



SMSD Information and Resources

Service Members and Military Families

May 11, 2020

Military Spouse Appreciation Showcase

We're back, showcasing more dynamic military spouses. Liz Walsh is married to LTC Dan Walsh. He is currently serving as the Chief of Staff for the Brigade Advisors Section for HHC 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Jeff Nicksic is married to SPC Kaleigh Nicksic, HHC 732nd CSS Mya Brown is married to SFC Daniel Brown with Det 2, Co D 1st BN 112th AVN, West Bend.



Liz and LTC Dan Walsh

What does it mean to be a military spouse?

Liz: It's about commitment. Commitment to your spouse, their career in the military and to your life together. Being a military spouse has allowed me to form a deep appreciation for what our service members do for our country on a daily basis. It has helped me to realize that life cannot be measured in months or years, but instead in the moments we have as a couple and a family. Being a military spouse can mean traveling to different countries to spend leave time together, standing proudly by his side at official events and being able to make lifelong connections and friendships with other military families. While the military brings plentiful changes to our life; the one constant we always have is each other.

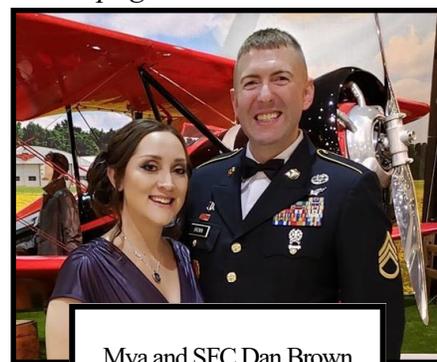


Jeff and SPC Kaleigh Nicksic

Jeff: Being a military spouse means to be stable for your spouse when there are so many unknowns in the world. Be supportive, reliable and patient.

Mya: Learn to be okay with change, everything seems to change a lot and at times very quickly. There will be sacrifices you will have to make with some unexpected. My husband being gone for drill, deployments and schools caused him to miss birthdays, time with the kids and needing to adjust family plans. It can be very hard for others to understand what it means to be a military spouse. I support my husband serving our country and would never want to take that away from him.

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Mya and SFC Dan Brown

Celebrate Armed Forces Day!

Established by President Truman in 1949, the creation of [Armed Forces Day](#) signified the consolidation of all the military branches under the Department of Defense. Citizens are encouraged to unite and to honor military heroes for their patriotic service in support of the United States of America. This year, Armed Forces Day falls on May 16.

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What advice would you give a new military spouse?

Liz: The military requires flexibility both of its soldiers and of their families. Be open to change and realize that your role “at home” may be adjusted when your service member is away. Lean on your military family for support as most have been through similar types of scenarios and can help guide you when times may seem tough. Honor and sacrifice go hand in hand as a military spouse. It may not always be easy, but it will always be worth it.

Jeff: Be patient. Find friends that understand your

situation to be supportive and use your resources! The military has so many resources for therapy, finances, legal...you name it!

Mya: Don't hold a grudge. Try to see things through your spouse's eyes as they try to support you and carry out their military duties. It can be easy to forget they may not necessarily want to be gone serving a deployment, in school, at drill or annual training when it happens. Don't try to do everything on your own. Reach out to the resources available to you and ask. It is not a sign of weakness to ask for and accept help/assistance when your spouse is away serving in the uniform.

The Resiliency of a Military Spouse

Karen Degner | Soldier and Family Readiness Specialist in West Bend

I am excited to be a part of the Service Member Support Division (SMSD) Family Programs as a Soldier & Family Readiness Specialist (S&FRS). I previously worked as a Family Assistance Center (FAC) Specialist, in the non-profit world as the Military Families Connect Coordinator and apartment management. My husband is currently serving (again) in the WI Army National Guard (WIARNG) and over my many years of being “married to the military” I have learned a lot. I had many “bumps in the road” and decided to make the most of all of it through volunteering. I currently volunteer with the American Legion Auxiliary, VFW Auxiliary, Plymouth Gift of Life, and was the Family Readiness Group (FRG) Leader with the Army Reserves. Some of the many gifts that come from volunteering with the FRG include meeting other family members, making connections, and learning more about how the military works having never worn the uniform! I decided long ago to use what I experienced to make a positive difference for others.

I think being a military family member can be exciting, taxing, frustrating and the most important part of my life. Sometimes all at the same time! Now let's throw in life in general, work and we'll add the current pandemic to the mix. All of the uncertainty, stress and changes to my “normal” life could be overwhelming if I let it. Learning ways to cope with, and recover from tough times in healthy ways is the heart of building resilience. Without it, we (I) can become overwhelmed and experience challenges to our (my) mental and physical health. Learning to bounce back from hardships help make us, our loved ones and our community more resilient, too. I'm more of a glass half-full or when life gives you lemons-make lemonade person. I wasn't always this way, but I decided that I much preferred to smile than frown all day long. By recognizing that I'm stressing or feeling overwhelmed, I have learned to take a deep breath, step away and give myself 5 minutes. I love to feed and watch the birds at my house and enjoy my flower gardens. I like to read, take walks and talk with my husband, family and friends. In finding new and/or additional ways to keep my “balance” I have found another resource on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website “Resilient Wisconsin” pages. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/resilient/understanding-resilience.htm>

They offer seven strategies you can easily incorporate into your life:

Prioritize healthy relationships: Build a supportive network of people who care about you and spend quality time (even if virtually) with them.

Take care of your body: It's easier to maintain mental and emotional balance when you feel healthy. Make an effort to eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise three or more times a week.

Avoid negative outlets: Look for healthy ways to process difficult emotions. Trying to escape these emotions through harmful substance use will create more stress.

Be proactive: We can't always control our circumstances, but we can take charge of our response. Break problems into manageable tasks and move forward.

Practice self-awareness: When stressful events occur, it's important to take a step back and reflect before we react. It helps to understand where your emotions are coming from before you share them.

Learn from the past: Recognize who or what was helpful (or unhelpful) the last time you were in a stressful situation. Remembering other challenges you've overcome can help.

Ask for help when you need it: Reaching out to family or friends, a health care professional, or a community resource isn't easy, but knowing how to accept help is a sign of strength.

