



SMSD Information and Resources

Service Members and Military Families

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April, A Time to Heal

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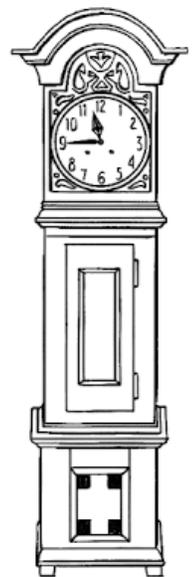
The month of April is a dichotomy of celebration and remembrance. “April” is derived from the Latin word *aperit*, which means “open”. April symbolizes the opening of many things including the first baseball game of the season, trees bud and flowers begin to blossom. If you were lucky enough to be born in April, your birthstone is the diamond, which represents “innocence”. April is also the Month of the Military Child where we recognize the sacrifices and resiliency of military-connected youth. Our [Child and Youth Program](#) has been creative with planning fun activities for families throughout this month. On the more somber days, we remember those who lost their lives in the Oklahoma City bombing and participate in activities for Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) that demonstrate our support and commitment to survivors of sexual assault.

I try to visit local places of significance when I am temporary duty. In 2008, I was in Oklahoma City for a conference and I convinced a group to visit the [Oklahoma City National Memorial](#) after work. This memorial is exceptional because it does an incredible job telling the story of the victims, rescuers and survivors. Some of you may recall where you were on April 19, 1995. At that time I was in college and you may have been stationed at Fort Sill-Lawton or Tinker Air Force Base and vividly recall the events of that day.

The memorial consists of remains from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Fifth Street, the Athenian Building and Oklahoma Water Resources Board. A reflection pool spans between two gates connecting a field of chairs representing the 168 individuals who lost their lives, 19 of which were children. Each gate is marked with a moment in time, one states 9:01 and the other is 9:03. Each time has significance, 9:01 represents the last moment of innocence and 9:03 represents the moment “when healing began.” This year marks the 25th anniversary of the bombing. I am struck by the correlation between the memorial and how survivors of sexual assault may approach their healing process.

Many victims of sexual assault may recall their version of 9:01 in their lives. A time when they lived without fear, a sense of innocence, the ability to live and work in a community they trusted. They had ambitious goals, dreams, felt safe in their home and community, and most importantly, possessed hope for the future. Like Oklahoma City, victims before 9:01 didn’t realize they were vulnerable to attack. At 9:02 the bomb detonated and forever changed the landscape of Oklahoma City, the families of lost loved ones, and survivors. At 9:03 healing began.

The time between 9:02 and 9:03 is literally 60 seconds. Sadly, when a “9:02” event happens for a sexual assault victim it is unknown when or if their “9:03” will begin. Although a metaphor for Oklahoma City, the start of a new normal for most doesn’t begin the moment after the assault because many continue to live in “9:02” out of fear. I emphasize this metaphor because I believe it’s important for those who want to support survivors to understand that the healing process begins at very different times and for some it’s a lifelong journey. As members of the Wisconsin National Guard, you can make a difference and help ensure we mitigate and eliminate these threats among our population. This year’s SAAPM motto is, “Protecting Our People Protects our Mission” and our mission this April is to be “open” to supporting soldiers and airmen on their journey to heal from their trauma at 9:03 and every minute thereafter.



Soldier & Family Readiness and the Importance of Volunteers



My name is Carina Sween and I am the Soldier and Family Readiness Supervisor for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. I have been working in various programs within the Service Member Support Division since 2008; starting out in the Badger Yellow Ribbon program and transferring to Family Programs a couple of years later. Having been the family member left behind for countless training exercises, military schools and two deployments (both exceeding 12 months in length) during the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, I understand the importance of having a robust support system for military families in place. As family members, we are asked to wear many hats to ensure life continues to run its course while our service member is gone. How great does it feel for a helping hand to come along and help you take off one of these hats? Even if it is just for a little while...

The mission of Soldier and Family Readiness is to be that helping hand to ensure all family members (immediate and extended) have the knowledge they need to thrive while wearing all these hats. To successfully navigate the military life style and support their service members, families need to be knowledgeable and able to access the resources that will help maintain and improve their quality of life. Volunteers serve a vital role in communicating timely information to families throughout the deployment and military life cycle.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard currently has ten Soldier & Family Readiness Specialists (S&FRS) on staff, who work closely with our highly dedicated, professional Family Readiness volunteers corps. Volunteers are the Wisconsin National Guard's family readiness force multiplier. Because, let's face it, ten people can only do so much when we have over 10,000 POCs (family members) listed in our database. Volunteers have built a strong partnership with their unit's commander and senior leaders and are also committed to ensuring that families have timely and accurate information.

Considering April 19-25 is National Volunteer Week, I find it only fitting I take this opportunity to talk about our team of volunteers. While it is a requirement for a Commander to appoint a volunteer to execute their units Family Readiness program, it is up to each one of our volunteers to accept their appointment. Each volunteer creates their own program tailored to meet the unique needs of their families and primary points of contact. Our database shows close to 100 duty appointed Family Readiness Lead Volunteers that are supporting units throughout the state and even though their reasons for volunteering may be different, we are all supporting the mission of Family Readiness.

For the past few years, I have been privileged to work with these hard working, dedicated individuals and learn their stories and hear about their reasons for volunteering. The Family Readiness volunteer corps consists of parents, spouses, veterans and community members and I am amazed by the amount time our volunteers invest without asking for anything in return. Their primary responsibility is to be that missing communication link between the military chain of command and each soldier's family member(s). Ensuring that every family member has a helping hand that reaches out and that they can reach out to when the weight of the hats is affecting their quality of life.

Due to the current circumstances, we are unable to meet for our annual Volunteer Summit this month and I won't get a chance to thank you personally. Rest assured that we are already working on an alternate date and I look forward to seeing you all in the near future so we can properly celebrate your accomplishments. This week and every week throughout the year, I am grateful to be able to support you and your families. When our families are strong, our Guard is stronger.

Thank you for your service and support!

Sincerely,

Carina Sween

*"Volunteers are not paid
-- not because they are
worthless, but because
they are priceless."*

If you would like to become a member of our outstanding Wisconsin Army National Guard volunteer team please visit us at: <https://wisconsinmilitary.org/smsd-loves-volunteers/>

April: Month of the Military Child

#MonthoftheMilitaryChild Activities

APRIL 21 Purple Up Day

- Military Kids are Connected
-Write a letter
- Show-off your purple on Facebook

APRIL 28

- Military Kids are Creative
-Shadow Drawing

Send a Secret –Invisible Ink

One of the recommended activities for this week's showcase for Month of the Military Child is to reach out to others through letter writing. Not all communications need be overtly formal nor public. Consider sending a secret message to a friend or simply have fun concocting mysterious messages between siblings.

Having this time at home is not without opportunities to learn. Combine a little chemistry and language arts with this [invisible ink recipe](#). This specific recipe can be used by all ages due to its use of an acid/base indicator, rather than high heat, to reveal the hidden message.

Materials:

- Water (1/2 cup)
- Baking soda (1 Tablespoon)
- Plain printer paper
- Q-tips or a paintbrush for writing with invisible ink
- Rubbing alcohol (1/2 cup)
- *Turmeric (1 teaspoon)
- Cotton balls (or a paintbrush) to apply color-changing agent

Directions:

1. Thoroughly mix baking soda with water to make the ink.
2. Use Q-tips or paintbrushes to draw or write the secret message.
3. Allow the message to dry.
4. Mix turmeric with rubbing alcohol in a glass bowl to create the revealing agent
5. Apply agent with cotton balls or paintbrush

*Please note turmeric solution can stain.

A Question of History

Family. The tree's roots and branches that keep us grounded, connected and provide us with oodles of childhood memories. In an odd turn of fate, these unprecedented times have greatly expanded time spent with family sharing a household while drastically eliminating time with extended or outside family ties. Consider taking some of this bonus family time to share family stories from years past.

Children and teenagers are going through a landmark event in history which has greatly disrupted their typical lives and any expectation of normalcy. Sharing childhood experiences from parents', grandparents', and if possible, other older relatives' childhoods may help to ease anxieties or feelings of isolation.

Perhaps there may be uncertainty regarding what to ask an older relation. Consider going over some standard questions together as a family to discover where the knowledge gaps may lie. Below is a list of questions from [Family Tree Magazine](#) to start with:

- * What's your first memory?
- * Who's the oldest relative you remember (and what do you remember about him or her)?
- * How did your parents meet?
- * Tell me about your childhood home.
- * How did you meet your spouse?
- * Tell me about your wedding day.
- * Tell me about the day your first child was born.
- * What were your favorite school subjects?
- * Tell me about your favorite teacher.
- * Tell me about some of your friends.
- * Describe your first job.
- * What did you do with your first paycheck?
- * What was your favorite job and why?
- * Who are some of your heroes?
- * Where were you when [important historical event].
- * Tell me about some of your favorite songs, books, movies and television shows.

For more questions check out [Google searches](#) or [Pinterest results](#).

If communicating with your relative over the phone, via email or through an online video chat is not possible, consider writing a letter. For relatives living at care facilities, receiving mail is always a joy. Dedicated staff is available to make sure your message is delivered safely.

