



PRESS RELEASE

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Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition hosts community outreach event in Wasilla

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska —The Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition kicked off an initial community outreach event for members of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough at the Alaska National Guard's Alcantra Armory in Wasilla, Sept. 3.

More than 30 Mat-Su Borough service organizations, including the Palmer Pioneer Home, American Legion, and office of Senator Lisa Murkowski, collaborated on how to support service members, veterans and families in the region. The event also offered an overview of the coalition and opportunity to network with like-minded community members.

"Mat-Su is a well-organized community," said Lt. Col. Kay Spear-Budd, Alaska National Guard Family Program director and Alaska-Forget Me Not co-chair. "In just four hours, we were able to identify several gaps specific to the service member, veteran and family population in the Mat-Su Borough that aligned with the Mat-Su Health Foundation Health Assessment."

"Some of the gaps the group decided to work include building collaborative relationships that enhance sharing of information, expediting housing for military members by developing a relationship between the JBER housing office and the local realtors association, improving access to services with help from the tribal veteran representative." added Spear-Budd.

Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition's mission is to ensure that service members, veterans and families are supported and cared for within their communities through a collaborative effort. The coalition focuses on statewide coordination, community outreach and education.

There are approximately 10,000 veterans in the Mat-Su Borough, with numbers increasing. There has been a 10 percent total population increase in the region in the last four years.

Special guest speakers at the event included Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel, Alaska National Guard adjutant general; retired Alaska National Guardsman, Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges; and Mat-Su Borough Mayor Larry DeVilbiss.

From hiring and financial fitness fairs to military cultural awareness and behavioral health education, the coalition has helped coordinate more than 30 statewide community events this year alone.

"Even more exciting is the Mat-Su group's decision and commitment to meet monthly and continue collaborating together," added Spear-Budd.

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The next meeting will be at the Alaska National Guard's Alcantra Armory in Wasilla, Oct. 20 at 8:30 a.m., and the public is welcome to attend.

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and photos.
2. **Flickr link** includes event album of full-resolution, free downloadable images.
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157657960495828>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and photos. (DVIDS is generally accessible from .mil computers)
<http://dvidshub.net/r/tbol5g>

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The Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition hosted an outreach event at the Alaska National Guard's Alcantra Armory in Wasilla for organizations in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that were interested in supporting service members, veterans and families, Sept. 3. More than 30 service organizations attended the event, which offered an overview of the coalition and opportunity to network with like-minded community members. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel)

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The Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition hosted an outreach event at the Alaska National Guard's Alcantra Armory in Wasilla for organizations in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that were interested in supporting service members, veterans and families, Sept. 3. More than 30 service organizations attended the event, which offered an overview of the coalition and opportunity to network with like-minded community members. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel)

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Philip Cooper, Genacta Home Care service coordinator, discusses gaps in services specific to the service member, veteran and family population at an Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition outreach event at the Alaska National Guard's Alcantra Armory in Wasilla, Sept. 3. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel)