

Strong Bonds...need to get away?

By an anonymous Flying Yankee spouse
Photos courtesy of Master Sgt. Jessica Rawlinitis Chenery

When I met and married my husband, it was my first experience within the military world. Never having served in the military myself, I could only imagine how military life could affect families as a whole and marriages, in particular.

The one thing I have always known is that anyone who wears the uniform does so with great personal sacrifice. The images of our military men and women often evoke varied emotions in all of us. For me, I have always held a place of respect for anyone who serves. I believe that anyone who serves our country embodies the idealistic characteristics that represent the best of humanity such as bravery, sacrifice, honor, commitment, perseverance, loyalty, integrity and courage—a formidable strength in the face of adversity. The media, at its best, reinforces this image of American strength and patriotism wrapped in stories of conquest and heroism.

Unlike the movies, the real heroes I believe are often behind the scenes at home. Military life is not easy on families. The separation and stress associated with deployments and the aftermath affect everyone. Although I have not had to endure such a strain personally, my husband has and many other members of our family. Humor is often what gets us through. Laughter has a way of making unpleasant situations—well, funny. As I am learning, it is not what happens to us, it is how we choose to respond that will determine our happiness.

Although stress occurs in everyone's daily life, military spouses in particular have the added strain of having to deal with long periods of separation and the fear of the unknown. Even when their loved one returns, sometimes the experiences they had can change them. Any of these circumstances by itself is enough pressure on a person and a marriage, let alone the combination.

The other observation I have had as a military wife is that the military often provides a strong support system for service



members and their families. My husband and I recently participated in one of these events given by the Chaplain's office called the Strong Bonds for Marriage weekend.

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MICT SAC Validation is here! ...and there was much rejoicing

by Maj. D Elliotte Draeger
103rd Inspector General Office



The 103rd Airlift Wing Inspector General team would like to remind everyone of the annual requirement to validate MICT Self-Assessment Communicators (SACs). This process creates a history of updated/validated assessments in our Air Force Inspection System self-assessment process. All SACs must be validated annually between 1 January and 15 February as this data is virtually inspected by our MAJCOMs. If you aren't sure how to accomplish this, the slideshow at this link will guide you through the process: <https://eissp.ang.af.mil/org/103AW/Wing%20IG/iginspections/MICT/>

[Perform Self Assessment.pdf?Web=1](#)

This is an annual requirement per AWI 90-202, paragraph 2.3.3 and further defined in the 103d AW MICT Business Rules. Any SACs that have not been validated within by the 15 February 2017 deadline will be tracked and reported to the wing Commander during the April 2017 CIMB. If you have any further questions, please contact one of the following Self-Assessment Program Managers listed below for assistance or contact the IG office at 292-2753:

MXG—CMSgt Shawn Robert, MSgt Ryan Starkey, SMSgt Michael Pennabaker, 2nd Lt Daniel Sanford
FSS—MSgt Peter Jones, MSgt Lisa Todaro

MSG—MSgt Justin Lanati
CPTF—SSgt Jeffery McDonald, MSgt Jacob Cournoyer
CES—2nd Lt Joshua Eichelberger, SMSgt David Frates, SMSgt Jeffery Pooler, SMSgt Robert Cross
ACS—TSgt Jonathan Weiss, MSgt Patricia Weiler
OPS—SMSgt Peter Martucci, Capt. Sean Jacobson, SMSgt Dana Babcock
AW
LTC Greg Kozbinski, Maj Jefferson Heiland, MSgt Christina Glasper
CF—SMSgt Mark Cote, MSgt Steven Bava
MDG—Captain Jessica Herndon, LTC Douglas Fowler
SFS—SMSgt Christopher Divita, SMSgt Kurt Smith



103rd Airlift Wing Base AFPAAAS POC
Master Sgt. Kristina Owren

AFPAAAS is a web-based application used to account for and assess the needs of the Air Force personnel and their families following a catastrophic event such as a Hurricane or Tornado. AFPAAAS is the sole source for accountability actions and provides Air Force leadership real-time feedback on the status of individuals impacted by a manmade or natural disaster. Leadership, Airmen and their family members will use AFPAAAS to attain 100 percent accountability and assessment in support of real-world or exercise events.

AFPAAAS is applicable to Air National Guard Active Duty Title 10, Active Duty Title 32, State Active Duty, drilling Guardsmen (Traditional & ANG Technicians), and DEERS-enrolled family member of these categories. In the event of a catastrophic event where normal reporting channels are not viable, AFPAAAS provides a tool to report status, current location, update emergency con-

tact information and requests for assistance. This system helps leadership account for personnel and to make decisions that support you and your family.

In the event of a catastrophic event that displaces you from your home or office, you may contact someone with internet access and ask them to use AFPAAAS on your behalf. You can also access AFPAAAS from any computer or request assistance from local authorities and relief agencies. If you do not have internet access you should contact your command representative or the Air Force Personnel Readiness Cell at 800-435-9941. The AFPAAAS website is located at <https://afpaas.af.mil> and is required to be on all unit recall rosters.

All members are required to validate their AFPAAAS information yearly. The procedures for this can be found on the 103rd Force Support Squadron's SharePoint page under Readiness and then AFPAAAS. For more information please contact your unit AFPAAAS POC or the 103rd Installation Personnel Readiness Superintendent, Master Sgt. Kristina Owren at 860-292-2572.

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The weekend is set up to help couples build relationship resiliency. The Strong Bonds program is designed for military couples, families and even singles. It is particularly effective for those who are about to deploy. Our weekend was for married couples and focused on laughing your way to a better marriage. The seminar utilized videos and workbooks to illustrate the vast differences between the male and female brain (no comment, see, I told you...humor is good) that helped us all have a better understanding



of one another in an amusing yet insightful way. I personally learned a lot about myself and my husband and new ways of relating. They also spoke about valuable

ways to divorce-proof your marriage—all good advice.

Together, we are using what we learned to strengthen our communication and deepen our connection. We also laughed a lot with the group and everyone was relaxed and open. I would absolutely go again. This was my second Strong Bonds weekend and I highly recommend it to any couple. Even if your marriage is great, you will be amazed at how much better it can get when you understand each other and laugh together.

Chaplain Corps holds successful back-to-back Strong Bonds weekends

By Master Sgt. Jessica Rawlinitis Chenery
103rd Airlift Wing Chaplain Corps

Photos courtesy of Master Sgt. Jessica Rawlinitis Chenery

It all started with the Marriage Strong Bonds Weekend January 27-29 at the beautiful Mystic Marriott. In all, 30 military couples participated. Friday evening kicked things off with a fabulous dinner that included beef, chicken, salmon and more. After dinner, we began with our Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage curriculum authored and facilitate (via DVD) by Mark Gungor. Gungor teaches insightful marriage tools thru hilariously-entertaining illustrations and anecdotes. Humor is his tool of choice, and he employs it ever so effectively.

Topics covered included: The Tale of Two Brains, The #1 Key to Incredible Sex, How to Stay Married and not Kill Anyone, and the Flag Page. For many, the flag page exercise is one of the best take-away tools, allowing husbands and wives to look closely at each other's drive and passion in life and help discover what makes their spouse tick. The chaplain staff facilitates each topic and ties in their own personal stories and discoveries. Staff spouses tag along as well; they make sure our stories are factual and honest.

Saturday started with a breakfast followed by class until noon, and then a break for a program-provided lunch at the hotel. Afterward, participants had the rest of the day to relax, enjoy the Mystic area and spend quality time with their spouse. I know for me, this is the time I look forward to most. Alone time with my husband without any distractions from kids, work, etc.—just hang out, talk and enjoy each other's company.

The weekend wrapped up on Sunday with another breakfast and class time. We like to end the Laugh Your Way weekend with a Reset button ceremony. The couples get a chance to look each other in the eye, say I'm sorry (if needed), kiss, and start fresh. Overall, it was a very good weekend.

Our Family Strong Bonds Weekend was held just a week later, February 3-5. We had 30 families attend. With



kids and adults, we had 135 people in attendance. The event was held at the fun-filled Great Wolf Lodge Resort. This weekend is filled with energy and fun. This year, we shared a new curriculum called The 7 Habits for Highly-Effective Families. It was a lot of work, but so worth it for our Airmen and their families. The 7 Habits program teaches basic, common sense information and tools that sometimes we just need to be reminded of when it comes to our families.

Habit 1, Be Proactive. We learned that sometimes we have to pause, think and choose the best option. We have to take responsibility for our life. Habit 2, Begin with the End in Mind. We learned to have a goal and plan for where we want to go as an individual and a family. Habit 3, Put First Things First. We learned to make sure our big rocks get taken care of before everything else. Habit 4, Win-Win. It's not about you or me, it's about us as a whole. Habit 5, Seek First to Understand. We have to learn to listen first, understand what the other member is really saying, and then speak. Slow down and really communicate with each other. Habit 6, Synergize. We learned to work as a team. Everyone has their own strengths and gifts and, if we come

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together and utilize them, we are a stronger family unit. Habit 7, Sharpen the Saw. We need to be reminded to take care of ourselves. We need to be physically, socially, mentally and spiritually healthy so we can then take care of our family. The kids created crafts

and participated in activities that represented each of these habits, while the parents and teens had their own activities and teachings for the 7 Habits.

This weekend is a good balance of learning tools to help families become stronger together and then have plenty of time to enjoy the resort and have

fun together. On Saturday and Sunday, we release everyone at noon to go and have a blast in the waterparks, ropes course, arcade, bowling alley and so much more. We enjoyed having our Airmen and families there and we can't wait until next year.

Meet the Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager

Over the past couple months I have frequently been asked, "Why did you move to Connecticut from North Carolina in December?" I admit, it does seem strange, but I was born and raised here and, while December probably wasn't the most ideal time to make a move, I am happy to be "home."

Although the Air National Guard is new to me, working with military families is not. My husband is a former active-duty Marine and I began work in family readiness programming with the Marine Corps in 2008. Over the past nine years, I have served in a variety of roles, from planning and implementing deployment and pre-deployment training at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, to managing the family program at Marine Special Operations Regiment, to working with Marines and Sailors with traumatic brain injury at Intrepid Spirit Concussion Recovery Center Camp Lejeune.

Each position allowed me a wide variety of experiences and has truly given me a great appreciation for the sacrifices, com-

mitment and dedication shown by our country's service members and families. I feel I've found a fulfilling and meaningful career path and I am excited to learn and grow with the Connecticut Air National Guard community. I look forward to working with you!

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