



# GUARD & RESERVE

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# WE GOT YOUR SIX



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# 10 YEARS SUPPORTING THE GUARD AND RESERVE

Anniversary is officially recognized with entry into the Congressional Record

A decade ago, the U.S. military marked seven years of continuous fighting in the Middle East. Scores of service members had already deployed multiple times, and the pressures of deployment had taken a toll on many — physically, psychologically, emotionally. That year, 2008, the U.S. Congress stepped up to help, approving a new program specifically for National Guard and Reserve members: the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP).

In establishing YRRP, Congress recognized that Guard and Reserve service members face challenges throughout the deployment cycle that are uniquely different than those confronting their active duty counterparts. The program connects service members and their families with resources where they live and provides a support network to aid their unique challenges.

Senator Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., who was instrumental in introducing the legislation creating the program in 2008, honored YRRP's 10th anniversary by entering a statement into the official record of the United States Congress. The proclamation recognized

the program's successes and dedication to ensuring a ready and resilient Reserve Component.

Klobuchar also acknowledged the contributions made by other members of Congress in the creation of the program by recognizing: retired Congressman John Kline, R-Minn.; former Senators Norm Coleman, R-Minn., and Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga.; and current U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson, R-Ga.. Minnesota's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program for its National Guard served as a model for the national program.

Since its creation, YRRP has continually evolved to address the changing needs of a dynamic and diverse military community. YRRP's pre-, during, and post-deployment events have supported more than 1.5 million service members and their families. Post-event surveys show attendees overwhelmingly approve of the effectiveness and benefit — program events received an 87 percent satisfaction rate in the most recent survey.

The full text of the proclamation can be found below. It can also be found online here. [📄](#)

## YRRP: A commitment to being...

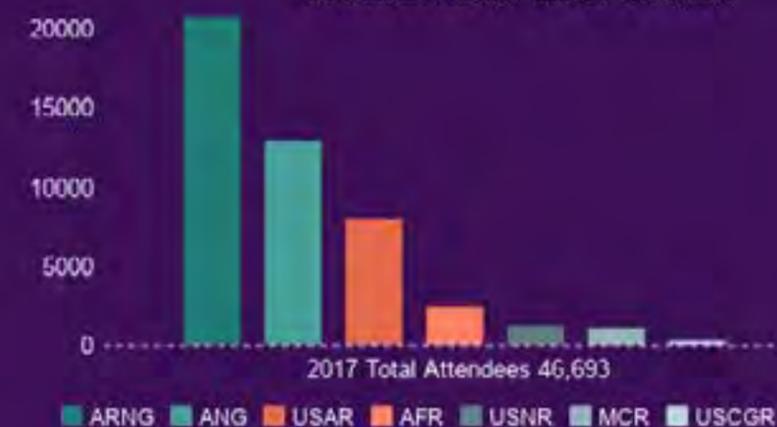
### Supportive



**1.8 million**

Service members and their families supported throughout deployment.

Reserve Component Attendees for 2017 Events



### Responsive

YRRP helps service members and families strengthen readiness, build resilience, and prepare for reintegration through curriculum addressing these issues and more:



Employment



Legal Issues



Financial Readiness



Well-Being of Service and Family Members



Family Matters: Marriage and Parenting



Education

### Enduring

Over **14,000** events held across the U.S. since 2008



**87%** satisfaction approval



More than **4,600** volunteers support YRRP





# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 established the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to assist National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as they transition between their civilian and military roles and back again. The program ensures the readiness of Reserve Component members, their families, and communities before, during, and after deployment.

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are the backbone of our Nation's military, comprising nearly half of our total force. We have relied on them to support combat missions abroad, and we will continue to rely on them. Nearly 1 million guardsmen and reservists have deployed since September 11, 2001, with nearly 35,000 currently mobilized.

Not only do National Guard and Reserve servicemembers support combat operations, security, and humanitarian missions around the world, they also ensure our safety when unforeseen disasters and emergencies occur. Just this past year, Reserve Component members have responded to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, providing relief and

emergency services to hundreds of thousands of Americans. Through their compassion, professionalism, and courage, they protect our way of life, not just abroad, but also here at home.

In establishing the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Congress recognized that National Guard and Reserve servicemembers face challenges throughout the deployment cycle that are uniquely different than those confronting their Active-Duty counterparts. Most notably, Reserve Component members often live far from military installations and other members of their units, decreasing their opportunities for support during each stage of deployment.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program bridges this gap by connecting National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families with resources where they live and provides a support network to aide their unique challenges. Through the program, Reserve Component members and their families gain access to relevant information and resources, including family and marriage counseling, financial planning and education, small business planning, legal benefits, healthcare information, employment training opportunities, and veterans benefits education.

I had the distinct pleasure of working with Congressman John Kline and Senators Norm Coleman, Saxby Chambliss, and JOHNNY ISAKSON in introducing the legislation that created the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in 2008. I am pleased to say the Minnesota National Guard's program, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, sought to improve how Minnesota's servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan experienced reintegration and became the model for the national program we are recognizing today.

Since its launch, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's pre, during, and post deployment events have supported more than 1.5 million servicemembers and their families. These 10 years have demonstrated the necessity of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's mission in maintaining the readiness of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers, their families, and their communities.

I am sure the entire Senate will join with me in congratulating the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program on the successes that have brought it to its 10th anniversary and supporting its continued success moving forward.



## YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

SUPPORTIVE. RESPONSIVE. ENDURING.



My wife and I spent the weekend in Houston at a Yellow Ribbon Navy Returning Warrior Workshop. It was absolutely phenomenal. From the time we walked in on Friday until the time we walked out on Sunday, EVERYTHING was a first class experience. Thank You!

—Rick Mecom



I have been in the army long enough to see this program born, tweaked and in my opinion, you've got it right now. It's just about perfect in almost every way. There are resources that I feel privileged to have available to me for free. Again, I've come home from deployments where this program didn't exist, so kudos for the brains behind this and thank you all who are involved. Your efforts are literally life changing for soldiers looking for jobs after deployment, along with financial advice to help young soldiers with money management.

—Jacob Laughlin

*"Thank you for your tremendous dedication to our National Guard families."*

—Mike Scholes

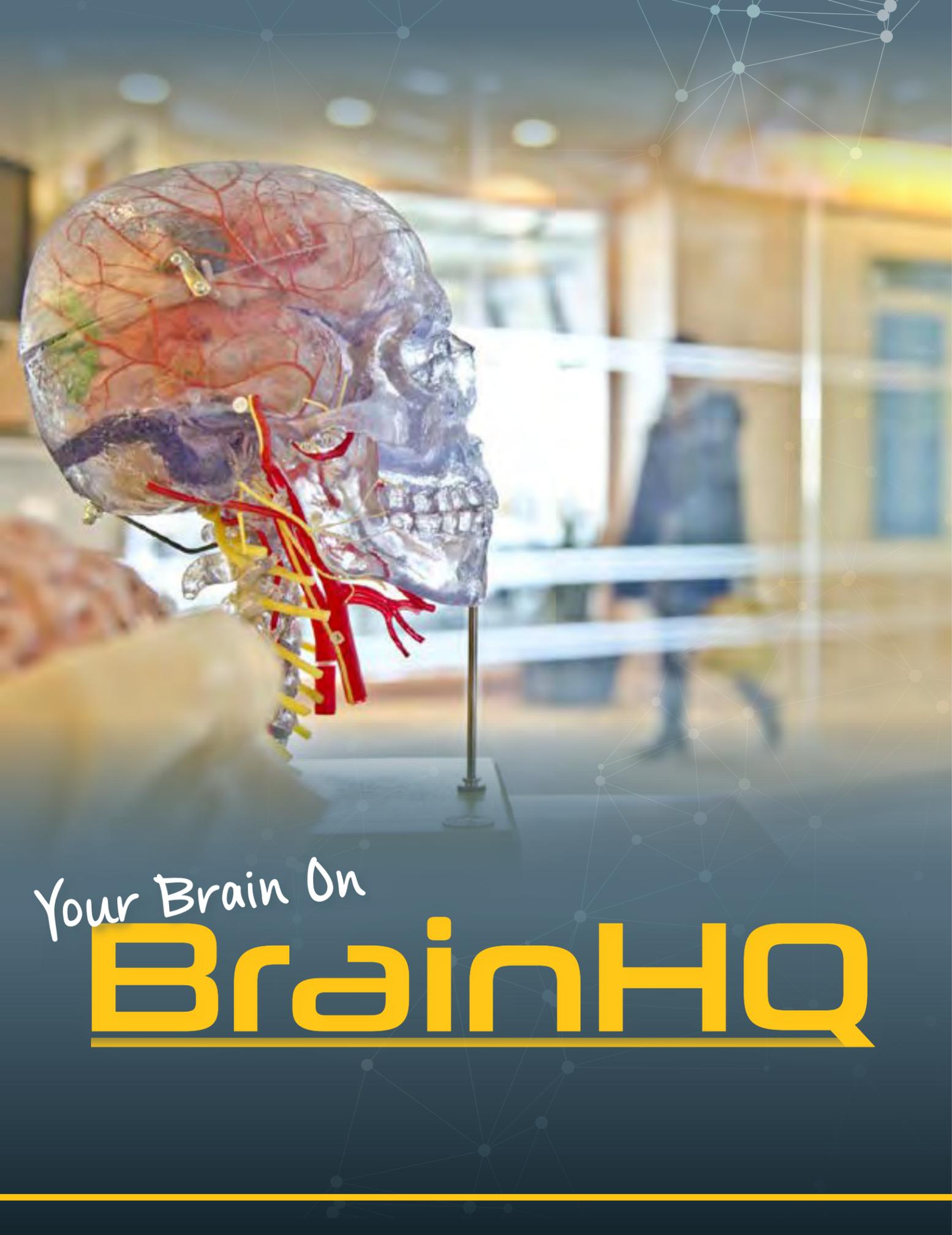
*"Thank you! Ya'll do great work."*

—Holly F. Andriesen

*"Awesome Organization"*

—Jessie González





Your Brain On

# BrainHQ

“We chose BrainHQ to help service members hone qualities such as lifelong learning, readiness, and resilience. This unique program will help our personnel improve their attention spans, decision making skills, and cognitive speed.”

Who wouldn't like to have a faster, more nimble, and more accurate brain? Remarkable breakthroughs in brain science are opening doors once thought closed with mental fitness programs accessed through online, phone, and tablet platforms. The Department of Defense (DoD) recognizes the potential benefits for service members and has recently made BrainHQ, a standard-bearer brain health program, easily accessible to all military members, active, reserve, and retired.

## How does it work?

The science hinges on an adaptation process known as neuroplasticity — the capacity for the brain to alter itself at any age. Brain training that involves improving processing speed pushes the brain to work harder, creating actual physical changes to its shape, or neuropathways, in this instance. Once developed, the new pathways are available for processing stimuli in real life, outside of the exercise program.

BrainHQ could be an important tool not only for military members who've suffered from traumatic brain injuries, memory loss, and other cognitive impairments, but for the mental fitness of all military personnel.

“We chose BrainHQ to help service members hone qualities such as lifelong learning, readiness, and resilience. This unique program will help our personnel improve their attention spans, decision making skills, and cognitive speed,” said Kristen Campbell, chief of the Air Force Libraries Division.

The exercises are divided into six categories: attention, memory, brain speed, intelligence, people skills, and navigation. Guidelines encourage members to participate in exercises in each of these arenas to optimize results. The logic behind this is simple: improving one's ability to interpret, memorize, and process information in a variety of settings will translate to increased levels of confidence.

That's an outcome that would interest DoD for total force strength.

Today, every service member and veteran can access the BrainHQ platform free of charge through the library systems of the Service branches, Military OneSource, and base libraries. A library card is all that's needed. 📖



# OUTSTANDING EMPLOYERS DESERVE OUTSTANDING RECOGNITION

The 2018 Freedom Award Nominations Are In. Who Will Make the Cut?

A prestigious award, a Pentagon ceremony, moving testimonials, exemplary leadership, induction into an elite membership, and the expressed gratefulness of a nation. That's the stage set for up to 15 U.S. employers who will travel to Washington, D.C. in August to receive the highest honor the Department of Defense (DoD) awards to employers of National Guard and Reserve members: the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

This year, nearly 2,000 employers are under review to advance first as semifinalists, then as finalists, and if chosen, to become one of the final recipients. Nominations are restricted to those who are in the best position to assess employer support — Guard and Reserve employees or

their relatives. More than 2,350 employees were inspired to submit the nominations for 2018.

Any business or industry, academic institution, civic or professional organization, or state or local government is eligible to receive this prestigious award, and nominees fall into large employer, small employer, and public sector categories. The 2018 pool of nominations spanned all U.S. states and territories, and the District of Columbia.

Nearly half of the individuals currently serving in the military are in the Guard or Reserve, and many of them have civilian jobs. Workplace policies that recognize the unique challenges of Reserve Component employees and the value these service members bring to the workplace are critical to the members' stability and resilience,

“In 1996, Secretary of Defense William Perry instituted the Freedom Award to honor and recognize outstanding employers of Guardsmen and Reservists.”

and by extension, to the stability and resilience of both civilian and military employers.

In 1996, Secretary of Defense William Perry instituted the Freedom Award to honor and recognize outstanding employers of Guardsmen and Reservists. Since then, the DoD has chosen 250 employers to receive the award who represent the very best from thousands of nominations. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a DoD program, oversees the selection process and award ceremony.

## What do these companies do to earn the Freedom Award?

It varies, but an unerring sense of patriotism is always in the mix. In 2017, one of the recipients was Howard County (Maryland) Department of Fire and Rescue Services. Coast Guard Reserve Ensign Gamaliel Baer, who has been a Howard County firefighter since 2008, nominated the department for its longstanding and overwhelming support of department members in the Guard and Reserve, and veterans. Strong advocacy for hiring military members, top-down leadership in onsite support, and stepping in to help families of deployed spouses were among reasons cited in the nomination.

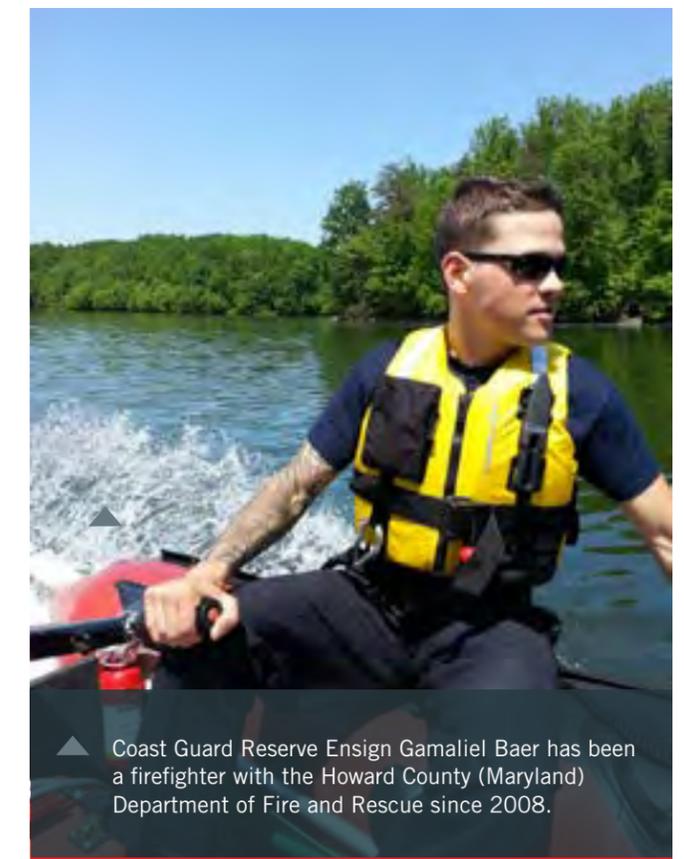
In an interview with The Baltimore Sun, Baer stated that even with the demands of his military schedule, he was able to take leave when needed and knew his job was safe when he returned.

Baer also cited Fire Chief John Butler as having a huge personal influence on Baer's success with the Coast Guard, mentoring him as he sought to become an officer.

As a visual demonstration of its support, the fire department has purchased a red, white, and blue fire

truck and a paramedic unit emblazoned with the words “we support our troops” and “we support our veterans.”

The stories of support shared by the nominators are as varied as the employers that are nominated. And although the ultimate recipients are honored publicly for an extraordinary measure of support, they represent all Freedom Award nominees — a class of employers that truly makes a difference for those who serve. 🇺🇸



▲ Coast Guard Reserve Ensign Gamaliel Baer has been a firefighter with the Howard County (Maryland) Department of Fire and Rescue since 2008.



# Readiness

is a Family Affair

Seven Outstanding Reserve Component  
Family Programs Earn DoD Award

Reserve Component family readiness programs across the country are employing novel approaches to support service members and families. From “Bring Your Kids to Work Day” to equine therapy and morale-building through outdoor activities, supporting military families going through uncertain times is an exercise in compassion, wisdom and creativity.

Creative support programs are what the Department of Defense’s Reserve Family Readiness Awards recognizes each year. A Pentagon ceremony March 23, 2018 honored the 2017 recipients and was hosted by Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Wilkie, and President and CEO of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) retired Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF.

Wilkie began his remarks at the ceremony paraphrasing Winston Churchill: “You, the reservists are twice the citizen,” he said. “There are no greater citizens and no greater families than those who man the ranks and carry on the traditions that go all the way back to Lexington and Concord.”

Established in 2000, the Reserve Family Readiness Awards recognize National Guard and Reserve units, one from each of the seven Reserve Components, that demonstrate outstanding programs supporting their military families. Representatives from each of the winning units were in attendance and received a commemorative plaque and framed certificate from Wilkie and Atkins.

Among the units recognized was the 1st Brigade, 98th Training Division (IET), Ft. Benning, Georgia, which along with numerous other family readiness activities, hosted a Family Day at the Warrior Outreach Ranch in Fortson, Georgia. There, soldiers and family members interacted with horses and learned how equine therapy can help veterans with PTSD and other combat-related injuries.

“The Warrior Outreach Ranch put in a lot of hard work for our soldiers to have a memorable experience and really took the time to ensure the soldiers were enjoying themselves,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Chestnut of the 98th Training Division.



**“Established in 2000, the Reserve Family Readiness Awards recognize National Guard and Reserve units, one from each of the seven Reserve Components, that demonstrate outstanding programs supporting their military families.”**



▲ Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Wilkie hosts the 2017 DoD Reserve Family Readiness Awards at the Pentagon, Mar. 23, 2018. (US Army photo by Darrell Hudson)

Some soldiers and families are now frequent visitors to the ranch, while a soldier and a staff civilian are now active volunteers there.

Likewise, the South Dakota National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion took extraordinary steps to ensure families felt supported during a recent unit deployment. Among the 153rd Engineer Battalion's activities were sending care packages to deployed unit members; keeping families connected with frequent phone, email, social media, and newsletter communications; and conducting a "Day of Adventure," with fishing, canoeing, and other outdoor activities for the whole family.

"Every soldier that deploys needs to feel assured that their family is taken care of," said Lt. Col. Dennis Bickett, 153rd commander. "This award demonstrates the fantastic job the Headquarters and Forward Support Company Family Readiness Group did while the 153rd was deployed to the Middle East."

The concerns of military kids were not lost in the mix of family support, either. The Air Force Reserve's 919th Special Operations Force Support Squadron out of

Elgin Air Force Base, Florida, orchestrated a large-scale Operation Hero exercise, where more than 250 children participated in a mock deployment experiencing what it's like to walk in the footsteps of their military parent(s) through the phases of deployment.

"We put a lot of heart and passion into what we do," said Master Sgt. AnnJill Transfiguracion, Airman and Family Readiness member, and the 919th Wing's Yellow Ribbon representative. "Our mission is to improve the well-being of our members and their families, that is a huge reward in itself. We're trying to change lives one family at a time."

Each unit also received a certificate of recognition and award from the Military Officers Association of America. For the 13th year MOAA presented the units with a monetary award intended to enhance family support programs.

[Click here for a complete list of all 2017 recipients.](#)