



# Connecticut GUARDIAN

*The Yankee Courier on page 13*

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## Breaking Glass: Montgomery earns top honors in STEM contest

**Tim Koster**  
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

With pioneers such as Ada Lovelace, credited as the world's first computer programmer, Marie Curie, the only woman in history to earn two Nobel Prizes for science, Katherine Johnson, who was responsible for calculating trajectories and launch windows for the Apollo space mission, and many others, women have long made a strong, and significant, impact in the realm of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM).

Despite a laundry list of amazing accomplishments by women that have revolutionized the world around us, female representation in STEAM careers is disproportionately

low, about 28% according to the American Association of University Women, compared to non-STEAM related fields. This fight to raise awareness and close the gender gap in some of the county's fastest-growing and most lucrative careers is ongoing but gaining momentum as more and more women and girls are gaining exposure to the opportunities available to them.

When this glass ceiling is finally broken, it will be because of the countless women and their accomplishments who chipped away at it over time. U.S. Army Sgt. Aundrya Mont-

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Command Sgt. Maj. Amber Selko receives the 118th Multifunctional Medical Battalion's colors during a change of responsibility ceremony on Oct. 30, 2020 in Niantic, Conn. Selko became the Connecticut National Guard's first female Command Sergeant Major.

## CTARNG gets first female Command Sergeant Major

**Capt. David Pytlik**  
**Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs**

On Friday, Oct. 30, 2020, Command Sgt. Maj. Amber Selko completed Change of Responsibility for the 118th Multifunctional Medical Battalion with the outgoing Boyd Dunbar, making her the CT Army National Guard's first female Command Sergeant Major.

Command Sgt. Maj. Selko began her military career in 1999 as a 91B Combat Medic in the 141st Medical Company, then stationed in New Britain, Conn., and held various leadership roles throughout the units of the 118th MMB during her career before moving to the 169th Regional Training Institute as the First Sergeant for the unit.

Prior to assuming the responsibility, Selko expressed a clear vision for the impression she wanted to leave on the formations and the road of how to get there, "My primary responsibility is to be the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the commander. In order to do that effectively I have to know this organization and its Soldiers. I need to have a solid grasp of what our strengths and weaknesses are as an organization and of the individuals that comprise that organization. Fortunately, this is my "home" unit; I have spent the vast majority of my Army career (about 14 years out of 20) in this battalion. I am thoroughly familiar with the organization's mission, how it operates in garrison, in combat, where we historically have done well, and where we've struggled. Most importantly, I know many of the people, especially those in many of the key leadership positions across all three Companies. However, I have been out of this formation for the last four years, so one of my first goals is to reacquaint myself with the key people and leaders in this organization, and get to know the Soldiers. Our Soldiers are the most important element and if I don't know them I can't properly advise the commander. My goals for the Battalion are to continuously increase Readiness. I want every Soldier in this formation to be as lethal and prepared for combat as they can be. That means everything from individual physical fitness and MOS skills to family care plans, to unit and BN level interoperability. So my second priority is to take a comprehensive look at how the BN is functioning in those areas, evaluate how we are measuring and planning for improvement, then make adjustments where they are needed."

When asked what it meant to be the Connecticut Army National Guard's first female Command Sergeant Major, she said that she was grateful for the opportunity, but was shocked that it has taken until 2020 to see a female in that role. "It's not about me, it's about the Soldiers and the organization, I'm just a Soldier in a position of responsibility with a job to do," said Selko.

Currently, her full time position is with the U.S. Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group. "I am an Operational Advisor for AWG. AWG's mission is to advise Army commanders on current and emerging asymmetric threats to the force. As an OA I travel and embed with Army units both to scout for those emerging threats and to advise commanders on a variety of topics," said Selko. "It has provided me the opportunity to learn firsthand about aspects of our Army and our military that I never would have otherwise. It has put me on the forward edge of where our Army is going and allowed me to have a say in some aspects of how we do business. First and foremost the organization is about increasing Soldier lethality and survivability, those two concepts are irrevocably interwoven and there is no greater purpose or pursuit in my opinion. As an NCO that has always been my job – make Soldiers better. AWG allows me to take that to an entirely different level."

When looking at the average age of Command Sergeants Major across the state, Selko is among the youngest, "I believe I am on the young end of the spectrum for CSM. Again though I don't think that is because of "me" as much as it's about timing and the people around me. I joined in 1999, a few years later 9/11 happened and we all know the effects that had on the Army. One of those effects was National Guard deployments at levels we hadn't seen in decades. Soldiers served their time, did their deployments, and then got out. I think the tumultuous nature of the last decade plus allowed those of us who stayed in to see more upward mobility faster."

The author did not believe Command Sergeants Major believed in fun or outside hobbies, but Selko offered a different picture, "My life has been fairly military-centric due to being on active duty orders the last few years. (I enjoy) reading and Wa Shin Ryu jujutsu, although I have not been able to practice as much as I'd like these last few years being away from my dojo at UCONN."

*Editor's note- The interview for this article was conducted in March 2020. COVID-19 delayed the Change of Responsibility ceremony from March until October.*



# CTNG Helps Rid Residents of Four Tons of Drugs

**Maj. Michael Petersen**  
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

For the 15th time since 2012, the Connecticut National Guard provided personnel and vehicle support to the Drug Enforcement Agency's National Drug Takeback Day efforts, Oct. 24, helping to rid Connecticut residents of more than 8,000 pounds of expired or unwanted medication.

On a cold, rainy Saturday, local and state police departments set up locations at police stations statewide for Connecticut residents to safely dispose of their unwanted, or expired, prescription medication. Departments then either destroy the collected drugs themselves, or deliver it to one of the DEA's two collection sites located in Rocky Hill and Bridgeport.

At the collection sites, the drugs were boxed, weighed and loaded in a CTNG Light Medium Tactical Vehicle or LMTV. Guard personnel, escorted by DEA investigators, drove the expired drugs to another location for incineration.

Nearly 60 police departments signed up to support the mission, with approximately 40 passing through the collection point in Rocky Hill, and the balance either heading to Bridgeport or destroying on site.

Typically, the DEA hosts Drug Takeback Day bi-annually, with a springtime collection complimenting the October event, however the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the April 2020 edition.

"We thought there may be potential for collected totals to be higher-than-usual, due to the pandemic," said Command Sgt. Maj. Dan Morgan, NCOIC for the Connecticut National Guard's Counterdrug Program. "Our teams were ready to work, and we're grateful for the partnership and opportunity to support such an important cause."

In Rocky Hill, four Guardsmen assigned to the 1048th Medium Truck Company supported efforts under the supervision of DEA employees and Master Sgt. Dan Reilly, CTNG Counterdrug Program Manager for Drug Demand Reduction Outreach. Another three Guardsmen supported the efforts in Bridgeport.

"It's really rewarding to support this nationwide effort on a local level," Reilly said. "Rarely do we get to see tangible results on-the-spot, but here we see police departments from all across the state come together to keep unneeded medications from being abused, or accidentally ingested by a young child."

The DEA reported that over 4,100 police departments nationwide helped rid residents of over 13.6 million pounds of prescription drugs.

In eight years of support, the CTNG has assisted the DEA with ridding Connecticut residents of over 99,000 pounds of unwanted drugs.

"At our next event, we will most assuredly cross the 100,000-pound, or 50-ton mark," Morgan said. "That's no small accomplishment."

For more information on DEA National Drug Takeback Day, visit [takebackday.dea.gov](http://takebackday.dea.gov).



*Specialist Cole Sheldon and Cpl. Collin LeDuc empty prescription medications collected by a local police department into boxes for weighing. The Guardsmen, assigned to the 1048th Medium Truck Company, helped support the efforts of the DEA and the Connecticut National Guard to rid Connecticut residents of over 8,000 pounds of unwanted or expired medication.*

## OIP certifies inspectors

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Francis Evon, adjutant general for the Connecticut National Guard, addresses subject matter experts ahead of the Organizational Inspection Program workshop Nov. 4, 2020. The program is the general's internal mechanism to identify, prevent, and eliminate problem areas that affect readiness.

During his address, Evon highlighted the importance of the inspectors being his eyes and ears and their responsibility to help the Connecticut National Guard better perform their missions and take care of their people.

The analysis and recommendations that come from the inspections help influence commanders to readjust their policies and priorities. The scope and nature of the OIP is built upon the context of the Army's inspection policy framework to help facilitate the Guard's vision and mission to answer the call when the state or nation calls.

U.S. Army Maj. Eric Roy led the training, certifying the OIP inspectors on the inspection process as outlined in AR 1-201. The inspection teams left training with a renewed focus on ensuring efficient and effective initial and subsequent command inspections.





# Montgomery

Cont. from page 1

gomery, the behavioral health non-commissioned officer for the Connecticut National Guard's 118th Medical Battalion and research assistant at the University of Connecticut, is one of those women doing her part to create a more diverse, and inclusive, environment within STEM-related careers.

Montgomery and 12 other women earned top honors in their respective categories during the 16th annual Women of Innovation Awards, held digitally for the first time on Nov. 12, 2020 to comply with COVID-19 regulations. The awards are given every year to acknowledge women innovators, role models, and leaders in STEAM at the high school and collegiate levels around the state.

"Programs like Women of Innovation are so important to help create interest and encourage women to get into STEAM-related career fields," said Kim Kinsley in an interview with News 8, WTNH. "We recognize that [Women] are underrepresented ... and it's important to try to encourage women through programs of innovation, and other ways, to ensure we get more interest from women and also young girls at an early age."

This year, Montgomery took home the award for the Community Innovation and Leadership category for her work with bioengineering strategies for potential application toward clinical treatments for acute traumatic and chronic fingertip injuries.

"I've always been a [science] nerd," said Montgomery. "I got involved in research during my undergrad years at the illustrious Alabama State University ... where I looked at different nanotechnology applications geared toward prostate cancer."

Although she is the one who gets to bring the award home, she hopes to use her new-found platform will help other young women discover and reach their potential.

"This award isn't for me. It isn't because of me," Montgomery said. "This is something that, thankfully, I was blessed with and I'm honored to have this recognition but I know, growing up, I didn't see a lot of people who looked like me in research."

Montgomery added that she hopes that, with this award, young women will see an individual who can relate to them and she can serve them better than before. As for her own inspiration, she's always looked up to the other women in her family who supported her and gave her the encouragement and resources she needed to follow her dreams.

"I told my granny that I wanted to be a doctor and she made sure I had all the necessary tools to make sure I would excel in elementary and high school and that drive never went away," said Montgomery. "Even now, she passed away in August from COVID, her motivation still pushes me forward."


This trajectory her grandmother placed her on has sent her on a journey not only to find personal success, but to lift up those around her and she's found herself on a mission to serve her community, state, and country. In addition to serving in the National Guard, she also volunteers as the president of the Urban League of Greater Hartford Young Professionals, works on research projects alongside UConn's Dr. Christine Fink to find bioengineer strategies for helping babies born with missing pieces of their esophagus, and works with the Connecticut Children's Hospital's Department of Psychology Gender Identity Program to analyze obesity trends among transgender youth.

The other winners of this year's awards include: Sophia Wang, a student from Amity Regional High School, Wanjiku Gatheru, an undergraduate student at UConn, Susan Dougherty, a STEM and special education teacher at Stamford High School, Diane Pintavalle, a science teacher at Glastonbury High School, Maria Chrysochoou, the department head for civil and environmental engineering at UConn, Erika Smith, CEO of ReNetX Bio, Beiyan Zhou, an associate professor of immunology at the UConn Health Center, Carrie McCusker, technical lead at Sonalysts, Sarah Wojiski, the director of education

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and external programs at the Jackson Laboratory, Kayla Cloutier, principal research and development engineer at Medtronic, and Sonya Richmond, a boardmember of the Connecticut Invention Convention.

According to the National Science Board, the percentage of women interested in STEAM is steadily rising. When the glass ceiling finally breaks, it will be thanks to women, such as Montgomery and the other recipients of the Women in Innovation Awards, who share their enthusiasm and drive to reach for their goals with future generations. To learn more about the Women of Innovation awards, visit: [ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation/](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation/)

## Want to become a Unit Victim Advocate?

CTARNG believes that we have the ability to make a difference in the world and demonstrate that by our service. In addition, we need to take care of our own in order to successfully accomplish any mission.

Sexual Assault is the most under reported crime in the military, those who step forward should feel confident when reaching out to receive protection, medical, and support services while being treated with dignity and respect.

Becoming a Unit Victim Advocate is rewarding and you provide essential support and care to the victim to include providing non-clinical advocacy, legal assistance, information on available options and resources to assist the victim in making informed decisions as they progress through resolution and healing.

How can you become a Unit Victim Advocate? Please contact Ms. Altia Lawrence-Bynum, Victim Advocate Coordinator at 860-500-3057 for more information.



## Interview with SSG Silk: CTNG's first Soldier to achieve perfect ACFT score

**Sgt. 1st Class Silas Holden**  
D Co. 1-169th Aviation (GSAB)

Happy holiday season, hope everyone is staying safe and healthy through the fall of 2020. This month I ask some questions to SSG Luk Silk who is the first Connecticut Army National Guard Soldier to score a 600 on the Army Combat Fitness Test. This is definitely an achievement to be proud of as the new test demands every facet of fitness to be finely tuned in order to accomplish this score. Soldiers must be holistically balanced in order to tackle all the different aspects of fitness that the ACFT throws at them. SSG Silk will give a little insight into how he trains and fuels to help him maintain the high level of fitness that he holds himself to.

**SFC Holden:** Briefly tell us about yourself and your military career along with accomplishments.

**SSG Silk:** For four years I was a sniper with HHC 1-102 Infantry before being promoted out and moved to recon as a squad leader. My most notable accomplishments in the military are Sniper school, Ranger school, and winning 2017 CTARNG Soldier of the Year during the Best Warrior Competition.

The BWC is a great way to push yourself to higher physical demands and to flood your mind with military knowledge from all areas of the military. The competition makes you get out of your comfort zone and is a great tool for growing as a Soldier and leader. This competition takes place each year in the March/April timeframe at the state level and the winners then move on to regional and national level competitions if advancing.

**SFC Holden:** What tips do you have that helped you get the first 600 ACFT score in the state of CT?

**SSG Silk:** Diet is huge and preventing injury is also key for the high training volume that is necessary. A lot of stretching and recovery work must be incorporated to stay healthy and maintain mobility while keeping injuries from occurring.

**SFC Holden:** How do you train so that you achieve a balance of strength, endurance, and aerobic capacity?

**SSG Silk:** I mostly follow training programs from Mountain Tactical Institute. They outline what components you'll be training during a 4-8 week period. Another one I have followed is Cronusfit which trains all aspects of fitness on a daily basis. Cronusfit is a 501c non-profit that benefits Soldiers, families, and other charities with any revenue they make. The gym that I train at is Mission Fitness in Glastonbury. They have a holistic approach to fitness and that has helped me a lot over the past few years.

**SFC Holden:** How do you feel the AFCT will change the culture of fitness in the Army, and will it be effective?

**SSG Silk:** I believe the ACFT is a good overall assessment of fitness and will force Soldiers to focus on a broader spectrum of fitness. I also believe the ACFT is a logistical hardship and fitness tests will no longer be able to be conducted remotely or in the field. It requires more time to complete and more training time will need to be dedicated to it once fully implemented.

**SFC Holden:** A big sticking point thus far is the leg tuck. What training tips can you offer so that Soldiers become able to meet the minimum for this event?

**SSG Silk:** Break the movement down into smaller portions. Practice pull-ups. If you can't do full range of



*Then-Specialist Luk Silk receives an Army Commendation Medal after placing first in the 2017 Connecticut National Guard Best Warrior Competition, March 26, 2017. The Best Warrior Competition tests the competitor's skills in basic warrior tasks, such as physical fitness and weapons qualification.*

motion pull ups then practice scapula pulls. (Scapula pull ups are a very short range of motion pull up that utilize the scapula muscle to create a slight upward movement. These can help create strength in the upper back which assists when getting back to full range pull ups). Practice leg lifts lying on your back. Any grip strength training such as heavy deadlifts, hanging from a bar, farmers carries, or rock climbing will also be beneficial.

The leg tuck utilizes so much of the body during the movement that breaking it down into segments helps an individual train for improvement and progression.

**SFC Holden:** There is a lot of worry over possible higher injury rates due to the change, what is your view on this, and if done "properly" will this test limit injury?

**SSG Silk:** If you don't train for the ACFT, then yes, there is a high risk of injury. But if soldiers do train for the events they will be less prone to injury both during the test, and while fulfilling their duty days performing missions. Deadlifting is a great way to build your core if trained properly.

Form and function are paramount with the deadlift, but

when done properly there truly is no better exercise for building a strong core and frame work for the entire body. Soldiers who are not use to the compound exercises and athletic nature of the ACFT will be more prone to injury or greater soreness until training so that they adapt to the new culture of fitness test.

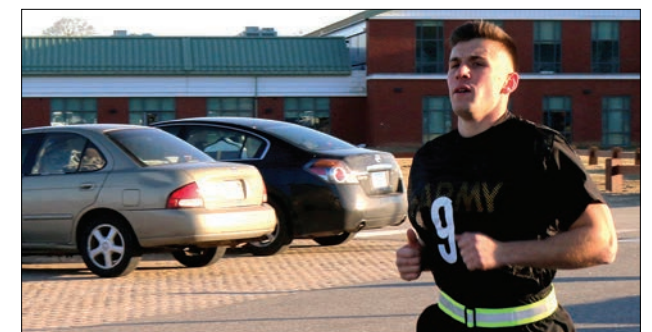
**SFC Holden:** We all know that everyone fuels their body differently due to personal preference and advertising. What are some staple energy and performance foods and drinks that you prefer to consume to maintain your high level of fitness?

**SSG Silk:** I try my best to stick to a whole food diet. It can be very time consuming to track your food and make sure you're getting what you need to maintain high energy levels and proper recovery. I do not like the idea of all the chemicals that are added to food today. I guess what I follow is close to the Paleo diet, which I often fluctuate off and on with. Drill weekends usually kill me with all the energy drinks and protein bars I end up eating. For preworkout if I need it I'll take whatever I have with me... usually what was on sale when I went to pick it up. Big fan of RX bars, Lenny and Larry cookies, and one bars.

I would like to make a huge shout out to Matt Mund, owner of Mission Fitness, for letting me train at his gym and being a big inspiration of mine. He motivates me to get after it every day because I know he is giving it his all.

**SFC Holden:** Thank you SSG Silk for taking the time to answer the questions I asked and congratulations on being the first CTARNG Soldier to reach the pinnacle of the ACFT with a 600 score. As Soldiers we must always find ways to motivate and mentor our junior Soldiers and bring them up through the ranks to become the leaders of the future. Your achievements speak for themselves and definitely serve as motivation for what a solid effort helps one accomplish. More than ever we are forging a military force that maintains high levels of lethality and readiness and holistic fitness is certainly necessary to maintain both. Good luck in your future career goals and keep pushing yourself to be better than you were yesterday. Next month I will be interviewing the new Fitness Improvement Program Coordinator, SGT Ashton Christopher. I look forward to getting more helpful and motivating material for our Soldiers and Airmen to learn and put in their toolboxes. Until next month, stay motivated, stay hydrated, and stay fit!

Disclaimer: the views expressed within are those of the Soldier interviewed, and do not constitute endorsement by the Connecticut National Guard



*Then-Specialist Luk Silk conducts tue two-mile run portion of the Army Physical Fitness Test during the 2017 Connecticut National Guard Best Warrior Competition, March 26, 2017.*

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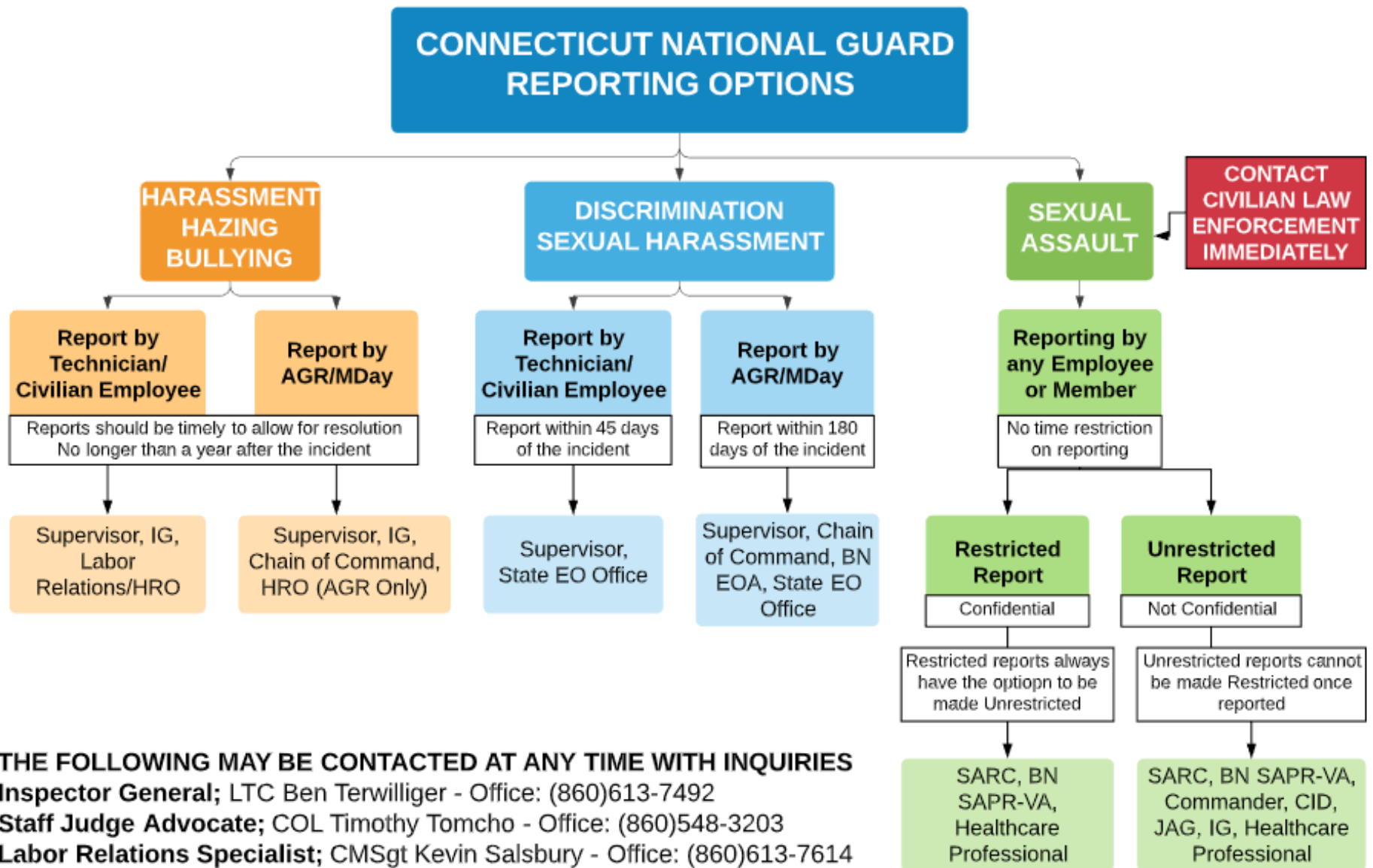
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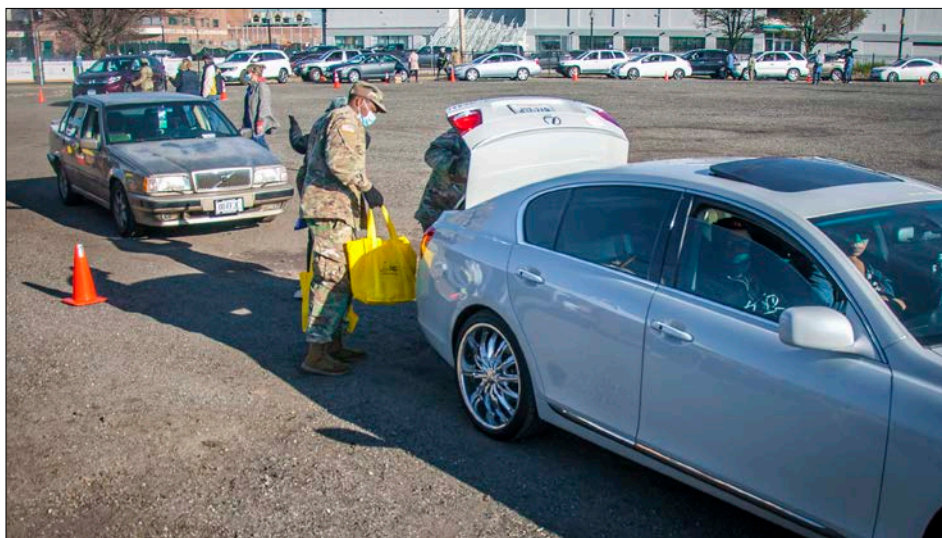
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# CTNG Helps distribute meals for Thanksgiving in Bridgeport



*U.S. Army 1st Lt. Edwin Escobar, assigned to the Connecticut National Guard's 643rd Military Police Company, grabs a couple of turkeys for families during the Bridgeport Rescue Mission's annual Great Thanksgiving Project Nov. 20, 2020 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The project gave away an estimated 4,000 Thanksgiving meals to families in need over the duration of the event. (photo by Timothy Koster, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs)*



*U.S. Army Sgt. Amos Muiga, a recruiter from the Connecticut National Guard's Bridgeport Recruiting and Retention office, helps load groceries into a families car during the Bridgeport Rescue Mission's Great Thanksgiving Project Nov. 20, 2020 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. (photo by Timothy Koster, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs)*



*U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Alexander Hernandez, assigned to the Connecticut National Guard's 103rd Logistics Readiness Squadron, helps direct traffic at the Bridgeport Rescue Mission's Great Thanksgiving Project, Nov. 20, 2020 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. (Photo by Timothy Koster, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs)*



# 192nd Military Police Company returns home from deployment



*U.S. Army Sgt. Joshua Odell, assigned to HHC 192nd Military Police gives an interview with his family at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Lock, Conn. on Nov. 24, 2020 following deployment. The unit was deployed throughout most of 2020 to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Dave Pytlik.)*



*Soldiers from HHC 192nd Military Police Battalion returned to Connecticut at Windsor Locks, Conn. on Nov. 24, 2020, following deployment to the Southern Command Area of Responsibility. U.S. (Army National Guard photo by Capt. Dave Pytlik)*



*U.S. Army Sgt. Audra Gallagher, assigned to HHC 192nd Military Police hugs her daughter at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Lock, Conn. on Nov. 24, 2020 following deployment. The unit was deployed throughout most of 2020 to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Dave Pytlik.)*



# Stress, depression, and the holidays: tips for coping

Maj. Sonja Smilnich | Mayo Clinic Staff  
CTNG JFHQ VA/SARC | Contributor

For many, the winter holidays can be the most stressful time of the year. As Victim Advocates, allowing yourself time for self-care enables you to provide better support to the survivors of sexual assault. During this time, you may also feel stressed, sad or anxious because your holiday plans may look different during the COVID-19 pandemic. With some practical Holiday Tips from the Mayo Clinic below, these tips can help you check in with yourself, and assist in minimizing the stress that accompanies the holidays.

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
2. Reach out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship.
3. Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.
  - If you're feeling stress during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call or a video chat.
  - Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.
4. Set aside differences. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.
5. Stick to a budget. Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

Try these alternatives:

- Donate to a charity in someone's name.
  - Give homemade gifts.
  - Start a family gift exchange.
6. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.
  7. Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.
  8. Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

Try these suggestions:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- Eat healthy meals.



- Get plenty of sleep.
  - Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
  - Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga.
  - Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
  - Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.
9. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Some options may include:

- Taking a walk at night and stargazing
- Listening to soothing music
- Reading a book

10. Seek professional help if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. The DoD Safe Helpline resources are always available to friends, family, and loved ones of sexual assault survivors in the DoD community. Connect with Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247 or at [safehelpline.org](http://safehelpline.org).

Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

To all of our CT National Guard Victim Advocates, remember to make time for yourself and be mindful of vicarious trauma, the emotional fatigue that caregivers may experience when working with survivors of trauma. It can be important to take a step back and make time for yourself to recuperate from vicarious trauma. Maintaining your normal schedule and continuing to participate in your hobbies can help. Taking care of yourself also helps you continue to be emotionally available for, and supportive of, the survivor you may be working with. Thank you for all you do to support survivors in the DoD community- YOU do make a difference!

For more information on the DoD Safe Help Self Care App, download on your iOS or Android cell phone. Help is just a click away.



# Winter Holiday Fire Safety



Did you know?

**Nearly half of holiday decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.**

It's fun to decorate for the winter holidays, but holiday decorations can increase your risk for a home fire. As you deck the halls this season, be fire smart.

- ✓ Inspect holiday lights each year before you put them up. Throw away light strands with frayed or pinched wires.
- ✓ Water your Christmas tree every day. A dry tree is dangerous because it can catch on fire easily.
- ✓ Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look, smell and feel like real candles.
- ✓ If you do use lit candles, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be knocked down easily.

For more information and free fire-safety resources, visit  
[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).



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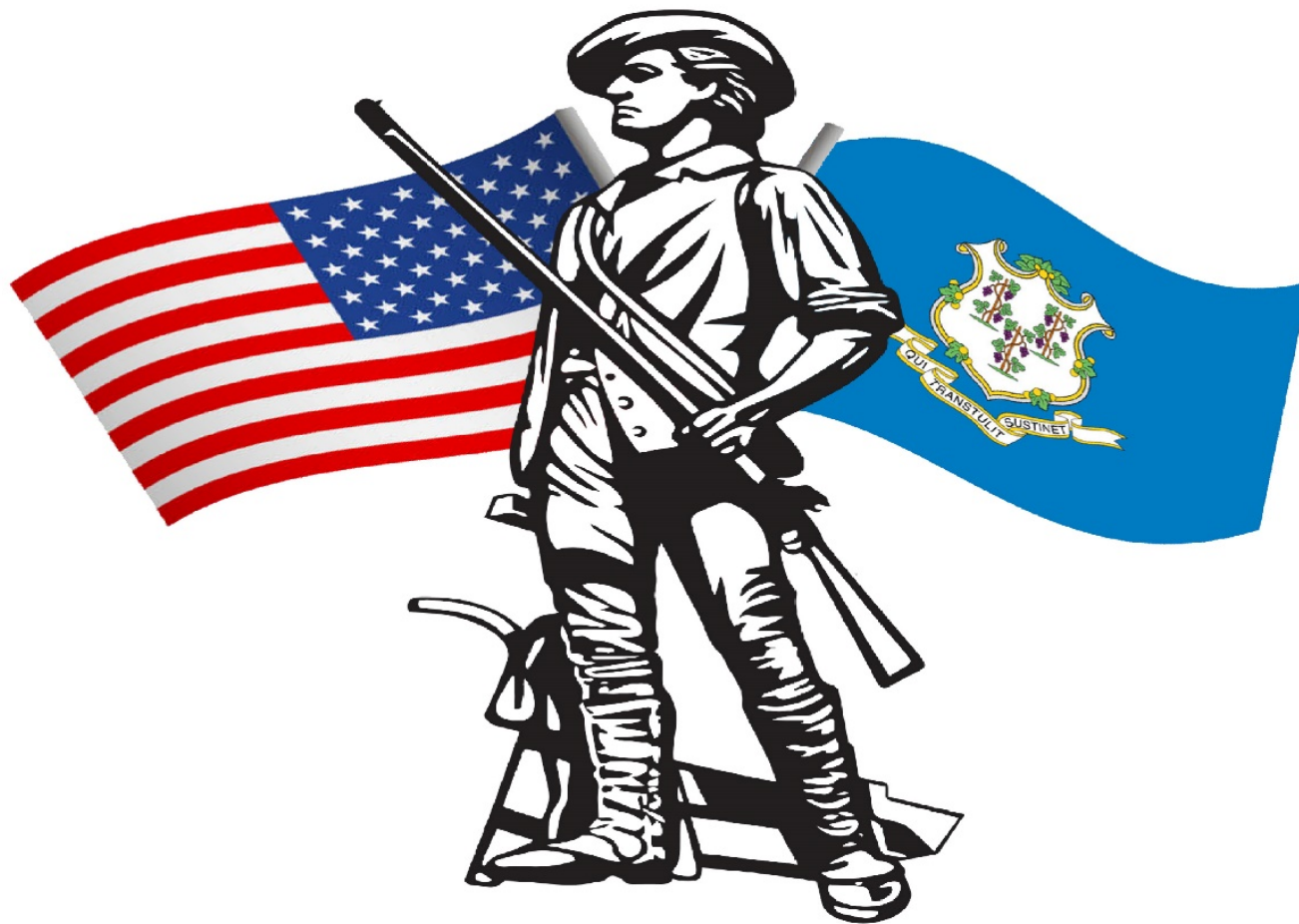




# CALL TO ACTION

**MAKE EVERY DAY A MILITARY DAY**

**COME JOIN OUR WORKFORCE TODAY!**



**APPLY FOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES BELOW**

<https://ct.ng.mil/Careers/Pages/default.aspx/>



# The YANKEE COURIER



VOL. 21 NO. 12

EAST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT

December 2020



Senior Airman Alexis Maher, 103rd Security Forces Squadron defender, packs a vehicle with Thanksgiving meal kits at Bradley Air National Guard Base in East Granby, Connecticut, Nov. 16, 2020. Maher organized the squadron's second annual Thanksgiving food drive, in which 103rd Airlift Wing members helped donate a total of 120 family meal kits to food banks in six Connecticut towns.

## CT Guardsman organizes Thanksgiving meal donations

**Staff Sgt. Steven Tucker**  
103rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

As many American families continue to face health and economic challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, a Connecticut Air National Guard member is making sure families in the local community can enjoy a warm meal this Thanksgiving.

Senior Airman Alexis Maher, 103rd Security Forces Squadron defender, organized the squadron's second annual Thanksgiving food drive this fall. Maher collected both food and monetary donations from Airmen throughout the 103rd Airlift Wing to put together meal kits for families.

"The first year we donated to two towns--Granby and Wethersfield--and with the coronavirus this year, I really thought it was important to help even more families around the state," said Maher.

This year, donations went to food banks in Hartford,

Granby, South Windsor, Vernon, Wethersfield, and Coventry.

"We were able to put together 120 bags this year, and 20 bags went to each town," said Maher. "All these bags go to local families who signed up for them at the food banks."

Each bag contains a box of stuffing, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, biscuits or cornbread, a can of cranberry sauce, two cans of vegetables, and a dessert mix.

The results of the food drive speak to the care unit members have for the well-being of their fellow Connecticut residents, said Maher.

"We have a really good community on this base," said Maher. "Everybody comes together and this is a great way to share our support and gratitude for our local communities, especially during the holiday season."

This is especially important as families forego typical large family gatherings to protect the health of their loved ones, said Maher.

"A lot of the time, people come together during the holidays, and unfortunately that's different this year with coronavirus," said Maher. "So I hope that providing these food packages can help families enjoy the holiday during these especially difficult times."

The Connecticut National Guard has helped local communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 1,000 Guardsmen activated for response missions, including recovery center setup, patient care, and PPE distribution.

Even while off duty, Guardsmen are working diligently to support the community during these trying times, said Maher.

"In the Guard, we're local citizens in uniform," said Maher. "It's hard to see people struggling in our community, and I'm grateful that we're able to help."



# Achieving Operational Success in Unpredictable Environments

**Lt. Col. Neal Byrne**  
Commander, 103rd Operations Group

To say 2020 has been an unpredictable and erratic year might just be the understatement of the century. However, through it all, in quite predictable fashion, the Flying Yankees rose to every challenge thrown our way.

We may be only a few months away from a vaccine that turns this ongoing battle with COVID-19 into a bad memory. However, we are most assuredly in a long-term struggle with unpredictability and uncertainty, which requires us to internalize and hold on to the lessons learned throughout this year to be successful in the future. Before we talk about why, let us take a quick look at the things we learned how to do in 2020. We learned how to:

- Execute virtual drills during the height of the pandemic.
- Carry out our mission under onerous infectious disease prevention protocols.
- Optimize our full-time and part-time manpower to achieve mission objectives with a fifty percent manpower limitation on base.
- Decontaminate aircraft and facilities between missions and shifts.
- Plan and execute the logistics and distribution of personal protective equipment to our communities on a massive, statewide scale.
- Build patient overflow centers to ensure our hospitals were poised to handle all patients requiring treatment.
- Support countless government and non-government organizations in a myriad of homeland missions.
- Achieve and maintain a level of mission readiness many thought impossible in a training environment stricken with countless limitations.

We did all this, in most cases, without formal training or written guidance specific to the mission activities we performed. We were able to do this by understanding command intent and putting our efforts and leadership at every level into action to ensure successful outcomes.

Why is this important to understand in the context of our future? The current National Defense Strategy of the United States of America breaks it down quite simply:

“We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order—creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory.”

In our warfighting capacity, it is important that we not let the skills we recently honed (outlined above) atrophy, as they are the exact skills needed to triumph should conflict break out in this time of great power competition. Directly applied, we need to be able to operate autonomously and execute the jobs the Air Force hired us to do in environments where the best information available to us may just be command intent. In our homeland operations capabilities, the future will certainly ask of the Connecticut National Guard action we never specifically train to execute, which recent history has proven repeatedly. When it does, we will continue to synthesize the skills we bring to bear with the trust our communities put in us to serve the state and nation. Simply stated, just as in the majority of our recent homeland operations engagements, we will continue to present highly competent Airmen and predictable support capabilities in the face of the unpredictable crises that arise in our homeland. We will glean the intent of our governor and commanders and



drive into the operational environment, wherever it may be, to assist the citizens of our state and communities in their times of need.

Please don't mistake this commentary as advocating for the leveraging of our capabilities outside the boundaries of established rules and regulations; rather, see it as a challenge to continue empowering Airmen at every level to innovate solutions to emerging and time-sensitive problem sets within those borders. Therefore, as we take our next steps toward the future, we must continue to embrace the unpredictable and bias our efforts toward deliberate action. Making the mission happen through leadership at every level is the essential ingredient to military success in the exceedingly dynamic and unpredictable operational environment in which we are currently, and will continue to be, engaged.

## CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD HELPLINE

*In an effort to support the needs of our service members and their families, the Connecticut National Guard has a 24-hour HELPLINE.*

*Your call will be answered by a behavioral health professional. You will receive information and referrals to community resources to support you and your family.*

**1-855-800-0120**





# 2020 PREPAREDNESS CALENDAR



**JAN**

Resolve To Be Ready  
Winter Safety



**FEB**

Central U.S. Earthquake  
Awareness Month



**MAR**

“It’s Not Luck” Campaign  
Severe Weather  
National Tsunami Awareness Week  
Flood Safety



**APR**

National Financial Capability Month  
Spring Safety



**MAY**

Wildfire Safety/National Community  
Preparedness Day  
National Building Safety Month  
National Hurricane Preparedness Week  
National Dam Safety Day



**JUN**

Pet Preparedness Month  
Summer Safety/Extreme Heat  
National Lightning Safety  
Awareness Week



**JUL**

Fireworks Safety  
Extreme Heat



**AUG**

Back to School -  
Children & Youth Preparedness



**SEP**

National Preparedness Month  
9/11 Day of Service & Remembrance  
Fall Safety



**OCT**

Cyber Security Awareness Month  
National Community Planning Month  
Fire Prevention/National Fire  
Prevention Week  
Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drills



**NOV**

Holiday Safety



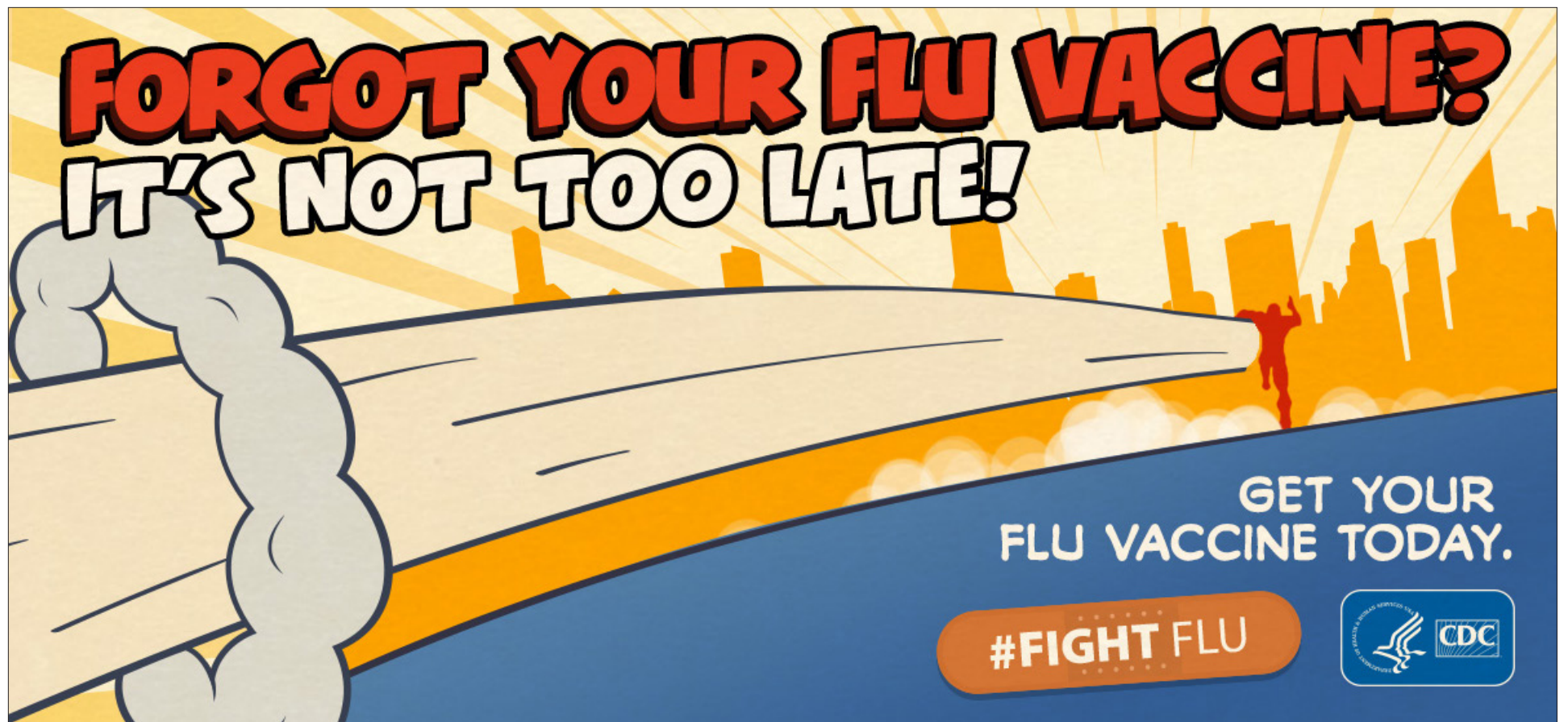
**DEC**

National Influenza Vaccination Week  
Winter Safety  
Holiday Safety  
Resolve To Be Ready

For links to social media toolkits and key messaging and topics please visit: [ready.gov/calendar](https://ready.gov/calendar).  
Social media toolkits include: flood safety, wildfires, hurricanes, extreme heat, National Preparedness Month,  
youth preparedness and more. Find toolkits at [ready.gov/toolkits](https://ready.gov/toolkits).

[ready.gov/calendar](https://ready.gov/calendar)





# Take time to get a flu vaccine

## Center for Disease Control Contributor

December 6-12 is National Influenza Vaccination week. Below are some key points from the Center of Disease Control on why you should seriously consider getting your influenza vaccine this year, if you haven't already.

- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. Getting a flu vaccine during 2020-2021 will be more important than ever.
- Flu vaccines will not prevent COVID-19, but they will reduce the burden of flu illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths on the health care system and conserve scarce medical resources for the care of people with COVID-19. (Read more about flu vaccine benefits.)
- CDC estimates that last season, fewer than half of Americans got a flu vaccine and at least 410,000 people were hospitalized from flu. Increased vaccination coverage would reduce that burden.
- Most flu vaccines protect against the four flu viruses that research suggests will be most common. (See Vaccine Virus Selection for this season's vaccine composition.) •Everyone 6 months of age and older should get annual flu vaccine by the end of October. Learn more about vaccine timing.
- Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
- People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older. Many people at higher risk from flu also seem to be at higher risk from COVID-19.
- Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for people at higher risk to keep from spreading flu to them. This is especially true for people who work in long-term care facilities, which are home to many of the people most vulnerable to flu and COVID-19.
- Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for infants should be vaccinated instead.

## Take Everyday preventative actions to stop the spread of germs

- Take everyday preventive actions that are always recommended to reduce the spread of flu.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with viruses that cause flu.
- See Everyday Preventative Actionspdf icon and recommended precautions to take during daily life and when going out for more information about actions – apart from getting vaccinated and taking medicine – that people and communities can take to help slow the spread of illnesses like influenza (flu).
- For flu, CDC recommends that people stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities. Fever should be gone without the need to use a fever-reducing medicine. The stay-at-home guidance for COVID-19 may be different.
- In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, local governments or public health departments may recommend additional precautions be taken in your community. Follow those instructions.

Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever. Visit CDC's website to find out what to do if you get sick with flu.



# NOT FEELING LIKE **YOURSELF?**

## REACH OUT. STAY MISSION READY.

### Military Life is Hard On Your Mind And Body

Even pain or trouble sleeping can hurt mission readiness. Talk to your health care provider if you feel unusually:

- Tired
- Stressed
- Angry
- Sad
- Forgetful
- Worried
- Pained
- Hopeless

### Psychological Health Resource Center

Call/Chat with a health resource consultant 24/7 at 866-966-1020 or [realwarriors.net/livechat](https://realwarriors.net/livechat)

### Military Crisis Line

Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, text 838255 or visit [militarycrisisline.net/chat](https://militarycrisisline.net/chat)

REAL WARRIORS ★ REAL BATTLES  
**REAL STRENGTH**

[realwarriors.net](https://realwarriors.net)

MHS

Military Health System

[health.mil](https://health.mil)



# Service Member and Family Support Center Staff Directory



At this time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, offices are being staffed on a part-time basis.  
We apologize for any inconvenience.

**William A. O'Neill Armory: 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105**

**Open Monday-Friday**

|                                                                         |                           |                                        |                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Director, Service Member and Family Support Center                      | <b>Kimberly Hoffman</b>   | kimberly.j.hoffman.civ@mail.mil        | (800) 858-2677                                 |
| Military and Family Readiness Coordinator                               | <b>Melody Baber</b>       | melodycheyenne.c.baber.civ@mail.mil    | (860) 548-3276 (desk)<br>(860) 883-2515 (cell) |
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist                                | <b>Kelly Strba</b>        | kelly.a.strba.civ@mail.mil             | (860) 548-3283 (desk)<br>(860) 500-3813 (cell) |
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist                                | <b>Linda Rolstone</b>     | linda.b.rolstone.civ@mail.mil          | (860) 524-4963 (desk)<br>(860) 680-2209 (cell) |
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist                                | <b>Rich Timberlake</b>    | richard.k.timberlake.civ@mail.mil      | (860) 493-2797 (desk)                          |
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist                                | <b>Jason Perry</b>        | jason.t.perry.civ@mail.mil             | (860) 524-4897 (desk)<br>(860) 655-9288 (cell) |
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist                                | <b>Denton Gladden</b>     | denton.r.gladden.civ@mail.mil          | (800) 524-4920                                 |
| ARNG Yellow Ribbon Program                                              | <b>SGT Jeovanny Ulloa</b> | jeovanny.j.ulloa.mil@mail.mil          | (860) 493-2796 (desk)                          |
| Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator                                  | <b>Michelle McCarty</b>   | michelle.m.mccarty4.ctr@mail.mil       | (860) 548-3254 (desk)<br>(860) 883-6953 (cell) |
| Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator                                  | <b>Reisha Moffat</b>      | reisha.a.moffat.ctr@mail.mil           | (860) 524-4894                                 |
| Military OneSource Consultant                                           | <b>Scott McLaughlin</b>   | scott.mclaughlin@militaryonesource.com | (860) 493-2722 (desk)<br>(860) 502-5416 (cell) |
| Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Volunteer Support Technician | <b>Ben Beaudry</b>        | benjamin.a.beaudry.ctr@mail.mil        | (860) 524-4970 (desk)                          |
| Personal Financial Counselor                                            | <b>Brian Deal</b>         | pfc.ct.ng@zeiders.com                  | (203) 233-8790 (cell)                          |
| State Support Chaplain                                                  | <b>Lt Col Eric Wismar</b> | eric.a.wismar.mil@mail.mil             | (860) 548-3240 (desk)<br>(860) 883-5278 (cell) |
| Transition Assistance Advisor                                           | <b>Fausto Parra</b>       | fausto.g.parra.ctr@mail.mil            | (860) 524-4908 (desk)                          |
| Connecticut Military Relief Fund                                        | <b>Russell Bonaccorso</b> | russell.bonaccorso@ct.gov              | (860) 524-4968 (desk)                          |

**Middletown Armed Forces Reserve Center: 375 Smith Street, Middletown, CT 06457**

|                                          |                    |                            |                                                |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist | <b>Jason Perry</b> | jason.t.perry.civ@mail.mil | (860) 524-4897 (desk)<br>(860) 655-9288 (cell) |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|

**Windsor Locks Readiness Center: 85-300 Light Lane, Windsor Locks, CT 06096**

|                                          |                        |                                   |                       |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist | <b>Rich Timberlake</b> | richard.k.timberlake.civ@mail.mil | (860) 292-4601 (desk) |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|

**103rd Airlift Wing: 100 Nicholson Road, East Granby, CT 06026**

|                                             |                         |                             |                                                |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager | <b>Kasey Timberlake</b> | kasey.timberlake@us.af.mil  | (860) 292-2730 (desk)<br>(860) 462-0379 (cell) |
| Yellow Ribbon Support Specialist            | <b>Laura Cohen</b>      | laura.cohen.2.ctr@us.af.mil | (860) 292-2772 (desk)<br>(860) 819-4636 (cell) |

**Niantic Readiness Center: 38 Smith Street, Niantic, CT 06357**

|                                          |                       |                               |                                                |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Military and Family Readiness Specialist | <b>Linda Rolstone</b> | linda.b.rolstone.civ@mail.mil | (860) 739-1637 (desk)<br>(860) 680-2209 (cell) |
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