



AFSA International Family Matters Trustee

April 2019



Hello out there in AFSA Land – so glad Spring has sprung!

Did you know that April is military child appreciation month? Officially, it is known as **Month of the Military Child** and it is a time to honor the sacrifices made by military families worldwide, with an emphasis on the experience of the dependent children of military members serving at home and overseas. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger was responsible for establishing April as the Month of the Military Child in 1986, and the Department of Defense has honored his initiative ever since.

Here are some facts about military children –

- According to a report by the Department of Defense there are 700 military child development program facilities around the world, running approximately 155,000 child-care spaces, with another 3,000 Family Child Care homes which provide.
- It's estimated that military Child Development Centers (CDCs) welcome around 200,000 children daily. There are 300 youth and teen centers worldwide serving more than 645,000 youth through a variety of educational and recreational programs.
- Approximately 2 million military children have experienced a parental deployment since 9/11.
- There are currently 1.2 million military children of active duty members worldwide.
- Nearly 80% of military children attend public schools throughout the United States.
- The average military family moves three times more often than their civilian counterpart.
- There are nearly 2 million "total-force dependent children" including more than 900,000 Army dependents, 400,000 Air Force dependents, nearly 300,000 Navy and approximately 118,000 Marine dependents.

Read more: <https://militarybenefits.info/month-of-the-military-child/>

Below are some ideas on how we can honor or show appreciation to our military kids. With us being in the first week of April, it might be tough to pull the first two together, but you can always shoot for the last weekend of April or first weekend in May.

- ✓ April 10 is designated as **“Purple Up! For Military Kids” Day**. This is a day for communities to wear purple to show support and thank military children for their strength and sacrifices. Purple symbolizes the combined colors of all branches of the military: Army green, Coast Guard blue, Air Force blue, Marine red and Navy blue.
- ✓ Host a Saturday **Pancake Breakfast** or brunch. Ask everyone to wear purple and invite all military members to wear their uniform. You could pass out framed certificates to all the military kids – this would be easy to do and very inexpensive. If interested, please contact me and I will email you a certificate I saved from Pinterest. Frames can be purchased at your local dollar store.
- ✓ **Adopt** a few **Deployed Service Members** and create Care Packages to send overseas. Contact their family members to see what items would be of interest to their deployed loved ones. Have the kids make greeting cards for their loved ones and include them in the Care Packages.
- ✓ **Geocaching** – have some fun with your kids by geocaching with them. I’ve done this with my granddaughter and daughter-in-law and we had a blast! Download the app to your phone and discover hidden items in your area.
<https://www.geocaching.com/guide/>
- ✓ **Friday Fun** -- For the month of April, let your child decide what you do on Friday nights. This will let them feel like they have a say in what family does, when they so often don’t. Consider all requests thoughtfully and make modifications as necessary. Movie nights, ordering take-out, and water balloon fights in the yard are a few ideas to get started. A board game may sound boring, but your children will love it!
- ✓ **Ask About Their Feelings** -- Whether it’s over dinner or a visit to an ice cream parlor, ask your kids how they’re doing. Let them lead the conversation, but sprinkle in questions like “How does that make you feel?” or “What do you think about _____?” Listen, verify and validate their feelings. You’ll be surprised what they are willing to share if you ask in the right setting. This should be done on a regular basis, but try striking up a conversation as it relates to their feelings of their Mom or Dad being deployed.

Thanks so much for all you do for our country and for AFSA. Take care and God Bless!

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