

**Your Well-Being Information Resource**  
**Well-Being Liaison Office (WBLO)**



# FLO Notes



**Soldiers on Point for the Nation – Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War**

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[www.armyfamiliesonline.org](http://www.armyfamiliesonline.org)

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## WBLO Chief's Corner

### Army Families Online transformed

The New Year brings Army Families a new capability through the recently re-vamped Army Families Online Web site [www.armyfamiliesonline.org](http://www.armyfamiliesonline.org).

Please let me take a few minutes to share with you some of the highlights Army Families Online offers. First off, it is important to note that the Well-Being Liaison Office's Army Families Online is the only Web site in the Army entirely focused on Well-Being.

AFLO (Army Family Liaison Office) Online, which officially launched in October 2002 as Army Families Online, is now into its third year of operation. In its first two years the site received well over a million visitors and in-site activity of more than 25 million hits. These figures are important as they demonstrate that the site's average users spend time inside gathering and making use of several types of valuable information.

Recently we implemented a new version of the site, which is designed to make it more user-friendly. Today, the site is clearer, faster and more efficient than in the past.

Additionally, the new version will better allow us to track areas of interest to our visitors, thus enabling us to place the right amount of focus on what you want to know, rather than what we may think you wish to know.

There are a couple of areas on the site that are of significant importance.

The first is our "News" section. This is the most traveled road within our site. The news section has several as-

pects that you need to know about. When you click into our news area you will get general news stories, which are geared towards keeping members of the Army Family informed.

However, what you may miss are the news stories that are dedicated to giving you an in-depth look at many of the positive news stories related to what is happening in the War on Terrorism. Our users told us they were unhappy with the mainstream media's focus primarily geared to covering the negative aspects of war, and turned to us as an outlet for the full story. We responded by creating a special section to provide these positive news stories.

"Front Line Stories" is the result of this endeavor. "Front Line Stories" is a section of news stories and photos that are dedicated to sharing many of the positive aspects of the good our Soldiers are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan, while fighting the War on Terrorism.

Many of you may already be familiar with the Well-Being Smart Book, however it too is new and improved, as items are now much easier to find. And while we've made significant progress in reducing the amount of steps required to find information, we are continuing efforts to reduce these steps.

Another area of special interest is the Army Disabled Soldier Support System (DS3) which is receiving a great deal of activity. This area is designed to support our severely disabled Soldiers and their families by providing them with links to support systems, contacts and resources.

Army Families Online also continues to present information for the Army's Victim Witness Protection Program – a feature that was offered long before the Army's increased emphasis on sexual assault – because victims of assault need to understand their rights and need to know where to go to get help.

Last, but not least, the Army Families Online "Photo Gallery" section is greatly improved in the new version of the site. It provides us with a place to offer our users a window into what is going on across the Army. In the future this section of the site will offer greater benefits and opportunities for our visitors as we continue to work through the construction of this section's capabilities.

While the new version of Army Families Online is now greatly improved, one of the greatest benefits in this transformation is that it will be easier for us to add and expand to meet the needs of Army Families in the future.

While we may be the managers of Army Families Online, it is not really our site, as Army Families Online really and truly belongs to our customers ... Army Families – be it Soldier, spouse, children, parents, grandparents and even siblings.



### DFAS releases schedule for 2004 tax statements

The end of the year is here, and that means only one thing in the tax world, tax statements (W-2, 1099R).

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service has compiled a schedule of dates when servicemembers, military retirees and annuitants and defense civilian employees can access their tax statements through myPay – <https://mypay.dfas.mil> – and when they can anticipate to receive the hardcopy delivery by mail.

Servicemembers, retirees/annuitants

and Department of Defense civilian employees will once again have access to view, save and print their tax statements from myPay.

DFAS delivers personal pay information and provides the ability to process pay-related transactions that are timely, safe and secure to all its members through myPay.

The Web-based system eliminates the risks associated with postal delivery by allowing members to access electronic tax statements and other financial information online. DFAS's myPay matches existing industry standards for the highest level of encryption and security. This prevents customer information from being accessed by others on the Internet.

DFAS officials said that during January, February and March 2004, an average of 1.4 million myPay users viewed their tax statements each month. DFAS continues to encourage users to view and print their statements online. Earlier access to W-2s and other tax statements is another way myPay gives users control of their pay information.

Retired Annual Statements, Retired 1099Rs, Annuitant Annual Statements, and Annuitant 1099Rs are now available on myPay and should have also been mailed; Army Reserve W-2s are now available on myPay and should be mailed by Jan. 5; Civilian employee W-2s should be available on myPay by Jan. 6 and mailed by Jan. 14; Active-Duty Army W-2s should be available on myPay by Jan. 14 and should be mailed by Jan. 24.



## DoD launches 'America Supports You' site

The Defense Department recently launched a new program to showcase America's support for the men and women of the armed forces and the myriad ways the country is expressing that support.

"America Supports You" is designed

to gather information about the many activities and programs Americans have launched to show support for the troops – and most importantly, to ensure they and their families know about it.

Communicating America's support for servicemembers and their families is a big morale booster for those who are fighting to defend our freedom and communicates America's recognition and appreciation of the courage and commitment of those who serve.

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Americans have come together as never before, united in their resolve against their terrorist enemies. In the three years since Sept. 11, 2001, the American people have stood solidly behind our servicemembers and their families.

That support spans every segment of society – from individuals and families to schools to local communities to major, multinational corporations, all doing their part to show their appreciation for the dedication and sacrifice of America's fighting forces.

But despite the outpouring of support, servicemembers aren't always aware of it. Leaders have heard reports of troops in the field asking if Americans are still supporting them, and DoD is determined to be able to answer that question in a meaningful way.

The America Supports You program will ensure servicemembers know about their many acts of gratitude – including activities conducted at the local level.

The program encourages people to visit a Web site – [www.americasupportsyou.mil](http://www.americasupportsyou.mil) – and share details about their project or activity. By doing so, they can sign up to receive a military-style dog tag with the "America Supports You" logo that provides a tangible symbol of their support.

A number of initiatives which are already under way run the gamut. Brittany and Robbie Bergquist, a brother-sister team in Massachusetts, have used their "Cell Phones for Soldiers" program to buy prepaid calling cards so deployed servicemembers can call home.

Another group formed to build or renovate homes for disabled veterans returning home from Southwest Asia.

Other groups set up programs so children of deployed troops could listen to or watch their mom or dad read bedtime stories to them.

Home Depot donated tools and materials so families could repair and maintain their homes during their loved ones' deployment. Starbucks donated coffee to give troops in Southwest Asia a taste of home. The list goes on and on.

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**“Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.”**

*– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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## Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service

During his lifetime, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., sought to forge the common ground on which people from all walks of life could join together to address community issues.

Working alongside individuals of all ages, races and backgrounds, King encouraged Americans to come together to strengthen communities, alleviate poverty, and acknowledge dignity and respect for all human beings. Service, he realized, was the great equalizer.

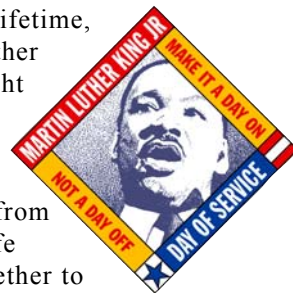
On Jan. 17, Americans across the country will celebrate the national holiday honoring King's life and work.

As they have since 1995, Americans will remember King by participating in service projects in their communities. Together, they will honor King's legacy of tolerance, peace, and equality by meeting community needs and making the holiday "A day on, not a day off!"

For more information, visit [www.mlkday.org](http://www.mlkday.org).

## New MSP Program offers more job opportunities

The Military Spouse Preference Program increases employment opportunities for spouses of members of the armed forces. The program provides priority in the civilian employment



selection process for military spouses who are relocating to accompany their military sponsor on a Permanent Change of Station move to an active-duty assignment.

Initially, the program permitted only a single opportunity for military spouses to exercise employment priority for either a permanent or temporary job. However a recent change implemented by DoD, which took effect in October, gives military spouses more options and control over the use of their MSP through modifications of the U.S. European Command's MSP Choice.

MSP Choice has now become a permanent program following a successful two-year test conducted in EUCOM. The U.S. Army Europe participated in the EUCOM test, which was conducted from 2001 to 2003, and strongly supported permanent implementation.

The policy change applies to the employment preference of military spouses into positions paid from appropriated and non-appropriated funds. Under the new policy, MSP eligibility applies only to initial employment into a permanent position in the new geographical commuting area of the servicemember's new duty station.

Military spouses may therefore be simultaneously referred for permanent and temporary positions, and may accept a temporary job (full time, part time or intermittent) without losing preference eligibility for a permanent position.

However, if the military spouse is placed into a temporary position, MSP eligibility for other temporary positions will be suspended until 60 days prior to the expiration of the temporary position.

MSP for the specific new geographic location commuting area will terminate when the spouse accepts or declines an offer of a permanent position.

## 200-unit Military Exchange Phone Cards now available

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service's "Help Our Troops Call



Home" initiative is expanding with the unveiling of a 200-unit Military Exchange

Global Prepaid Phone card that makes giving the gift of communication to deployed troops more affordable.

AAFES unveiled the 200-Unit card in late November.

On the day they were issued, KLBJ-AM in Austin, Texas placed an order for 4,675 200-Unit Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards.

"After raising \$70,075 through the station's 'Operation Call Home' program, we were looking for a way to maximize every dollar," said KLBJ-AM promotions director Macon Schoonmaker. "After talking with AT&T it became clear that AAFES' 'Help Our Troops Call Home' program was the most affordable way for KLBJ to provide the greatest number of cards and call minutes to deployed troops."

AAFES has offered the 550-Unit phone card since the 'Help Our Troops Call Home' program began in April. While the \$39 550-Unit card offers the bulk buying power to drive the cost per minute to as low as 19 cents a minute during the holidays, it limits the number of troops that can benefit from the distribution of phone cards purchased by civilian organizations, individuals and businesses.

The \$14.99 200-Unit Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone card can be used at any of the 63 AAFES call centers throughout Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom including 47 locations in Iraq and Afghanistan. With a rate of only 30 cents a minute, each card provides 50 minutes of talk time to the United States from the AAFES phone centers throughout Iraq and Afghanistan.

Before a servicemember even picks up a phone in a deployed location, servicemembers should read the fine print on the card. All phone cards are not created equal. Troops as well as friends and family should be aware that price per minute charges can be much higher when placing an overseas

call using a credit card, calling card or other pre-paid phone cards.

Most commercial calling cards purchased in the United States are designed only for domestic use and rates are as high as 50 cents a minute when calling from Iraq or Afghanistan. So troops on the front line really get a lot more bang for the buck when provided an AAFES Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone card, regardless of the denomination.

Many pre-paid phone cards sold in the United States are designed for use within the 48 contiguous states.

AAFES' Military Exchange Global Prepaid phone cards are designed for use on a "global platform." This platform is tailored to the unique needs of mobile servicemembers.

The "Help Our Troops Call Home" initiative allows any American to make a direct contribution to the morale of troops who find themselves far from home. Individuals, organizations and businesses can log on to [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com) and click the "Help Our Troops Call Home" link, or call 1-800-527-2345 for more information on 200-Unit and 550-Unit Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards.

## Supporting deployed Soldiers has never been easier

One often-repeated question from forward-deployed troops today is some form of: "Does America support what we're doing over here?"

Judging by the number of Web sites devoted to that support, the answer is a resounding, "Yes!"

But as times have changed, so have the ways to support the troops. Just because the old way – no more "Any Servicemember" mail – doesn't work anymore, that doesn't mean that troops can't receive mail and care packages from patriotic souls. It simply means finding an organization to help you get that morale-boosting mail to the troops.

Dozens of independent organizations are ready and willing to help those

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who want to support the troops. They generally fall into two basic categories. The first is the organizations that collect cash or goods to create care packages to be sent to troops who wish to receive them.

One such organization is Freedom Calls Foundation ([www.freedomcalls.org](http://www.freedomcalls.org)), which uses state-of-the-art communications technology to keep servicemembers connected with their families. Because of Freedom Calls' efforts, servicemembers have "been there" for milestone events such as weddings (sometimes their own), births and graduations.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars ([www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)) offers a program called "Operation Uplink" ([www.operationuplink.org](http://www.operationuplink.org)) that connects servicemembers with family and friends. The program, begun in 1996, provides pre-paid phone cards to active-duty servicemembers and hospitalized veterans.

Again, Operation Uplink accepts cash donations that are used to purchase the pre-paid phone cards. Donations can be made online, via phone or through the mail.

Another supporter of deployed U.S. troops, the United Service Organizations ([www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org)), has a program called "Operation USO Care Package" ([www.usocares.org](http://www.usocares.org)). The program lets well-wishers sponsor a care package for a monetary donation. USO makes the donation part easy too. All it takes is a mouse click, a phone call or a stamp to mail a check.

The second-type of organization pairs supporters with servicemembers who have given permission to release their contact information to an individual. Most of the sites offering servicemember "adoptions" require a minimum commitment of one piece of mail a month.

AdoptaPlatoon ([www.adoptaplatoon.org](http://www.adoptaplatoon.org)), not only provides the means to "adopt" an individual servicemember, but an entire platoon. The requirements for each adoption are a little different. Supporters can also ask to be matched with a servicemember as a pen pal.

Operation Military Pride ([www.operationmilitarypride.org](http://www.operationmilitarypride.org)) is another group that focuses on care packages. However, to obtain mailing information for a servicemember, supporters

are required to sign up through the site. Like many organizations, Operation Military Pride has several different campaigns in the works to support deployed troops.

There also are a smaller number of Web sites dedicated to allowing a supporter to send an electronic greeting to servicemembers and some that have compiled a list of links to various support Web sites.

Care packages are always nice, but letters are just as good. And sites like Operation Dear Abby (<http://anyserVICEMEMBER.navy.mil>) and Letters From Home ([www.lettersfromhome-program.org](http://www.lettersfromhome-program.org)) make that very easy to do. Operation Dear Abby provides the means to send an electronic greeting to a servicemember and Letters From Home works with the old-fashioned variety.

If the legitimacy of a site is a concern, check out the list on the Defend America Web site – [www.defendamerica.mil](http://www.defendamerica.mil). While the Department of Defense does not endorse organizations, a DoD official said that the groups listed on Defend America's "Support Our Troops" page – [www.defendamerica.mil/support\\_troops.html](http://www.defendamerica.mil/support_troops.html) – are checked routinely to make sure they are doing what they say they are.

It's also important to remember that some Web sites are easier to use than others. So don't get discouraged, the links are there. It may just take a little looking to find them.

These are just a small sampling of organizations that offer Americans the means to remember and appreciate our troops. There are many, many groups offering many, many ways to show deployed troops that yes, America Supports You!

## Commissary locator highlights Web site change

The "commissary locator," a new driving-distance calculator and mapping feature on [www.commissaries.com](http://www.commissaries.com), highlights several changes to the Defense Commissary Agency's Web site designed to help patrons maximize their



shopping experience.

The Web site sports a new red, white and blue motif with drop-down navigation menus to give the site a consistent look and operation throughout and to help visitors navigate more speedily. It also gives visitors an option to view Flash animations highlighting features that make commissary shopping so unique and popular among servicemembers.

"The changes couldn't come at a better time. November marked the first anniversary of unlimited commissary shopping for National Guard and reserve families, many of whom live some distance from a commissary. Our new commissary locator feature will make it easy for them to determine where to shop," said Patrick B. Nixon, DeCA's acting director and chief executive officer.

Visitors use the commissary locator by providing their ZIP code and a driving distance of their choice into data fields on a Web page. The system responds by providing a list of all commissaries within the driving distance. When visitors select a commissary from the list, they're taken to that commissary's Web page that features a link for detailed driving directions to the commissary from a location provided by the visitor. The Dec. 1 launch of the new-look Web site comes four years after it was last changed. The site's content is essentially the same, although it's been organized and presented a little differently in some cases to better present content that's been added in the last four years.

The popular commissary store Web pages, which each of the 272 commissaries maintain themselves to provide the most current local shopping information possible, are still featured under the "locations" navigation button.

Designed with commissary shoppers in mind, the site also serves DeCA employees and its business partners. A new "about us" navigation button serves as the gateway to job announcements, information for employees, information for business partners and as a way to access the online customer comment form. Thanks to the drop-down navigation menus, these popular features are just a click away from the home page.