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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Military Family Month Tips

November is Military Family Month, and as a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Meriden YMCA offers the following tips to help children of military families in Meriden cope while loved ones serve overseas.

1. **Avoid the Countdown:** Try not to focus on the expected homecoming date of a loved one serving overseas as these dates can change. Instead, emphasize how mom or dad will be home once the work is done.
2. **Give a Geography Lesson:** Using maps and books to learn more about the place or region where the parent is stationed will empower the child and provide some comfort.
3. **Family Ties that Bind:** Help the child stay connected during separation by building holiday care packages for the parent and taking advantage of services like [United Through Reading](#) that videotapes a parent reading their child's favorite book or the Armed Services YMCA's [Operation Kid Comfort](#) program that provides a personally handcrafted quilt or pillow.
4. **Monitor the Media:** News stories can scare or alarm children, keep an eye on the child's media exposure and be prepared to answer questions prompted by what they see and hear.
5. **Take Advantage of the Internet:** Utilize Facebook, Skype and other chat services to keep in touch with the parent in real-time. This will let the child know their parent is safe while providing important bonding time.
6. **Find Time for You:** When a loved one is away, the remaining caregiver takes on the brunt the family responsibilities. This can be stressful, and many Ys offer free memberships through the [Military Outreach Initiative](#) and child care (free babysitting through the Meriden YMCA Take A Break Program) that provide additional support to keep the body and mind healthy. The Meriden YMCA also offers membership discounts to military reserve personnel and their families and veterans. For more information on how about military family support at the Y, visit www.meridenymca.org or call 203-235-6386 x16.