

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE

MAY 17, 2007

Good afternoon!

To the members of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves.

It is indeed a pleasure and privilege for me to speak to you briefly as a volunteer for the Family Readiness Group Program.

I have learned much about and have gained a great deal of respect for the men and women who lead and serve this organization.

I know that the Guard's mission is always ready for mobilization and plays a vital role in our nation's defense.

Like the Guard, The Family readiness group too parallels that vital role: always ready for mobilization

Question : How do they do this?

They provide the arena whereby families are prepared for the stresses related to deployment through family group meetings, informative trainings and fun-related outings.

These outings and skilled training sessions, help in my opinion, to minimize family anguish, fear and distress. The FRG offers a myriad of services such as mental health, and financial planning services, marriage counseling and other family intervention that is needed.

Therefore our service members leave for their mission assured that their families will receive reliable and friendly support from the FRG which in turn acts a stabilizer for the service member.

For example:

When you walk through the doors of the family readiness support center, as a stranger you are sincerely and courteously greeted with warmth and compassion.

One immediately appreciates the assistance and concern offered, as they begin to help a family member. The energy, enthusiasm, the resourcefulness and the skill in which they are served is exemplary.

1st story

Met a lady who was recently married and new to the District of Columbia community. She at the time was not employed, knew very few, if any people and was somewhat shy and withdrawn. As she was adjusting to her new community and seeking employment, her husband received orders that he was soon to be deployed! In her words, she said "I went off, I was angry, and how could they do this?"

Here enters FRG. They were there and provided that immediate friendly support to diffuse that mistrust and anger that she felt. Consequently, her self-esteem and confidence has been boosted and she is now that supportive and understanding life partner to her husband.

2nd story

It has been my experience as a 30 year veteran teacher, that young people are affected by events and life changes a bit differently. Our children are vulnerable and it is important that we make them feel safe and secure. Enters our Youth component of the family program, a vital arm of the program.

A few months ago at a retreat where the youth were participating, two of the youth gave brief accounts of the Family Youth support group program and its effect which has changed their perspective. One was a young lady whose mother had been deployed and a young man whose father had been deployed. Both shared their thoughts and indicated that being involved with other young people who shared common experiences allowed them to express their thoughts, fears, and successes. As a result these two youth, said they were more confident, could get up in a mixed group and express themselves and were grateful for the opportunities afforded through the FRG program

Conclusion:

As a volunteer, I realize full well, the responsibilities and importance of this organization. They strive to provide essential services to the families and the FRG Center often acts, for those who enter, as a respite from the stresses of every day living. I am indeed grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this group and I hope that in some small way I have helped them to advance and carry out their goal: Mission first, family always.