

## Ep. 73: National Veteran and Military Families Month

Welcome to Sword and Shield, the official podcast of the 960<sup>th</sup> Cyberspace Wing. Join us for insight, knowledge, mentorship and some fun, as we discuss relevant topics in and around our wing. Please understand that the views expressed in this podcast are not necessarily the views of the U. S. Air Force, nor the Air Force Reserve, and no endorsement of any particular person or business is ever intended.

Good day Gladiators. This is Frances Martinez, the director of psychological health for the 960th Cyberspace Wing here with Mrs. K.C. Erredge. Thank you K.C. for joining us. Thanks for having me. And uh so November is National Military Family appreciation month and this is something that we have to celebrate our families and show thanks. Um and just that that great deal of appreciation for supporting our airmen. Yes. Um Military family appreciation month was established in 1993 and every president since then has signed a proclamation um-declaring November National Military family month. So um it's got a long-standing tradition. Um and it's a time for everyone to recognize the sacrifices of the entire military family. It's not just the member that serves, it's the it's the wife, it's the Children, it's a husband, it's everyone in the family and I think a lot of the times we talk about like I mean obviously my husband was in the military for 20 years and you know your spouse of a gr so all of us have these experiences and sometimes we get a little, I don't want to say neglected but we don't get all of the information sometimes. Like what's happening? I'm a very uh you know I'm a witness of this for myself with my husband being active duty for so long. I couldn't tell you anything that was happening at his job. You know what's going on base because I just didn't have that connection and I didn't know how to get those connections. Yeah that that connection piece is hard to come by and um I think that's even more difficult in the reserve in that um you know when you've got the members that are traditional reservists and they don't um they don't do the job full time. Um It's just the one weekend a month or two weeks a year kind of thing that the civilian career is but just like everybody else and that the military is kind of like an after thought and it's and they don't really see that as a big part of their life. It's just a teeny little piece but we have those TRS that also don't live near a military installation. And so then that puts another layer of complication on like a lot of these things that we're trying to do and trying to connect them with. Um I know it was a big shocker to me to hear from Colonel marriage said sometimes military spouses and family member dependence don't even have a military I. D. And I'm like what do you mean? They don't have a military idea. I don't understand how that's even possible. Um He said well they sometimes don't even set foot ever on a military installation. And so for me growing up an army brat and then you know marrying into the air force, it's a complete difference being active duty my whole life as a dependent and then seeing the reserve side of the house and what that really looks like. Yeah and um he tells another story too. That's really funny that there was a spouse at the at the member's retirement that just learned at the

retirement that he was getting paid. She thought he was doing it just for fun and that it was just something he liked to go do and then found out about the retirement at the retirement ceremony and she was like wait so what is all this money? Yeah so uh so yeah the traditional reserve families, you know they don't necessarily always know um that they're not near the installation and then because it's kind of like an afterthought like I said before, they don't know that there are organizations that are out there to assist them, you know um It may be help them with something that a child is struggling with or struggles that they're having um and they don't know that it's available to them. Yeah so you being the key spouse mentor for the whole wing, you know your are really drilling that um service and support line to our families. I know there was a big increase in new key spouses throughout the wing, I think you're leading the best practices uh for a for effort, but you know this is something that we have to do right, We have to find creative ways to connect with our families and let them know that we're here to support them in addition to their service member. Um and that's why I like, I love the position that I'm in because I can help anyone that's connected with the wing to include family members and um spouses, but it doesn't matter what status you're in, right? And so I think a lot of the times like if you call the mental health clinic or you call, you know Wilford Hall or any of these other resources like you have to be in status or we can't service you. Um and so I know like your support is um is really helping um and changing the culture really. Yeah and the key, the key spouse program yeah is a vital connection to the families and we want to be that that's part of the reason why we've made sure that we've kind of I guess for a good word, infiltrated. Um like all of the units is to make sure that every unit has a key spouse so that those family members have a way to access those resources and find out, you know what they have access to. And it's not necessarily those families that they have to come to get the information. We want to just push it out so that they see it and that they know that it's available and to take advantage of it. I mean if it's there, you know, we want to be using these services because when they don't get used and sometimes they go away. So um you know, we want to make sure that that families regardless of status um know that they are appreciated every day. And some of the ways are the different services that different organizations might offer up. And they're at least there are just a ton of different support organizations. I mean the chaplain services Airmen and Family Readiness and flax key spouses. Um I mean the list goes on and on military. One source is always a great option as well. Um and so what we're trying to do is continue the messaging um to our families by sending home newsletters and trying to get that information in the house. I wish I had that because I didn't. And so I know if I would have had that type of information, then I would have been more engaged and involved and my kids would have different activities um you know, within my husband's organizations. And so this is something that I've noticed and I wanted to change and that's why, you know, we worked really hard to get these newsletters and home to our families um and let them know what we're doing and what services are available to them. And my experience was similar. The first 10 years of Rick's military career, we were active duty and I had no clue about any of the stuff that I now like go out and preach. I had no idea it was available to me, you know. Um and I found it very hard to connect with other military spouse. I'm not really a spouse club

person. That's just not my, not my jam. Um and so it was hard for me to find people um you know, and so I it's partially why I got involved with the key spouse program was um to help families and be that conduit um to help connect spouses and get them in the note. It's funny that you say that. So I wanted to take a little piece of what you're saying because um getting to know new people, right? We are military. So what else is that travel at pcs that you know, when our spouses deploy, we're stuck at home and have to figure life out. Um and so all of that transition and granted there's a ton of resources for the service members, right, deployment, pre deployment, yellow ribbon programs and things like that. Um but again, I think we forget about the family members um sometimes in that process and that's, you know we really want to make sure that we are focusing on them and supporting them especially through all of those rough transitions. Yeah. Um and when you say when you say that you know we want to make sure that we're supporting. So you might be a single airman um and a deployment might be affecting say your parents um you know you might not be married and have kids but your parents might be affected by it you know? Um we truly want to support anyone and appreciate um any family member that comes along and helped guide him or her and help them through the process. Yeah I remember I can I can think of a time when we had just PCS'ed, Est um to my husband went to the pentagon and so on base I had at the time she was four years old and I'm like okay well time to meet some people you know um and figure out life for myself when he's gone. Who knows at what time um of the day? And so it was like okay well I'm going to enroll her in daycare or like the little um half-day pre K. Type thing. And then I started meeting mom's there and then it's like a little awkward because you don't want to like push yourself on them and you don't know what they're thinking and so just that whole adjustment phase of getting to know new people. Um I think part of it helped where I am today because now I'm well I'm always super extroverted, but it's just that uncomfortable, like, you know when it's a professional, like you have to do it versus like when you're trying to make friends and I think that's like the uncomfortable part of it, right? And it's just the transition. Can you imagine what our kids go through, you know, like going to high school and having to make those different transitions? Um and so it's very challenging. I can only imagine. Yeah. And the kids adjust differently. We moved a kid as a senior and he seemed to do okay. Um and now we've moved others not as seniors, but as teenagers still. Um and it's a hard adjustment. I mean they like sit in their rooms and I'm like why don't you go outside and head to the basketball court and play now, I'm good here. You know? And so they all adjust differently and have different levels of comfortable nests. So what they're going to do, and I think sometimes it takes about and tell you're just on the verge of moving again and then they finally get comfortable that they hung out with somebody and then where am I, you gotta, you gotta move them again, so we're gonna go again. Um So yeah, it's uh you know, it's an over and over thing and it's hard, yeah, when I was little, I forgot how many, I counted one time and it was more than 10 schools I think that I had went through. Um so just between everything, it was a big challenge. But I don't remember like as a kid being like difficult time making friends right? Or fitting in because it was all like around military installation and so there wasn't a whole bunch of weirdness to it I guess or trans difficulty transitioning. But I think like now

it's a little bit different because as an adult, it's like, okay, you have to think about all the stuff you have to do plus like get a social life of new social life and what does that mean? Or leaving jobs, right? Like some spouses, they're having to leave jobs, especially if you're like a license provider and you're sometimes you're degrees or licenses don't transfer over to the new state. It's a whole other ball of wax. Yeah. Um along the lines of realizing those sacrifices, they are working on a spouse licensure and re certification things and that's like a countrywide thing, um, that the, the government is working on and there are many states already that are recognized reciprocity from, from multiple different locations. Um, and, and the military has realized it and has provided a re certification a reimbursement for those certification fees to help our families with those with those expenses. Um and they're constantly working on trying to improve that and make that make that an easier transition um for our families. So it's one less stressor, you know, that is waiting on you when you're trying to move and you've got to So many other things you're trying to handle and get ahold of the same time. And so we like to have some fun right at the wing. We try to do some fun events um, for again our family members and our service members. And so we do have a virtual bingo night on 13 November. And uh, so it is in the in the newsletters that were sent home. And so we had a successful one last a couple months ago. I think it was that we did it. Um, and we had a pretty successful time doing that a lot. I can remember what that was. A lot of gift cards went out. I do remember that to one particular family that kept winning. Um, and so we hope we are going to have a good turnout for this one. So gladiator families make sure to join us for virtual bingo night. There will be prizes; there will be good prizes. This was telling me she's working on some good prizes, good prizes. Um, we want to again continue to show our appreciation to our military families and you know, some other things that are happening around for J. B. S. A. The vocal resiliency center is doing a food distribution. They're also looking for volunteers. But if you are in need of any food or assistance or would like to volunteer, you can reach out to them at 2102 to 1 to 055 and then, okay, so you said some really great options for thanksgiving meals. Yeah. The Operation Home front, which is a nationwide organization that supports military families, um, has a currently has a holiday meal drive that they've got sign ups for. Um, and they have pick up locations for those meals like across the country. Um, I was just out there and looked at them. Um, some of them are closed, but there are still a lot that have, um, sign ups available. Um, the eligibility is when you go out to the event and you find the event that you're looking for, it will have the eligibility. Some of them, there is a, there is a rank eligibility that they want you to fall under, but it's all listed on their website and that's Operation Homefront. Um, and they do that now. And while I was out there, I see that they've got a toy drive that they're doing. Um, and I have seen them give away homes as well to veterans that are in need of assistance and need a home too. So it's a wonderful organization that does a lot to, um, to support military families and they give out free backpacks and school brigade at the start of the school year. They do backpack drives. Yeah, so it's always good to kind of keep an eye on what's going on there. So, you know, thanksgiving is coming up to, we have uh, the thanksgiving day three K. I know it's a lot to get out and walk on thanksgiving after you have that delicious turkey and all the, you know, sides and

pumpkin pie and whatnot. Um, but you know, just to get out and spend some time some quality time with your family members. Um, and we also have the turkey pardon and just, you know, again to have fun and show what you're really thankful for. It's been a tough couple of years with the pandemic and then, you know, with a lot of other stuff happening across the country. And so it's really important for us to, you know, really focus on the good stuff and what we're thankful for and sharing our gratitude with one another. Yeah. Um, and in that turkey Francis mentioned is in the newsletter too. So you all can color your turkey and send it to Francis and we'll get it posted on Facebook so everyone can see what you're thankful for. Um, I know I'm thankful that we're here again in Texas this summer and we didn't, we didn't move, we've now been in one place longer than we've been anywhere since we left Minnesota in 2016. So I am thankful that I am going to be in the same home again this year and not be someplace not is someplace new. So um but I echo it has been challenging and so I hope that the holidays are a good time for everybody to connect with their families and be thankful for what you've got and yes it's been a struggle but we will get through it. Yeah it's a very challenging time. Um but you know we've made it almost two years through this pandemic um and you know obviously no one knows what's going to happen. We don't we don't have a magic ball but um it's something that you know we have to take it with a grain of salt and just kind of focus on the here and now and be present with what's happening in our lives and just you know everything external and try not to focus on everything to now. Unplug except for our Facebook page. We want people to like our Facebook page right? We have some good information on there and do you want to share the family? Um so we have we have we do have a family Facebook page and um even though we're here at J. B. S. A. I do share stuff that is valid nationwide and every now and then um I come across a post that's for like one of our, one of our, one of our units are so I share that. So um any member of our wing regardless of your location your family are welcome to join that Facebook page and it is 9 69 60 C. W. Families no spaces altogether. Um And you just put in a little note there's a little question when you come log in it's a closed group. Just tell me where you are and we'll let you we'll let you in and we'd be happy to have you and share the information with you. Yeah we always share all our good happenings and things that we have going around the wing or just around the country and so it's a great resource for our families again just to stay connected. Um I really appreciate you joining us today Casey and I appreciate all of our military families that are out there listening. Um I hope that you know 2022 is a better year for all of us. Um But I'm thankful that I'm here to be able to work with all of you guys. Yes and uh I appreciate you all as well. Um It's you all are why I am in the role that I am in um and I do it to support the families and um so yeah I'm grateful to have that and focus on everyone else. So families if you are in need you can reach out to myself or to K. C. Um and my phone number is 21037 to 6378. I can point you in the right direction for any resources that you need. Um And I hope everyone has a great holiday season and I look forward to talking with you soon. Gladiators out.