



eXtension – Military Families Monthly Report

Reporting Period: 16 September 2011 – 15 October 2011

1. Significant Activities:

- **NIFA Webinar:** A webinar (*Military-Extension Webinar: Resources for Extension Faculty*) was conducted on 11 October for all Extension faculty. Presenters included Brian Higginbotham (USDA-NIFA Visiting Scholar), Brent Elrod, and MFLN leadership. There were more than 160 in attendance.
- **DoD/MFLN meetings in Washington, DC:** Two full days of meetings with various DoD staff (child and youth, family, personal finance) were held in Washington, DC during 5-6 October.
- **Family & Youth Development Face-to-Face Meeting:** A face-to-face meeting of the Family & Youth Development Concentration Area steering committee and the MFLN leadership was held in Des Moines, IA from 28-30 September.
- **National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences Annual Meeting:** The MFLN leadership attended and exhibited at this national meeting in Albuquerque, NM from 27-29 September. State program leaders were briefed on the MFLN and asked to review the Environmental Scan Summary Map to ensure accurate and comprehensive data are included.
- **Network Literacy Webinar:** A webinar was conducted on 3 October for all Extension faculty to introduce the Network Literacy CoP. Presenters included members of eXtension, MFLN leadership, and the NL CoP steering committee.
- **Personal Finance Face-to-Face Meeting:** A face-to-face meeting of the Personal Finance Concentration Area steering committee and the MFLN leadership was held in Charlotte, NC from 14-15 October.

- **PFAS Reorganization:** A number of conversations and teleconferences were held with DoD, USDA-NIFA, MFLN leadership, as well as potential IT professionals to restructure the concluding phases of the PFAS project.
- **Social Media Strategy Planning:** An oversight in reporting from last month, but continuing on the project, are the weekly planning meetings between MFLN leadership and the pilot project Concentration Leaders (Friday mornings). These meetings have been critical to moving the social media strategy forward and include significant planning time. They appear here in *Significant Activities* due to the importance, time involved in preparation, and the actual meetings over the course of a reporting period.

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

- **Military Families Learning Network (MFLN):** Significant activities related to deliverables for the MFLN are presented according to the Concentration Areas/CoPs.
 - **Personal Finance:** The face-to-face meeting in Charlotte, NC in mid-October provided an opportunity to do some significant planning as well as provide continued education on the structure and culture of the overall project. After adjusting the agenda due to changes in attendance (invited PFMs [by PF PI] did not travel to the meeting as per protocol and direction of funding partners), the focus became developing an implementation plan for the identified deliverables in the approved Plan of Work. October 26 was secured as a date for a teleconference to discuss with identified PFMs (an advisory unit) work that might have been done in the face-to-face meeting in Charlotte. Additionally, December 13 is the date for a web conference with DoD staff and the PF Concentration Area to exchange ideas and provide mutual feedback on the progress of the project as well as answer any questions concerning the MFLN. There was significant energy and effort from members of the PF leadership team (specifically Barbara O'Neill, Rutgers; Michael Gutter, U. of Florida; Deb Pankow, NDSU; Molly Herndon, NCSU [Concentration Leader]) and progress was made toward the goals on the PoW (four identified deliverables). Tuesday, 13 December @ 11:00am ET has been selected as a first choice date for a web conference between DoD staff and this pilot project staff to exchange ideas, share plans, and seek information (alternative: 16 December). This may not be necessary after the 26 October meeting.
 - 1) **Re-purpose Content/Establish Ask an Expert Resource:**
Approximately 300 military focused FAQs are ready for copy-edit and publishing (copy-edit has been arranged by Barbara O'Neill).

Work on establishing a military-specific PF plan for AaE is underway as well with eXtension staff.

- 2) **Engage the Target Audience Through Social Media:** The Facebook page was launched (*Personal Finance 4 PFMs* - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Personal-Finance-4-PFMs/260780047278162>). Two personal finance blogs were posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Stop Loss-Retroactive pay for service members whose tour of duty was involuntarily extended* and *Personal Finance and the Web*).
 - 3) **Provide Professional Development Opportunities Through Web Conferencing:** A list of 10 professional development webinar topics was created along with potential CES presenters. Feedback is being requested from DoD on this list as well as potential for co-presenters (PFMs). The plan is to present approximately one per month starting yet this fall and through the duration of this one-year project. Agreement was secured with AFCPE to award CEUs for professional development sessions.
 - 4) **Make Available and Distribute Current Research and Trends in Personal Finance:** A large collection of research and trends summaries are currently housed at the CoP site (<http://www.extension.org/pages/18203/financial-security-for-all-research>) which is more general in nature. More military-focused resources are being accumulated to add to this list. Both were requested by DoD as a deliverable for the pilot project. Efforts are underway to distribute these through social media tools as per the PoW.
- **Child Care:** This pilot project continues to make significant headway on deliverables approved in the PoW (six identified deliverables). Wednesday, 9 November @ 11:00am ET has been selected as a first choice date for a web conference between DoD staff and this pilot project staff to exchange ideas, share plans, and seek information (alternative: 15 November).
- 1) **Re-purpose and Create New Content:** When current and new content is identified by the CoP as relevant to military family service professionals (through a variety of means including direct contact with DoD staff), it is re-purposed. This is an ongoing and active process within the CoP. Examples: <http://create.extension.org/node/88138> and <http://create.extension.org/node/58160>.
 - 2) **Engage the Target Audience Through Social Media:** A Twitter account was established (*Military Child Care* - <http://twitter.com/#!/MilChildCare>). A child care blog was posted

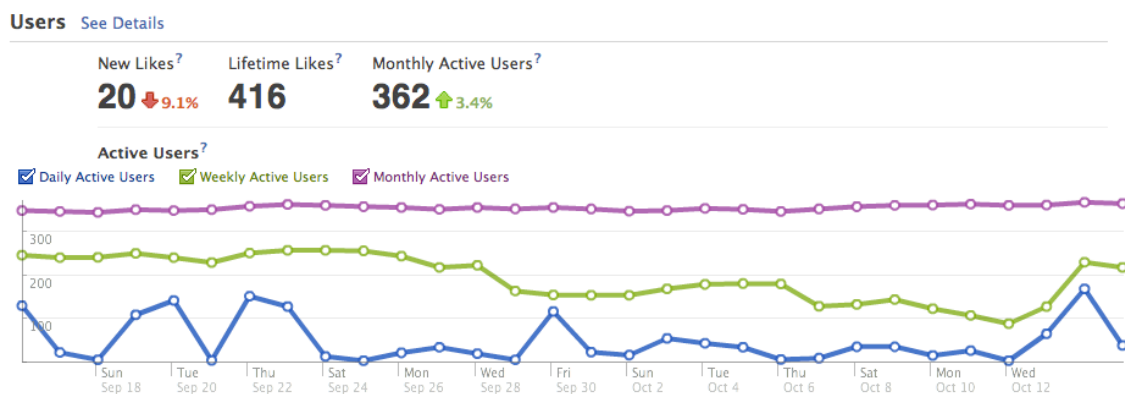
at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*3 Keys to Understanding Stress in Young Children*).

- 3) **Create a Searchable List of Children's Books:** Leadership met with eXtension staff (Henrietta Ritchie-Holbrook) to discuss platforms. Existing databases and search terms were researched and potential books for inclusion were identified.
 - 4) **Create Online Training Course:** The leadership brainstormed potential topics and created a description of one possible course. PSU was contacted regarding conversion of an instructor lead module to an online format.
 - 5) **Provide Professional Development Opportunities Through Web Conferencing:** Feedback was received from DoD on topics for web conferences and *attachment* and *early literacy* were selected from the list.
 - 6) **Create a Comprehensive Listing of State Online Training Approval Requirements:** After investigating state requirements, creating a report of the findings, and identifying modifications, consultation was solicited from WSU's Department of Early Learning to assist in moving forward.
- **Family & Youth Development:** Again, the face-to-face meeting in Des Moines, IA in late-September provided an opportunity to do some significant planning as well as provide continued education on the structure and culture of the overall project. Thursday, 10 November @ 11:00am ET has been selected as a first choice date for a web conference between DoD staff and this pilot project staff to exchange ideas, share plans, and seek information.
- 1) **Identify, Promote, and Make Available Content (Re-purpose, Create New, and Disseminate Content):** Planning for two 5 minute videos is underway and initial shooting may occur at the National Council of Family Relations annual meeting in Orlando, FL in mid-November.
 - 2) **Develop a Military Family Professional Commons (Engage the Target Audience Through Social Media):** An initial design for the Commons page was developed with a mock up created. Functionality is being evaluated as well for the Commons. Five family and youth development blogs were posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*When a parent is deployed: Implications for military families service professionals; Exploring Military Deployment Through the Eyes of Youth: Implications for Research and Practice; The Children Struggle Too!; Preparing Children for Deployment; and When a Deployed Parent Returns Home*).

- 3) **Provide Professional Development Opportunities Through Web Conferencing:** Feedback was received from DoD on topics for web conferences and *identifying and building family strengths, social support, co-parenting at a distance, and balancing work and family* were selected from the list. Planning continues for those in selecting speakers, evaluation, and dates (December, January, February, April).
- **Network Literacy:** This CoP has been active and busy as they prepare for their soft launch (potentially during the next two months).
 - Thursday, 27 October @ 11:00am ET has been selected as a first choice date for a web conference between DoD staff and this CoP staff to exchange ideas, share plans, and seek information (alternatives: 1 or 2 November).
 - Three network literacy blogs were posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Hi, AleX; AleX NetLit Guides Professionals Toward Network Literacy; and Flip the Switch on the Power of Online Networks*).
 - The creation of the persona, AleX NetLit, has occupied a significant amount of effort by the CoP. See the following blog posts to help understand her role in the CoP's work (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/2011/10/03/alex-netlit-guides-professionals-toward-network-literacy/> and <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/2011/10/13/hi-alex/>). AleX can also be followed on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/#!/AlexNetLit>).
 - The Facebook page for Network Literacy was launched (<http://www.facebook.com/NetworkLiteracy>).
 - Two webinars have been offered to the CES system (*Introduction to Network Literacy* and *Twitter Hashtags*) and have been recorded to be offered to DoD audiences through appropriate venues. These sessions were offered through the Military Families Adobe Connect site as we were transitioning to using DoD's site.
 - Content (articles and FAQs) is being developed and is in various stages of creation, review, and copy-edit on its way to publication. This includes **75 pieces of content**, which is significant given this is a new CoP that began its work in earnest only 2 months ago.
 - **Wounded Warrior/Family Caregiving CoP:** Although not funded with Partnership dollars, this CoP has been active in the work of the MFLN.
 - A Wounded Warrior blog was posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*TBI Caregiver Education*).

- **Evaluation:** The map of CES programs is in a continuous state of update. A report was prepared (using information from the EScan) for the Director of eXtension to use in his meetings with the Western Region Directors. Child Care, Family & Youth Development, and Network Literacy are all participating in a pilot of SWX, a social media measurement tool eXtension is exploring. Google Analytics are being conducted for each of the pilot projects and the Network Literacy CoP and will be incorporated into following months' overall report.

Facebook activity has increased since the last reporting period.



There has been a steady increase in interaction on the Facebook page, so efforts to increase interactions and ultimately engagement are beginning to show results. We are reaching people and more of them are responding/engaging with us in Facebook. There has been a slight decline in the numbers but those that are “with us” are talking about us and sharing our stories and posts more.

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

- **Overall Assessment of Action Still Needed:** Dates are to be confirmed with DoD in a number of areas of the project. That process is underway. “Great and Meet” webinars scheduled for the various pilot projects and Network Literacy to connect with various associated DoD staff will be helpful to move many facets of the plan of work forward.
- **Final Release of Funding:** A final plan of work is being developed that will be associated with the remaining funding from this award. Once this is completed and approved through the system, a no-cost extension will be requested to complete the current work that is underway. This is necessary given the original and approved projects dates (1 March, 2011 – 29 February, 2012) and the actual

start dates associated with the release of this current funding (various dates throughout July-August 2011).

4. Relevant challenges that need attention from DoD/NIFA

- Continuing attention is needed on the transition from our Adobe Connect system to DoD's. This is in process and the expectation from both ends is that we will have a successful condition to offer professional development sessions for DoD and CES staff. It is simply a challenge, but not one that cannot be overcome.
- The transition and completion of the PFAS project continues to be a challenge that is also being resolved through a number of opportunities with potential new partners.
- Continued transparency in discussions of staff and project issues and stumbling blocks is always appreciated and necessary to ensure the best possible outcomes for the project.

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

- Although it seems self-evident from the above report, the entire project is up and running with all units having held their initial face-to-face planning and launching meetings. The individual plans of work are being implemented, activity is increasing in social media outlets, non-profits are beginning to find us and look our way with excitement, and the MFLN is engaging and evolving in new and unanticipated ways. Very successful face-to-face meetings were held in early October with DoD staff and MFLN leadership. This was a tremendous jumping off point for the project and will lead to well informed decisions as the MFLN moves forward. As roadblocks and obstacles are presented to the MFLN, they are overcome with creative means with a spirit of teamwork among our communities and Partners.