



eXtension – Military Families Monthly Report

Reporting Period: 16 June 2011 – 15 July 2011

1. *Significant Activities:*

- **Growth and Maintenance of the Military Families Learning Network:** The Military Families Learning Network continues to grow and become more visible, not only as a destination but also as a resource and opportunity to engage. It's membership continues to draw from outside of the CES (DoD and branch services). Social media activity has been constant and the conversation has been surfacing in a wide variety of areas/branches/topics. The Concentration Leader from Child Care (**Kathy Reschke**) began July 5th and is orienting to the LN. The LN blog was established during this reporting period and includes sections for *Personal Finance, Child Care, Family & Youth Development*, and Network Literacy, as well as basic Military Families Learning Network information. Members from the various Concentration Areas, the Network Literacy CoP, and USDA/NIFA met in Louisville, KY during the week of June 27-30 (eXtension National CoP Workshop) and worked on formalizing and specifying the Plan of Work in detail. A number of smaller and more targeted meetings occurred as well as an overall group leadership meeting on Thursday afternoon, June 30. The *Personal Finance* concentration area has made an offer to **Molly Herndon** to serve as the Concentration Leader. She has accepted and has an anticipated start date of August 15, 2011. *Personal Finance* FAQs continue to be developed/re-written and entered into the review process.

Arrangements have been finalized for face-to-face meetings with leadership from the *Child Care* concentration area and the Network Literacy CoP for early and late August, respectively.

LN leadership is eager to spend time in Washington, DC and extend the reach by spending time with new audiences and networking with the USAF and others on the agenda for the visit.

- **Evaluation:** Data collected from the Environmental Scan have been mapped by state and US Territory so that military family service and CES professionals can locate CES programs specifically serving military families.

The logic model and evaluation plan was presented to the Military Families Learning Network leadership team in Louisville, KY. Leadership team members included members from the various associated CoPs involved in the project and the Network Literacy CoP as well as USDA/NIFA representation.

A survey was conducted with the LN leadership to gather search terms to begin the process to work with Scoutlabs in monitoring the network to discover high concentration areas for military families service professionals.

- **Overall Outreach and Relationship Building:** The Military Families Learning Network core leadership attended and participated in a number of national meetings during this reporting period. Workshops were presented and exhibits were displayed. These events included:
 - Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE)/National Extension Technology Conference (NETC)
 - National Association of Rural Mental Health
 - eXtension National CoP Workshop

There are also opportunities planned for the coming weeks with the USAF, MilitaryOneSource.com, potentially other contacts in Washington, DC, and the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (invitation only forum to discuss challenges, strategies and collaborations to support National Guard and Reserve couples and single parent families).

2. *Current deliverable(s), activity, goals/objectives:*

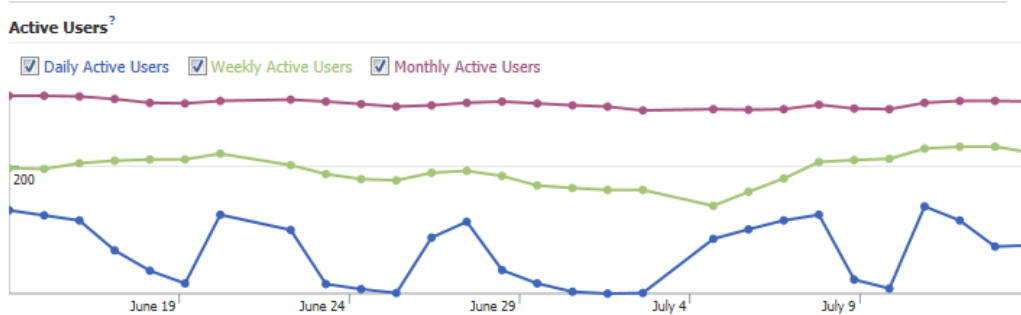
- **Growth and Maintenance of the Military Families Learning Network:** The Military Families Learning Network has established a blog (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/>). As the various Concentration Leaders orient and come onboard the project, blogging activity will increase dramatically and this space should become more dynamic. Currently, there are a number of informational blogs populating the site. Additionally, general social media activity will increase as there will be dedicated and full-time staff (CLs) who will work in the networked space (this has previously been initiated primarily by current LN leadership only and in addition to their other duties [Adrian, Baughman, Kostelecky]).

A large pool of personal finance FAQs have been re-written/drafted and are ready for the peer review process. This procedure will unfold over

approximately the next two months and then they will be ready for publication. Content continues to be developed and published to the Military Families Learning Network, as well.

- **Evaluation:** The interactive map of the military families CES programming is published and will be continually updated (<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=213026007065282977695.0004a5b083d667597dea3&hl=en&ie=UTF8&z=3>).

As expected, Facebook activity has leveled off since the launch in April. During this reporting period, we increased from 300 to 327 “likes” and had 300 monthly active users.



Interactions on the Facebook page, a better measure of relationship building than users or views, included 18 posts between June 16 – July 15 and 13,704 post views.

3. Action still needed to complete the current deliverable(s)

- **Growth and Maintenance of the Military Families Learning Network:** Final contract development and execution at the sub-contract levels (with NDSU, Rutgers, U of FL, U of IL, ISU, WSU) is needed to allow all personnel to be hired and fully begin the work of the amended plan of work.
- **Evaluation:** Continued gathering of data to inform the map and add to the Environmental Scan is ongoing. Analyzing the data gathered from the concentration areas and the Network Literacy CoP on terms to inform the conversation surrounding the analytic portion of the marketing plan is necessary. Taking the logic model to the next level of development, incorporating an implication strategy, will significantly assist in working with the various concentration areas (CoPs) as they move forward.

- **Overall Outreach and Relationship Building:** Successfully completing the information gather trip to Washington, DC and connecting with and engaging DoD and branch service professionals so as to better understand what we are working with as we develop communication tools/strategies to engage and partner the CES with DoD/branch service military family service professionals.

4. Relevant challenges that need attention from DoD/NIFA

- The greatest challenge that continues for the Military Families Learning Network continues to be access to the service professionals that help to inform the process of engagement, strategy development, and design of network space function. The hope is that the scheduled trip to Washington, DC opens new doors and opportunities to gather this critical information. We move forward with the best information we have with the hope that it is acceptable and useful.

5. Success stories that would be of interest to USDA and or DoD Leadership

- Kathy Reschke, PhD, was hired as the Child Care Concentration Leader, beginning her work on July 5th, 2011. She earned her PhD from Iowa State University in 2001 in Human Development and Family Studies with a specialty in Early Childhood Education (Dissertation: *The Family Child Care Forum: The co-construction of knowledge in an online environment*). Prior to her current position, Kathy was an early development and care consultant in Ohio. She has published and presented on such topics as grandparents as child caregivers and child care needs in rural, low-income, and impoverished families. We are absolutely delighted to have someone with her experience, education, and background working in our project.
- The Military Families Learning Network continues to grow with **152** members.
- The Network Literacy CoP continues to grow with **103** members.