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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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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-New Britain-Berlin YMCA offers the following tips to help children of military families in our communities 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 children and provide some comfort.
3. **Family Ties that Bind:** Help children 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 their 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 children know their parent is safe while providing important bonding time.

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](#).

Contact Joan Goodman at the Meriden YMCA at 203.235.6386 or Desiree Rivera at the New Britain YMCA at 860.229.3787 for more information.

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