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Standing Strong Together

Honoring the Sacrifice and Strength of Army Reserve Families

By Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory O. Betty

U.S. Army Reserve Command

Army Reserve families are a critical part of our force. They don't just *support* the mission — they're a crucial element of its foundation. We talk about "Twice the Citizen," but that title doesn't begin to cover what these families handle. Monthly drills, annual training, and deployments — it adds up. And it's the families who bear the brunt of the disruption.

I remember my first deployment — from 1989-90, including Desert Storm. No internet, no cellphones. Letters took a week, maybe more. A five-minute phone call meant waiting in line with 2,000 other guys packed into a "Deuce and a Half" and paying top dollar for

just five minutes with my loved ones. I was 18, with few responsibilities at home, but I saw the strain on guys with kids, with spouses juggling everything. It stuck with me.

While they are always on the minds of loved ones and employers in cities and towns across America, deployments aren't just about the Soldiers who serve the nation far from home — they are also about spouses taking on a second job, kids adjusting to a parent's absence, and the constant worry. It's a weight they carry with quiet strength.

Organizations like Army Reserve Family Programs and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program are vital. They provide resources and a network to lean on, helping

families navigate the practical challenges and emotional toll.

And as deployments draw to a close, too often, the focus is on returning Soldiers, and families get lost in the shuffle. We need to change that. It's not enough to thank the Soldiers. We need to thank the families who held things down.

Simple gestures matter — a helping hand or a listening ear. I've seen more companies step up lately, offering support to veterans and Gold Star families, and it's a good start.

Technology has changed things. Video calls and social media keep families connected in ways we couldn't have imagined back in '90. I remember getting a call from my son during a deployment to Kuwait, needing help with his PlayStation. It was a small thing, but it was normal. It

was family. Maintaining that normalcy is key.

But returning isn't the end of the story. Reintegration is tough. I came back from my first deployment as a first sergeant a different man. The weight of responsibility and the things I'd seen changed me. And my family had learned to function without me. As we say, "Life keeps lifing." We must be aware of that and offer support as families adjust to having their Soldiers home — changed Soldiers.

Army Reserve families demonstrate resilience every single day. They deserve our respect, our gratitude, and our unwavering support. After every battle assembly, I remind my Soldiers: Don't forget to thank the people who picked up the slack while you were gone. It's the least we can do. Let's make sure, as a society, we do more. ■

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