



eXtension – Military Families Monthly Report

*Reporting Period: 16 October 2011 – 30 November 2011**

**This report reflects an extended time to accommodate a change in the overall reporting period, which previously was the 16th of said month to the 15th of the following month. The new reporting period will be on a monthly basis, i.e., the next submission, after this, will report on activity for December 2011.*

❖ **MFLN** = Military Families Learning Network; **PF** = Personal Finance; **CC** = Child Care; **FD** = Family Development; **NL** = Network Literacy

1. Significant Activities:

- **Transition of PFAS:** The transition of the responsibility of completing the PFAS project from the MFLN to staff at the University of Wyoming was conducted (24OCT).
- **Restructuring of PF Leadership:** At the request of DoD and USDA/NIFA, conversations were held with the PF Concentration Area leadership (Carolyn Bird, Debb Pankow, Barbara O’Neill, Michael Gutter) and a more equally distributed leadership structure was established allowing for a more public role of the Co-PIs as the project is exhibited and presented.
- **Transition of Leadership in FD:** Paperwork was initialized to begin the process of transition of leadership in the FD Concentration Area as the Co-PI, Kim Greder, will be involved in a faculty leave during the spring semester beginning January 2012. This effectively terminates the additional 0.50 FTE appointment of Kristin Taylor as a Concentration Leader/Developer. The remaining contract (funds and work) will be moved to NCSU for the remainder of the project.
- **National Association of Extension 4-H Agents:** The MFLN leadership attended and exhibited at this national meeting in Omaha, NE (26-28OCT).

- **DoD/PF Planning Meetings:** Two planning tele-conference meetings were held with leadership from DoD-MC&FP personal finance staff and MFLN PF leadership (26OCT and 8NOV).
- **USAF Child & Youth Programs Branch Meeting:** The MFLN leadership as well as the CC leadership continues to meet (2NOV) and work with the USAF to educate and develop a collaborative relationship. As usual, there was a great deal of interest in furthering this connection.
- **DoD/CC Meet & Greet Webinar:** The MFLN and CC leadership held a “Meet & Greet” webinar (9NOV) where an overview of eXtension and the CC plan of work were presented to DoD child care program staff.
- **DoD-Family Advocacy Programs/MFLN Information Webinar:** A webinar was conducted (14NOV) between the DoD-FAP leadership and the MFLN leadership for the purposes of education about Extension, eXtension, and the FD plan of work. This webinar opened the conversation about what the MFLN was and how there may be an opportunity for engagement between the units.
- **National Council on Family Relations:** Members of the MFLN and FD leadership attended the NCFR annual conference in Orlando, FL (14-20NOV). Several presentations were conducted and meetings were held, including participation in pre- and post-conference workshops focusing on military families.
- **eXtension Governing Committee Update:** MFLN leadership provided an update to the eXtension Governing Committee following APLU (15NOV) (<http://create.extension.org/sites/default/files/Military%20Families%20Learning%20Network%20Report.pdf>).
- **DoD/NL Meet & Greet Webinar:** The MFLN and NL leadership held a “Meet & Greet” webinar (17NOV) where an overview of eXtension and the NL plan of work were presented to DoD staff.
- **Social Media Strategy Planning:** Weekly planning meetings between MFLN leadership and the pilot project Concentration Leaders continue.

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:**
 - 1) **Re-purpose Content/Establish Ask an Expert Resource:** A page was created (<http://www.extension.org/pages/61399/personal-finance-military-families>) to provide a place for content that PF is developing. A project showcase page was also developed and continues to develop and be updated (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/personal-finance/>). The FAQs are in the hands of DoD-MC&FP personal finance staff for a final review. A plan was established to have them published by April 2012.
 - 275+ FAQs sent to Service Branch contacts (6DEC2011)
 - Service Branch contacts return FAQs to DoD (22DEC2011)
 - FAQs returned to PF leadership (15JAN2012)
 - PF leadership completes consolidation (1FEB2012)
 - Copy-editing is completed (1MAR2012)
 - FAQs are published (1APR2012)
 - 2) **Engage the Target Audience Through Social Media:** Five personal finance blogs were posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Banking Fees Add Up; Steps to Financial Freedom; Steps to Financial Freedom: Know the Score; Steps to Financial Freedom: saving & Investing; Steps to Financial Freedom: Teaching Children Smart Financial Habits*). An Ask an Expert Widget has been enabled for PF (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/personal-finance/ask-an-expert/>). A Discussion Forum for sharing best practices, ideas, tips, and other resources was established (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/personal-finance/discussion-forum/>)
 - 3) **Provide Professional Development Opportunities Through Web Conferencing:** PF leadership continues to wait for feedback after a number of reminders. This portion of the project cannot move forward without approval of topics and go-ahead to proceed to secure speakers.
 - 4) **Make Available and Distribute Current Research and Trends in Personal Finance:** The list continues to be updated (<http://www.extension.org/pages/18203/financial-security-for-all-research>).
- **Child Care:**
 - 1) **Re-purpose and Create New Content:** One article, *How Child Care Providers Can Help Deployed Parents and Their Children Stay Connected*, (<http://www.extension.org/pages/61674/>) and one FAQ, *Our child care program often enrolls children with at least one parent in the military. What can we do to help maintain a*

strong relationship between the children and the deployed parent?, (<http://www.extension.org/pages/61673/>) were published during this reporting period.

- 2) **Engage the Target Audience Through Social Media:** One child care blog was posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Stress Relievers for Young Children*). A Facebook page was launched (<http://www.facebook.com/childcareandmilitaryfamilies>). During this reporting period, CC gathered data about social media use/preferences/perceptions from fifteen child care professionals in communities surrounding an air force base in Ohio. CC leadership joined four LinkedIn groups focused on early care and education.
 - 3) **Create a Searchable List of Children's Books:** No activity.
 - 4) **Create Online Training Course:** Confirmed the development with DoD staff that a military culture course would be developed in collaboration with Eddy Mentzer. CC leadership began collaboration with professionals. Explored war play issues in child care as potential additional topic. Moodle online learning system training was also completed.
 - 5) **Provide Professional Development Opportunities Through Web Conferencing:** Dates and times were selected for the upcoming web conferences (all at 2:00pm, ET):
 - ♦ Wednesday, 29FEB2012 - *Secure Attachments*
 - ♦ Wednesday, 25APR2012 - *Children's Literacy*
 - 6) **Create a Comprehensive Listing of State Online Training Approval Requirements:** Listing of state online training approval requirements is complete. A plan for distribution through social media and other outlets is under development.
- **Family Development:**
- 1) **Identify, Promote, and Make Available Content (Re-purpose, Create New, and Disseminate Content):** Over six hours of raw footage of fifteen family development experts with background in military families was shot at NCFR. Topics included divorce, building social support, stepfamilies, work and family balance – all within the context of military families. Included in the segments were: Francesca Adler-Baeder, Lynne Borden, Gary Bowen, Stacey Hawkins, Brian Higginbotham, Angela Huebner, Benjamin Karney, Jay Mancini, Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, Dennis Orhtner, Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan, and Patricia Tanner-Nelson. These videos are being edited and will be compiled in 1-3 minute segments used to highlight content or stand-alone pieces to forward the project. The target date for publication is early 2012.

FD leadership was also part of the NCFR Showcase at the Extension Family Life Specialists Pre-Conference Workshop. The entire NCFR annual conference proved valuable for the FD Concentration Area as their membership increased and they had productive meetings and conversations during the event that informed their work.

- 2) ***Develop a Military Family Professional Commons (Engage the Target Audience Through Social Media)***: One family development blog was posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Born at 11:11am on 11/11/11*). Concentration Leaders continue to be present in HOMEFRONTConnections. The Professional Commons page/subpages were launched (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/family-and-youth-development/>). An Ask an Expert Widget has been enabled for FD (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/family-and-youth-development/ask/>). A Discussion Forum for sharing best practices, ideas, tips, and other resources was established (<http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/family-and-youth-development/discussion/>)

- 3) ***Provide Professional Development Opportunities Through Web Conferencing***: The first professional development Web conference is scheduled for 8DEC and is titled, *"Identifying and Building Upon Strengths in Military Families"*, presented by Drs. Kim Greder (Iowa State University Families Extension) and David Brown (LMFT Wing Director of Psychological Health, 132nd Fighter Wing, Air National Guard). Other sessions are planned as follows (all at 11:00am, ET):

- ♦ Wednesday, 25JAN2012 - *Helping Military Families Create Systems of Social Support*
- ♦ Wednesday, 29FEB2012 - *Co-Parenting at a Distance*
- ♦ Thursday, 5APR2012 – *Boundaries and Self-Care*

○ **Network Literacy:**

- Two network literacy blogs were posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Mapping the Networked Future; Google+, What's the fuss?*). Two more are under review and will be posted shortly.
- Another professional development Web conference is scheduled for 2DEC (2:00pm, ET) and is titled, *"Google+, what's the fuss?"*, presented by Drs. Stephen Judd (University of New Hampshire Extension) and Kevin Gamble (eXtension). Plans are underway for another offering early in 2012 (many more to follow).

- Content (articles and FAQs) continues to be developed and is in various stages of creation, review, and copy-edit on its way to publication.
 - NL is collaborating with the Ohio State University Extension on piloting Google+ immersive training. More on this in the coming months.
 - **Wounded Warrior/Family Caregiving CoP:** Although not funded with Partnership dollars, this CoP has been active in the work of the MFLN.
 - Two Wounded Warrior blogs were posted at <http://blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies> (*Operation LEARN; Children of Wounded Warriors: Guidance for Caregivers*).
 - Impressive content continues to be developed and posted at: <http://www.extension.org/pages/60576/military-family-caregiving>.
 - An Ask an Expert Widget has been enabled for the Wounded Warrior project on their front page (<http://www.extension.org/pages/60576/military-family-caregiving>). Rachel Brauner (Wounded Warrior staff) has provided skilled and knowledgeable responses to appropriate Ask an Expert questions within her area of expertise.
- **Evaluation:** Sarah Baughman continues to provide expertise and support the evaluation needs of the MFLN. She works closely with the NL CoP and the Concentration Leaders from the other pilot projects as they implement and evaluate their work. Stakeholder interviews were conducted to refine the overall evaluation plan and as a “checkpoint” for current activity. These interviews were extremely useful and displayed significant support for the efforts underway. A summary report is forthcoming.

As there are now a number of Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and other social media tools that make up the social media thrust of the MFLN, it would not be as useful as in the past to graphically report and provide analytics on the main MFLN accounts. Overall, there is a steady climb in activity and engagement. The substance is evolving from a more “push out information” type of activity to a conversational and relationship building movement in the various tools. As more professional development sessions are offered and the target audience becomes a larger part of those audiences, the expectation is that this engagement will increase accordingly. At any time, should it be necessary, an analytics report can be produced. This data is being collected and examined to better understand progress and direction.

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

- **Time:** The MFLN is in a situation where a significant portion of the various plans of work are underway and simply need time – preparation time for developing professional development Web conference offerings; review and editing time to complete and publish content, including FAQs (PF) and videos (FD); planning time with DoD staff to turn over and incorporate content into the online learning module (CC); and most fundamentally, to allow the plans of work to unfold
- **Access:** There is still a critical need that is related to “action” on the part of the overall project. In order to complete the current deliverables and utilizing them to the fullest extent, those deliverables need to be “touching” the target audience – military family service professionals at the ground level. Opening up the lines of communication to these groups is of paramount importance. This “action” is still needed.

4. Relevant challenges that need attention from DoD/NIFA

- The NL CoP is in need of further feedback and information to best plan for professional development sessions and continue their work in the network and social media arena. A great understanding of how military family service professionals use and understand the network is of greatest concern. These discussions are underway.
- There is a request from FD to connect/interact in Military OneSource. It is understood that this conversation is ongoing. It would be good for leadership (MFLN/DoD/USDA) to explore this topic and be able to provide guidance to FD.
- Overall marketing and information pushing for the various deliverables/offerings of the MFLN needs more attention. Exploring alternatives to how this information is developed and is delivered to those that need it the most in a timely manner so calendars can be scheduled well in advance would be useful.

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

- Karen Jeannette (University of Minnesota Extension) has joined the MFLN team as an expert in social media (specifically blogging), to provide some IT support, and as a liaison between various eXtension units (Content, Engineering) and the Network Literacy CoP to the MFLN. She will be supporting the MFLN 0.25 FTE with an increase to 0.30 FTE early in 2012. We are delighted to have her onboard and her background and knowledge significantly contributes to the success of the MFLN.

- Colleagues at Zero to Three (<http://www.zerotothree.org/>) have invited Kathy Reschke (CC Concentration Leader) to contribute to an article on strategies to help military families stay connected, to be published in their journal in the spring. Kathy's contribution will be focused on social media and info about the MFLN and eXtension will be included.
- A transition was made from the DoD Adobe Connect system back to Iowa State University's system. Modifications were made to access and, for the most part (except the USMC), the system is available to relevant DoD employees. This IS a success story!