



# SMSD Information and Resources

## Service Members and Military Families

September 1, 2020

### Connect to Protect

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In the spring of 1991, my family made the decision to move across the country to North Carolina to escape the Wisconsin winters. We had our location narrowed to three cities: Hickory, Newton-Conover and Concord. One evening, while dining at The Avenue Bar in Madison, my mom decided to put our destiny in the hands of our waitress. She wrote down each city on a separate piece of paper, placed them into the bread basket, and asked her to pick one. She chose Concord and that's where we moved in August 1991.

My first day of school was overwhelming. My new high school was quadruple the size of my former school, I didn't understand anyone's southern accent and because I wasn't a member of a country club—my hopes to play tennis were crushed. I didn't fit in no matter what I did. Everywhere I went I felt rejection and I was often made fun of for “speaking too fast” or simply for being from Wisconsin. (At this time a guy named Jeffrey Dahmer from Milwaukee was making national news—as you can imagine this tidbit didn't help my social circle!) In February 1992, I got a job working at Arby's right as I was hitting a low point and was questioning whether anyone would notice if I was gone. My relationship with my mom was rocky and I lacked positive social connections. My head was racing with negative thoughts and during commutes, I contemplated driving into a tree on the rural parts of Highway 73. I didn't feel I had much to live for and my mom wasn't going to sign the Free Application for Student Aid, so college was out of the question. What options did I have? I was lonely, disconnected and felt my life lacked purpose.

But connections happen in the most unlikely places. Sundays were my favorite day of the week to work at Arby's because I was responsible for opening the store—I had a purpose. This was also the day that several customers dined with us after church. A few of the couples reminded me of my grandparents who I missed very much. I was immediately drawn to them and we formed a connection—one that ultimately saved my life! I felt normal again, someone acknowledged my existence and when I graduated, I received cards and gifts from them, and they were sad that I was leaving as I was preparing to return to Wisconsin. Around the same time, my calculus teacher selected me as a “Northwest Scholar,” a recognition only a few received. I immediately thought she had made a mistake, but she, just like my loyal Arby's customers, actually saw me. The *‘me’* who was not only a good person but someone who deserved a future. These simple gestures, or connections, had a significant impact on me and *almost* thirty years later, still remains powerful.

I share this story because I want you to take away the simple power of connection. September is nationally recognized as Suicide Prevention Month and this year's motto is, “Connect to Protect”. Simple connections could be extending a verbal greeting, a smile, a nod or even a kind gesture (i.e. holding a door for someone.) Simple acknowledgment. The strength of the Wisconsin National Guard is -and will always be - our people. Throughout the month of September, and beyond, strive to find ways to #ConnectToProtect with our soldiers and airmen, your actions could actually save a life!



**Need Help? 1-800-273-8255**  
**National Suicide Prevention Hotline**



# WI National Guard SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH CONNECT TO PROTECT

September 2020



## CONNECT TO PROTECT

Make it Your Mission to  
**#BeThere**



Suicides are still an issue in the WIARNG and society in general. Losing even one WIARNG Soldier to suicide is unacceptable. September is recognized as the national suicide prevention month and it is important for all units to participate and communicate the Connect to Protect message and resources available.

Review the 10 Ways to Take Part in Suicide Prevention Month. Pick a few things your unit can implement during September drill. The rest of this packet includes easy to use tools.

Unit SIO's are encouraged to reach out to the WI Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Mrs. Brenda Gallant, at [brenda.l.gallant.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:brenda.l.gallant.ctr@mail.mil) for assistance in promoting the #Connect to Protect message.

**Someone is always available to connect with at:**

### **WIARNG Psychological Health Coordinator lines:**

Central WI: 608.504.6027

Southern WI 608.640.8344

Eastern WI: 608.640.9317

Northwestern WI: 608.640.9315

Free and confidential mental health resources available anytime of the day  
for WIARNG members and families.

## Thrift Savings Plan Seminars

Concerned about your financial future? Would you like to know how to set yourself up for success? Knowledge is a powerful tool. Learn more about the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and how you can make in work for you by registering and attending educational webinars. Webinars are scheduled at 11am and 2pm CST. For a list of topics and to register, visit the link: <https://www.tsp.gov/agency-service-reps/training/#intro-to-tsp>



### Important notes regarding registration:

- Go to <https://www.tsp.gov/representative/Content/trainingInfo.html#tspWebinars> to register for any session by clicking “Register now.”
- Registration password for all TSP webinars is: **TSPweb**
- Participants need to have access to WebEx via work or personal device to attend and register.
- If your agency/service does not allow access to WebEx, please contact the appropriate office at your agency/service for assistance and make that known to participants.
- The timeframe for webinars is 1 hour, and participants can attend any session.
- All scheduled start times are 10am/1pm Eastern Time (11am/2pmCST).

After registration, the participant will receive an email with an approval message and the link to join the webinar.

Should you have any further questions, contact Ms. Jo Kammer, [Mei-shan.kammer@tsp.gov](mailto:Mei-shan.kammer@tsp.gov)

## Top 6 list of OPSEC “Don’ts” for Social Media

1. Don't "check-in" at a destination on social media apps. Checking in will allow others to know you are not home. You may be giving someone an opportunity to break into your home.
2. Don't list your specific job or work location on social media apps. Sharing this information can potentially open the door for harm to you and co-workers.
3. Don't post where your soldier is drilling, training or deployed to. Ask yourself this: Could someone with bad intentions use this personal information to make me think they knows my soldier and cause problems for me or others in any ways?
4. Don't post troop movements (for example homecoming dates). You may think your social media page is private but do you really know that for sure? This is especially important during deployment. For the safety of our soldiers, return flights can be delayed due to an OPSEC violation on social media.
5. Don't ask for prayers or good thoughts when your soldier is "on mission." We know you want people to be supportive, but letting everyone know your soldiers is out on patrol is not the way to do it. This would be a message best relayed privately.
6. Don't post your metadata. What is metadata? Metadata is the information linked to your photos or status updates letting people know where you posted from.
7. Don't forget to check your cell phone and other data devices to ensure that your “location” is turned off. “Geotracking” can be used to track your whereabouts.

Remember: Just because the military tells you something, does not mean you can share it publicly.

# Fall Into Fun

As the heat, humidity and summer sun begins to fade, so will the green of the leaves. September 22nd marks the first official day of autumn. The season will bring along all things pumpkin spice, fall colors, the onset of harvest and a tonal shift with every crisp breeze. Thankfully enough fall activities exist to please everyone!

## Outdoor Adventures

Not ready to give up fun in the summer sun? Does the thought of spending time inside, hiding from windchills and blizzards, make you anxious? Good news! Fall offers plenty of unique opportunities to spend time outside.

- ◆ Observe the Fall Colors - Spend time enraptured by the temperate forests of Wisconsin while they showcase what they do best: change colors. There is still plenty of time left in the year to hike trails and enjoy the natural world. Check out the [WIDNR website](#) for information on State Parks.
- ◆ Maize Daze - If you spent most of your summer in the wild woods and you're ready for a change of scenery, frolic your fall away on the farm! Wisconsin boasts [iconic corn mazes](#)! Search google maps to find the closest maze location. Not a corn maze fan? Many of these locations offer other fall fun activities such as hayrides and celebrating harvest.
- ◆ Go Picking - Looking for more fun on the farm? Consider visiting an apple orchard or pick your own pumpkins! Fall signals the final harvest for the time intensive crops in took all summer to grow. Despite harsh winters, WI is capable of sustaining almost 300 orchards and their apple trees. Orchards offer a sampling of apple varieties with all their unique textures (soft and crisp) and tastes (tart to sweet). Pumpkin patches offer varieties of decorative

pumpkins with variations in size and color. Some pumpkins are grown specifically for their flavor (natural sugars) and are used for baking.



## The Great Indoors

Tired of the sunburn, heat exhaustion and mosquito bites? Sick of lemonade and outdoor cooking? Does the first cool breeze send you gleefully unpacking your sweaters and fluffy blankets from storage and flinging open the windows? Congrats, autumn lover, your time has come!

- ◆ Fall Colors, In Style - Want to “Ooh” and “Aah” over nature's beautiful color palette? Not a fan of picking off ticks afterwards? It's time to hit the road! Hop in the car and chase the fall colors through the Wisconsin countryside! The Wisconsin Tourism website offers an [informative guide](#) to enjoy the peak of the season no matter where you go!
- ◆ Start Baking - Team up with an “Outdoor Adventure” type in your life by having them bring back bushels of apples and pounds of baking pumpkins. ‘Tis the season to do for apples and pumpkins what Bubba Gump’s did for shrimp: Pumpkin pancakes, pumpkin bread, pumpkin pie, pumpkin shakes, pumpkin cake, pumpkin cookies, pumpkin ice cream, apple pie, apple cake, apple cider, apple crisp, apple chips, apple strudel, apple sauce...and more!
- ◆ Curl up with a Good...or Scary...Book - Did you pass up serene evenings at home for warm nights of fun and friends? If so, your reading pile may have grown without you. Perhaps you're more introverted and need to recharge? Embrace the darkening, windy nights to get cozy with warm blankets, comfy clothes and calming drinks while a book takes you to another place. (If that sounds too peaceful, consider picking up a bone chilling novel!)

