



eXtension – Military Families Monthly Report

Reporting Period: 16 July 2011 – 15 August 2011

1. Significant Activities:

- **Meetings in Washington, DC:** Core leadership from the Military Families Learning Network (MFLN) met in Washington, DC in mid-July as part of the USAF Caring for People Breakfast and various meetings with USDA/NIFA, MC&FP, Public Affairs, and MilitaryOneSource staff. The meetings were informative, productive, and significantly helped to further understand the “terrain” as the MFLN expands its reach.
- **Growth and Maintenance of the Military Families Learning Network:** The MFLN is happy to report that any remaining contracts and sub-contracts were executed during this reporting period! This translates to each Concentration Area (CA), *Personal Finance, Child Care, Family & Youth Development*, and the Network Literacy CoP are all actively working to grow the MFLN and making progress on creating and implementing the various deliverables found in their Plans of Work. The leadership for each unit is as follows:

Personal Finance (Financial Security for All CoP):

- a. PI – Carolyn Bird [NCSU]
- b. Co-PI – Debb Pankow [NDSU]
- c. Co-PI – Barbara O’Neill [Rutgers]
- d. Co-PI – Michael Gutter [UF]
- e. Concentration Leader (1.0 FTE) Molly Herndon [NCSU]

Child Care (eXtension Alliance for Better Child Care CoP):

- a. PI – Diane Bales [UGA]
- b. Co-PI – Lesia Oesterreich [ISU]
- c. Co-PI – Jane Lanigan [WSU]
- d. Concentration Leader (1.0 FTE) Kathy Reschke [Westerville, OH]

Family & Youth Development (Just In Time Parenting CoP):

- a. PI – Andrew Behnke [NCSU]
- b. Co-PI – Aaron Ebata [UIL]
- c. Co-PI – Kim Greder [ISU]
- d. Concentration Leader (0.50 FTE) – Kristin Taylor [ISU]
- e. Concentration Leader (0.5 FTE) – Marissa Stone [Atlanta, GA]
- f. Content Specialist (0.50 FTE) – June Mead [Cornell]

Network Literacy CoP

- a. PI/Chair – Stephen Judd [UNH]
- b. Co-PI/Vice-Chair – John Dorner [NCSU]

The *Child Care* leadership met with the MFLN leadership face-to-face in early August as part of their Plan of Work to formalize and finalize moving forward. It was a productive 2-day meeting in Ames, IA and plans are well underway to accomplish their plan.

The *Network Literacy CoP* will be meeting in Charlotte, NC during the last week of August to accomplish similar work. Plans are in development for *Personal Finance* and *Family & Youth Development* to have their face-to-face meetings later this fall.

The Social Media Strategist has been actively working with the various Concentration Leaders (CLs), meeting with them at least once per week in these early stages to provide leadership, guidance, and answer questions. The blog (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/>) has several postings and will continue to be populated by our CLs and other members of the various CoPs, including Network Literacy and Family Caregiving (through the Wounded Warriors Program).

In addition to the regular activity surrounding the growth and maintenance of the MFLN, plans are unfolding for a series of webinars/web conferences directed at DoD program staff. These will include informational kinds of content with MC&FP HQ staff and then drill down to more interaction type sessions directed at specific subject matter/concentration areas (those associated with the individual projects mentioned above). The first informational webinar for DoD MC&FP staff is scheduled for Friday, August 26, 2011, with others following throughout September and October.

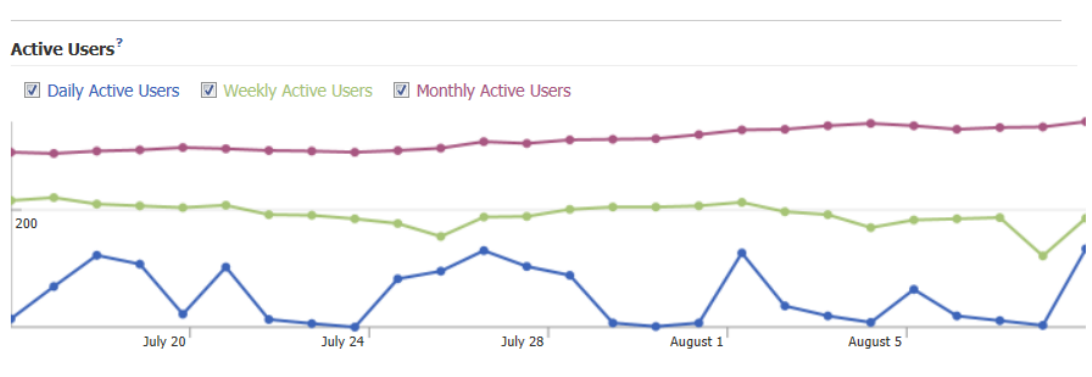
- **Evaluation:** Refinement continues on the logic model for the overall project. Input has been solicited from a number of experts and interested partners. The Evaluation and Research Specialist continues to be highly involved in the planning and development phases with each of the CAs and the Network Literacy CoP.

- Overall Outreach and Relationship Building:** The MFLN core leadership attended the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center *Working Together to Strengthen Guard and Reserve Couples and Families Forum* in Charlotte, NC. Representatives from the CES, National Guard Family Support and Programs, The Marriage Initiative, the Military Family Research Institute, Yellow Ribbon, the Army Chaplains Corps, Inter-Service Family Assistance Centers, Air National Guard, Veterans Affairs, Army OneSource, and other universities. Discussions and work sessions included topics such as: 1) family support systems across the country; 2) VA Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships; 3) Guard and Reserve family programming; 4) community programming; 5) the Essential Life Skills For Military Families program; 6) The Marriage Initiative; 7) Yellow Ribbon; 8) Army OneSource; 9) cooperative challenges from Guard/Reserve to community and community to Guard/Reserve; and 10) Strategies for cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

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

- Growth and Maintenance of the Military Families Learning Network:** Each CA is working on creating a windowshade/banner for marketing purposes. They continue to work on creating content (FAQs, articles, social media pieces, etc.) as well as webinar/web conference topics. The CLs are working in a variety of areas including “listening” in various DoD/branch service online spaces to inform their own work.
- Evaluation:** Progress is being made in planning for overall social media monitoring to assist in informing the logic model and plans for working with the CLs.

Facebook activity has increased since the last reporting period. “Likes” have grown from 327 to 381 and the page had 350 monthly active users.



There are now a total of 56,049 post views since the establishment of this page.

The eXtension MFLN site (<http://www.extension.org/militaryfamilies>) had 51 pages viewed a total of 1,473 times during this reporting period with a bounce rate of 60.22% and an average time on the page of nearly 2 minutes. This activity has increased significantly since early August.

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

- **Overall Assessment of Action Still Needed:** It would be fair to state that as each of the CAs and the Network Literacy CoP are just now moving forward with the recent funding release, and in the early stages of planning for the implementation of delivering their Plans of Work, time and final organization to those plans is necessary for delivery. There have been face-to-face meetings for Child Care and the Network Literacy CoP that have been productive and energizing. Personal Finance and Family & Youth Development will follow shortly and that will bring together the final initial plans for the entire MFLN to this point and time. Gathering information about the needs of the target audience as they work and engage in online, networked environments continues and will significantly inform this early work. With guidance from the Social Media Strategist and Evaluation and Research Specialist, the MFLN is in a good position to move forward as is expected and necessary. The expectation is that the following several monthly reports will include more detail of actions for completion as CA plans are fine-tuned.

4. Relevant challenges that need attention from DoD/NIFA

- We believe that most of what is articulated in this section is either already underway in the planning phase or will surface soon as the various CAs identify their needs (and will then the requests will be forwarded on to DoD/NIFA).

There is a need to schedule the follow-up web conferences (post the initial webinar scheduled for August 26) that will bring together the various subject matter areas to learn and exchange information between DoD and MFLN staff. The next round would have at least 3 web conferences, one each with personal finance, child care, and family and youth development program level staff. Following that would be the “boots on the ground” personnel later in the fall.

During this time (or before), there will be a need to identify DoD/branch service staff that may participate with the various CAs as they plan for individual webinars/web conferences as articulated in their Plans of Work. Identifying topics for these presentations is necessary as well and will require feedback from DoD to move forward. Requests from MFLN staff are forthcoming.

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

- During this reporting period, new hires and members of the MFLN team include: Molly Herndon, MS, was hired as the Personal Finance Concentration Leader. She earned her MS from North Carolina State University in Human Development and Family Studies as well as a BS in Journalism. She is a seasoned journalist and communicator with experience in multiple forms of media including newspaper, monthly magazines, newsletters, and social media environs. The Military Families Learning Network is fortunate to have Molly onboard leading the social media efforts for the Personal Finance Concentration Area.

Kristin Taylor, MEd, joins the Family & Youth Development team as a half-time Concentration Leader for the Military Families Learning Network. She holds a BS in Agricultural Education and MEd in Curriculum and Instructional Technology from Iowa State University. Kristin has worked with ISU Extension to Families for 12 years as an Instructional Technology Specialist. Her experience and leadership will greatly enhance the social media efforts and overall success of the Family & Youth Development Concentration Area.

Marissa Stone, MS, joins the Military Families Learning Network as a half-time Concentration Leader for Family & Youth Development. Her BS in Psychology was earned from Georgia State University and she also holds an MS in Child and Family Development from the University of Georgia, specializing in Parent Education. She has a tremendous amount of experience with eXtension and the use of social media as an educational medium. We are extremely pleased to welcome her and look forward to her involvement and contributions as a leader in this area.

June P. Mead, PhD, was hired as the half-time Content Specialist for the Family & Youth Development Concentration Area in the Military Families Learning Network. She earned a PhD from Cornell University with concentrations in Program Evaluation and Planning, Educational Psychology, and Research Methodology, and an MA in Human Development from Binghamton University. She has over 15 years of experience in evaluating education and community-based programs and has served in positions with Children, Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR), Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERnet). The Military Families Learning Network is extremely fortunate to have June onboard.