of flowers make me happy. Daffodils in the ditch or fresh-cut tulips on the table. Lilac trees that you can smell before you even see them on a walk. Heifers that come out of the barn for the first time in the spring. After a long winter, opening up the doors to let them outside. My dad says that is a joy of his, even after all the years of farming he leans on the barn door to watch them run, kick and genuinely be happy out in the fresh air every spring. How about food? Not necessarily eating it (although my teenagers would beg to differ) but preparing it for others. My mom could bake and cook all day to surprise a friend or family with the joys of a home-cooked meal. Guaranteed to be packed with more love than calories. The lake. The anticipation of getting closer as you have your boat all packed and ready for the day's adventure. The sounds of the fish jumping or the waves crashing or the stillness and calm of the water. Stop and look around the boat landings. Everybody chats is happy, and willing to lend a helping hand when needed. A bad day on the water is better than a good day in the office, right? Watch a youngling' reel a fish in. If that face isn't pure joy, I don't know what is. Take a closer look at the other people watching the action. THAT my friends is pure joy. Watching and experiencing other's joy brings happiness. I'll never tire of watching others be happy. That is what makes my soul truly happy. Next time you need a good dose of happiness, look around. It's everywhere, soak it all in.

If you are struggling with your "happy" feel free to reach out to me at <https://wisconsinmilitary.org/fac/> for additional resources and referrals or check out our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/WIFamilyPrograms>.

Military Spouse Employment Opportunities

Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) The Department of Defense MSEP connects military spouses with hundreds of partner employers who have committed to recruit, hire, promote and retain military spouses. Check out our website's [employment page](#) for more details and a list of Military Spouse Employment Partners to include many of telework opportunities. Some on the partnership list for telework include; American Health Connection, accountingdepartment.com, LLC, Armed Services YMCA of the USA, Werner Enterprises and many more. The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program provides expert education and career guidance to military spouses worldwide. This partnership includes more than 390 partners or military-friendly employers. Additional resources or information can always be found on www.wisconsinmilitary.org or by calling 1-800-292-9464 opt 1.

To Make the Best Better

Jayne Nakielski | Soldier & Family Readiness Specialist in Portage

Before joining the Service Member Support Division, I was a LTE with the Department of Transportation and recent Master of Strategic Public Relations graduate from The George Washington University. However, at my core, I have been and will always be a farmer. I have raised livestock on my family farm and advocated for agriculture since my youth. Although I do not have a military background, I am no stranger to the concept of service for the benefit of others, personal responsibility and self-sustaining life skills. I learned all of these concepts through my local 4-H program. I am a proud alumni of the North Scott 4-H Club. During my 10 year membership I learned about; public speaking, local government, the arts, gardening, cats, youth leadership, how to raise crops, cattle and swine and market agriculture products. I also served the community through Adopt-A-Highway, facilitating bingo for care center residents and sending military care packages.

The 4-H organization is facilitated by UW-Division of [Extension County offices](#) throughout Wisconsin. Despite my own personal journey, 4-H offers [opportunities for kids in urban settings](#) too. Another wonderful fact about the organization is 4-H Clubs are present throughout the U.S. and it's territories and in 80 countries around the world! If you have children, I would encourage you to enroll them in [your local club](#). The lessons that can be learned through 4-H are truly life changing. There is a reason the motto is, "To Make the Best Better" because that is what 4-H program accomplishes.



As an adult I gave back to the organization by directing musical programs, being a livestock project leader and through communication arts judging. You don't have to be a 4-H alumni to be a project leader and teach new life skills to children in your community. If you have special skills or hobbies, consider contacting local clubs to find out what their needs may be for project leadership. You may also consider being a guest speaker at a 4-H meeting to share military life experiences. Special guest speakers offer unique opportunities for 4-Hers to learn about new professions or possibilities.

In addition to facilitating the 4-H program, [Extension](#) provides information regarding agriculture, community development, health, natural resources, families and finances. If you're concerned about food scarcity or would like to know what it takes to grow your own garden and preserve your yields, you don't have to be a 4-Her. Extension provides a wealth of information and resources to adults. They manage the [Master Gardener](#) program and some counties offer to test the gauges on pressure cookers used for canning. They also offer information on [community food systems](#).

If you're interested in making your "best better" or you would like to connect with your county Extension office but unsure where to begin, please reach out to me. You can find my contact information on our website: <https://wisconsinmilitary.org/fac/>