



Commonwealth of Virginia

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First Lady Maureen McDonnell Launches “Serving Our Service Member Families” Website

*System Matches needs of Families of Deployed Service members with
Businesses and Volunteers that can help*

Website can be accessed at: www.SOS.virginia.gov

RICHMOND – Virginia First Lady Maureen McDonnell today launched the “Serving Our Service Member Families” website, www.SOS.virginia.gov, which will provide an easy to use on-line connection between the families of deployed soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, and their fellow Virginians, businesses, places of worship, and civic and volunteer organizations to help meet their needs while a loved one is away serving the nation. Through the website, families can log on and find help in a secure format for various needs; businesses can register to give their support by offering their company and services at a special rate for the families; and community groups can register and list themselves as resources to the families. The website is a part of Mrs. McDonnell’s ongoing “Serving Our Service Member Families” (SOS) initiative which she launched shortly after her husband took office.

Speaking about the website, Mrs. McDonnell commented, “Last year we launched ‘Serving Our Service Member Families’ to encourage all Virginians to reach out and help the families of the deployed with the everyday tasks we often take for granted. **SOS** is, for me, the very essence of what it means to be a good neighbor. As a military daughter, wife, and mother, I know the challenges military families face first-hand, and how special it is to have love and support when a spouse is deployed. Today’s launch of the **SOS** website will help connect military families with businesses, support organizations, and generous neighbors that want to lend a hand. It is our hope that citizens, businesses, places of worship, and community organizations will go to the website to sign-up and get involved by serving the families who are repeatedly enduring tremendous burdens and sacrifices for our state and nation.”

She continued, “In remembrance of those lost on September 11th, when Virginia herself was attacked, and those called to arms in response to that attack, I want to honor our military and their families in some small way. So every month, we do something to honor and bring attention to our service men and women, their families, and our veterans. I am asking all Virginians to adopt the 11th, or any day each month, as a day of ‘Serving Our Service Member Families’ and do something special for the family of a deployed military member or wounded warrior in their community.”

Virginia is home to more active duty military and their families than any other state, and the Governor and First Lady want our service members to know that there is a military family in the Governor's Mansion, who thanks them for protecting the freedoms we wake up to every morning. Reaching out, connecting, and offering support to these families by simply letting them know you'd like to help if they have an emergency, or something as simple as taking a hot meal to the family of a deployed service member, or offering to cut their grass or help with raking leaves. Businesses can offer discounted services for items such as oil changes; discounts on plumbing services; or a percentage off their meal on the 11th of every month in honor of the sacrifices their families are making. Again, small gestures can mean so much.

Major General Daniel E. Long Jr., Adjutant General of Virginia, commented, "The Virginia National Guard has mobilized more than 12,000 Soldiers and Airmen since 9/11, many of our personnel have served on federal active duty multiple times and more than 1,700 will be on duty in the next year. Their service in defense of the ideals of freedom places a large burden on their families, and we need to do everything we can to support those families while their loved ones are away. The Virginia Guard, along with the other active and reserve military services, have extensive programs in place to support families, but this web site is going to be an important tool that will connect families in need with local organizations that can provide valuable assistance. We all know the Governor and First Lady have focused their attention on the needs of military families, and we are very excited to work with them to make this program a success and increase the support we offer to our families."

The "*Serving Our Service Member Families*" campaign is part of FLITE, the First Lady's Initiatives Team Effort. FLITE is a team of 100 leading Virginia women working with the First Lady to recognize programs, activities, organizations, or individuals who embody the ideal of "getting involved and giving back." It brings attention to the great work being done by selfless people around the Commonwealth who are taking the opportunity to leave the Commonwealth a better place than they found it. It also helps to develop new programs and events to support the First Lady's four signature issues:

- A Commonwealth of Opportunity for Military Families
- A Commonwealth of Opportunity for Preventive Health and Wellness
- A Commonwealth of Opportunity for Economic Development, with a specific focus on the Virginia Wine, Film, and Tourism Industries
- A Commonwealth of Opportunity for Women

You can learn more about FLITE here:

<http://www.firstlady.governor.virginia.gov/Initiatives/FLITE/>

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of early wars were treated and appreciated by our nation." ~George Washington

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