

STRONGER FAMILIES

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Your Gift to U.S. Marines Serving Together

Sgt. Denise King and Cpl. Joshua King are both deployed with Camp Pendleton's Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 267 in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, and are not only newlyweds, but new parents, as well.



Photo by Cpl. Samantha Arrington

^^ *Sgt. Denise King and Cpl. Joshua King in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan.*

CAMP BASTION, AFGHANISTAN

Sgt. Denise King and Cpl. Joshua King, both with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 267, are not only newlyweds, but also new parents. When the couple was deployed to Afghanistan, their son, Julian, now 10 months old, was just learning to roll over.

"I'm sure he'll be walking by the time we get back," said Joshua, an

intelligence analyst. "For both of us the hardest part of this deployment is being away from him."

Joshua, of Battle Ground, Washington, and Denise, a native of Los Angeles, California, explained family will take care of their son throughout their time in Afghanistan. Both the mother and father's parents will help create a stable environment for their son while they are away from

home. The couple said that hope for future stability, and the goal of providing a better future for their son, is why they deployed.

Beating the Odds

As a rule, couples aren't allowed to live together in Afghanistan even if they are married, and though husband and wife might work in the same squadron, they often work different shifts, thus limiting the time they are able to see each other.

"Our relationship has grown in the time that we have been deployed. We communicate a lot more and having my wife out here is definitely a pro."

—CPL Joshua King, USMC

The Kings also know the statistics against them. Historically, divorce rates for junior Marines are above the national average— and higher still for dual-military couples. But they agree that courses for engaged and newlywed Marines about life

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Strong Bonds for Stronger Marriages: Your Support for Military Families

Stronger Families has joined forces with the U.S. Army's Strong Bonds Program to help service members and their families strengthen their relationship and build support for the challenges of Army life.



^^ *Strong Bonds offers families a retreat style format to learn together in a fun and relaxing environment.*

JOINT BASE LEWIS MCCHORD, WA

Stronger Families has joined the U.S. Army's Strong Bonds program with our Oxygen marriage and family strengthening programs. Our first major training event was held August 21-25. Eighteen chaplains from various Army units attended the week long program, which included professional speaker training.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The content was well-received and there were many positive comments from Chaplains eager to begin teaching the program to soldiers and their families. One Chaplain commented that she found the *Oxygen* Strong Bonds training exceptional: "All in all, this training has been an amazing experience!"

What is Strong Bonds?

Strong Bonds is a unit-based, chaplain-led program that assists commanders in building individual resiliency by strengthening the family. The mission of the Strong Bonds program is to increase soldier and family readiness through relationship education and skills training.

Strong Bonds is conducted in an off site retreat format. The retreat or "get away" provides a fun, safe, and secure environment for couples to address the issues that impact their marriage—relocations, deployments, and military lifestyle stressors.

Supporting Army Couples

The Strong Bonds retreats are designed to strengthen relationships, inspire hope, and rekindle marriages—even start the journey of healing for relationships under fire. Whether an Army couple is newly married or been together a long time, many have likely experienced more excitement, and more challenges, than the average civilian couple.

Participating couples gain practical, useful information using *Oxygen for Your Relationships* and other curricula developed from years of research.

Couples learn new communication and conflict resolution skills to fortify their marriage and enjoy a time of relaxation, recreation, fellowship, and fun. They are also given time to practice communication and relationship-building skills as well as share intimate moments together. In small groups, they participate in activities that renew bonds with their peers. ■

“The program is a key part of Army family support and a meaningful way of saying thank you for the sacrifices these families make every day.”

—Chaplain Command, US Army, Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Married Chaplains Bring the OXYGEN Program to New Oklahoma Command

Married Chaplains Jimmy and Patti Nichols leave Joint Base Lewis-McChord for Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and bring with them their experience working with Stronger Families and the Oxygen Program.

FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA

"Are you crazy!?" Her friend exclaimed when Patti Nichols said she was considering joining her husband as a U.S. Army Chaplain.

Goodbye Missionary—Hello Army!

Patti grew up as the daughter of a civilian pastor to a military congregation in Germany. With no TV, she read many books about missionaries and church leaders. At age 11, she felt God's calling on her life to preach, and she thought that perhaps, one day, she would be a single female missionary like the ones about whom she had read.

At the age of 17, she made a commitment to God to be willing to preach whenever given the opportunity. A short time later, she met and married Jimmy Nichols, an Army PFC stationed in Germany (studying to be a minister) – so much for the idea to be a single missionary!

A Call to Chaplaincy

As a Chaplain spouse with four young boys, Patti's ministry involvement included serving as Family Readiness Group and Protestant Women of the Chapel leader, but she was always aware of that early call.

One day, in response to an off-handed remark by Patti about serving together in ministry, Jimmy stopped what he was doing and said with conviction, "You'd make a great Army Chaplain!" From that



^^ Married Chaplains COL Jimmy and MAJ Patti Nichols. They have four boys ranging in age from 17 to 28. They celebrate their 30th Anniversary this year.

point forward, this calling wouldn't let her go. She started running (for fitness), enrolled in seminary, and ultimately achieved the goal of becoming an Army Chaplain.

Stress of Deployments

When you're a Chaplain, you not only support and meet the spiritual needs of your troops, but also serve as a support and advisor to your commander and leaders. In their nine years together as an Army Chaplain couple, Jimmy & Patti have not had to deploy at the same time, but deployments create stress on individuals and on a marriage.

"It has been encouraging to see Oxygen impact couples. We're thankful to be taking Oxygen to Fort Sill to see more couples helped and marriages saved."

—Chaplains (COL) Jimmy Nichols and (MAJ) Patti Nichols, US Army

Losing 56 Soldiers

While Jimmy was a Chaplain for the 101st Strike Brigade out of Ft. Campbell, KY, his Brigade lost 56 men during a deployment. Shortly after Jimmy's return, he and Patti went out to dinner at Applebee's. The person in the next booth was loud, crass, and obnoxious. Jimmy politely asked him to tone it down. When the foul and disrespectful language continued, Jimmy nearly came unhinged (completely out of character for him). Jimmy realized the toll the deployment had taken on him and sought out support and counseling to heal.

Thankful for Stronger Families

After 3 years at JBLM where they were introduced to Stronger Families and Oxygen, the Nichols are now stationed at Fort Sill, OK, where Jimmy serves as the Garrison Chaplain and Patti as a Brigade Chaplain. ■

“ **StrongerFamilies.com for Veteran Families has been the best thing for me and my husband. Thank you!** ”

—Heather B., Veteran Spouse

If you would like to donate a one year premium membership to a veteran couple, go to strongerfamilies.com today!



Your Generosity Helps Strengthen Veteran Families

Thanks to your incredible generosity, more than 120 veteran families are receiving new resources to help navigate their transition.

Veterans need support for their relationships just as much as active duty service members. Stronger Families recognizes this need and is now providing full access to all of the digital resources on StrongerFamilies.com to veteran couples. So far, 119 veteran couples have been sponsored.

Stronger Families is also creating digital resources specifically geared to serve the unique needs of veterans, including PTSD and transitioning to the civilian world. Check out these new veteran resources at StrongerFamilies.com.

- Oxygen Show with Karen Wiseman: *Big Life Transitions*
- Oxygen Show with Michael Cain: *The Pain of PTSD and the Healing Power of Journaling*
- MasterSeries with Dr. Edward Tick: *War and the Soul*
- MasterSeries with Dr. Elizabeth Harper Need: *The 7 Phases of Grief*
- MasterSeries with Dr. Dan Siegel: *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*

Your Gift to U.S. Marines Serving Together

...Continued from front

skills and relationship communication have helped them to overcome stresses common for a young marriage—stresses compounded when both husband and wife serve overseas.

Both Joshua and Denise agree that communication is key to a healthy marriage, wherever the couple may live.

“Our relationship has grown in the time that we’ve been deployed. We have to communicate a lot more, not that we didn’t back in the States, but out here communication is all we have,” said Joshua King. “Having my wife out here is definitely a pro. It’s amazing being married to someone who knows everything that you do and understands the Marine Corps like you do.”

Another Oxygen Seminar is scheduled for September 19-21. In partnership with the USO, this free seminar is open to all those in the 1st Battalion 1st Marine Division. We anticipate 25 US Marines and their spouses will attend. Many of these Marines are weathering multiple and consecutive deployments in their service and sacrifice for our freedom and safety. ■

Portions of this article from DoD Live by Jessica Tozer. <http://www.dodlive.mil/2011/08/05/family-focus-friday-6-marines-3-couples-1-squadron/>