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## Navy offers free VITA, ELF

*Submitted by Carrie Mast  
 CNIC N91 Deployment Support Program Analyst*

The Navy Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program assists military members and their dependents with filing their tax returns free of charge using the help of volunteers trained and certified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). VITA tax specialists are trained and equipped to address such military-specific tax issues as combat-zone tax benefits and the effect of the new Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) guidelines. Visit <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/EITC-Income-Limits-Maximum-Credit-Amounts-and-Tax-Law-Updates>, for more information. To learn more about the VITA/ELF program and to locate a center near you click on [http://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code\\_16\\_tax\\_info.htm](http://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code_16_tax_info.htm).

Taxpayers should bring these items to VITA sites to have their tax returns prepared:

- Photo identification.
- Social Security cards for the taxpayer, his or her spouse, and dependents, if applicable.
- Birth dates for primary and secondary earners and dependents on the tax return.

“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life”  
 — Confucius

- Current year’s tax package, if taxpayers received one.
- Wage and earning statements (W-2, W-2G, and 1099-R forms) from all employers.
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (1099 forms).
- A copy of last year’s federal and state returns, if available.
- Bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit.
- Other relevant information about income and expenses (e.g., total amount paid for day care, day care provider identifying number [tax ID or Social Security number]).

To file taxes electronically on a married-filing-jointly tax return, both spouses must be present to sign the required forms.



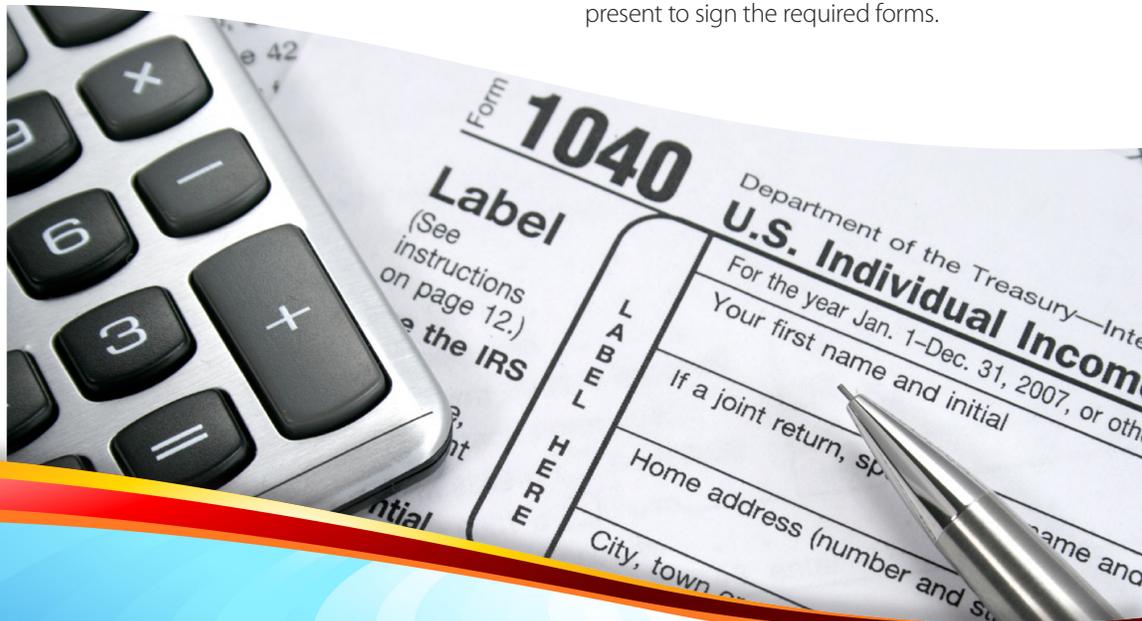
Family Connection is a publication of the Fleet and Family Support Program.

The Navy's Fleet and Family Support Program promotes the self-reliance and resilience of Sailors and their families. We provide information that can help you meet the unique challenges of the military lifestyle.

The appearance of external links in this newsletter does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the U.S. Navy or Department of Defense.

If you have questions or comments, contact the Communications Program Specialist Timothy McGough at [timothy.mcough@navy.mil](mailto:timothy.mcough@navy.mil).

Visit us online at:



## Keeping pets safe in winter

*Submitted by Amber Kerr  
CNIC N912, Family Emergency Preparedness Program Manager*

Pets are often like family members, especially cats and dogs. Now that winter is in full swing, it is important to take extra precautions to ensure your pets' safety and well-being.

First, keep pets indoors whenever possible. If you have to leave them outside, minimize their exposure to the elements. Provide an adequate shelter that is protected from the wind and large enough for your pet to lie down in, but small enough to retain body heat. The shelter should be raised off the ground a few inches and the floor should be covered with either cedar shavings or straw to maintain warmth. It is also important to cover the shelter opening with heavy plastic or waterproof burlap to keep the wind out.

Next, be mindful to protect pets from salt and other chemicals used to melt snow or prevent freezing. Wipe your pets' feet with a damp cloth after they have been outside so their paws do not get irritated and they do not inadvertently ingest chemicals when they groom themselves. Ensure chemicals such as antifreeze are put away and any spills are cleaned up properly. Antifreeze tastes sweet to animals but is highly toxic.

Finally, be sure to include your pets in your emergency preparedness plan. Have at least three days' worth of food and medication for your pets in your kit and have a record of their vaccinations.

Taking the proper steps to protect your pets and planning accordingly in case of an emergency will help ensure that your furry



family members stay healthy and safe during the coldest winter months.

For more information on pet safety visit: [www.humanesociety.org](http://www.humanesociety.org) or [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).

## Entrepreneurship help available for service members, spouses, veterans

*Submitted by Rebecca O'Connor  
CNIC N91 Transition Assistance Program Analyst*

Interested in starting your own business? The Navy's Transition Assistance Program, along with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Syracuse University (SU) has a variety of programs designed to help you with your entrepreneurship dreams.

As a service member or spouse at the Entrepreneurship Career Track course (facilitated by the SBA), you will receive an overview of business fundamentals and insights into the realities of small business-ownership. With



the facilitator's help, you will also research the entrepreneurship realities in the industry of your choice and begin developing a detailed business plan.

After completing the two-day Entrepreneurship Track course, you can enroll in an eight-week, instructor-led online program offered by the SBA and the Whitman School of Management at SU.

In addition to the Boots-to-Business course, which is open to all transitioning service members, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at SU also offers Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE) program for female spouses, service members and veterans interested in small-business ownership. Once you have been accepted into the program, the first step is to complete a 15-day online learning experience designed to teach participants "the language of business." After that, you will attend one of several three-day training

conferences offered in a number of cities throughout the country (in 2015, V-WISE will be offered at Boston, Mass.; Kansas City, Mo.; and Charlotte, N.C.). And after completing the course and conference, V-WISE participants receive further support from SBA and IVMF-provided partners and services (including Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, and Veterans' Business Outreach centers.)

V-WISE applicants do not have to have a college degree or already own a business, though the program does allow participants to earn 2.7 continuing education credits. Thanks to the SBA, conference costs are kept low: V-WISE participants pay a \$75.00 registration fee and are responsible for their transportation to and from the hotel, any parking fees accrued, and their dinner on the conference's second evening.

Apply as soon as possible at <http://whitman.syr.edu/vwise/apply/>. Each conference location is limited to 200 participants and acceptance is on a first-come, first-served basis.

## Employment and Transition Corner

### New Transition GPS website for service members and families

Wondering what happens if you don't meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS)? Or what the CRS and why they're important? Chances are the questions you have about transitioning are shared by many other service members. So to provide answers, Commander, Navy Installations Command Headquarters (CNIC HQ) redesigned their website to help you and your family.

With more than 20 questions and answers tailored to service members' experience, the new [Transition GPS for Service Members](#) page makes it easy for you "to obtain a very detailed explanation of Transition GPS," according to Mike Cheshier, Military Support Section lead at CNIC. And to find documents necessary for attending the workshops, new transition-related videos and external websites to help you find post-military opportunities, check out the [Resources for Service Members](#) page.

The site also features a [schedules page](#) where you can find the time and dates for Transition GPS workshops, Career Tracks, and Capstone in your area, as well as upcoming job fairs. "It truly is," as Cheshier said, "a valuable resource for all who are involved in Transition."



## SAPR program support never stops

By Shannon Whelan  
CNIC N91 SAPR Program Analyst

The New Year ushers in a period of new beginnings, high hopes and life changes that may sometimes overflow our plates and hearts. Many dedicated people stay on call throughout the year; Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Victim Advocates (VAs) are some of them. They are ready when their assistance is needed at a moment's notice. While people may be out celebrating birthdays, attending weddings and graduations or enjoying vacations or long weekend getaways, our on-call Advocates are mentally and physically prepared to respond immediately to reports of sexual assault. Although SAPR VAs are often providing rotational on-call duty, it is essential that they are able to maintain a life outside of work, doing things that they enjoy as well.

During the New Year, give thanks to our SAPR VAs standing watch, and the Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) who ensure that the SAPR program is providing critical services year round. Each works hard to ensure service delivery and the care everyone deserves meet the highest standards. This requires substantial dedicated focus and believing in the call to service for others. Take a moment to learn more about your local Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office. The confidential and anonymous services of Department of Defense (DOD) Safe Help Line at <https://safehelpline.org/about-dod-safe-helpline> is dedicated to helping sexual assault victims 24/7 via phone call, text, or online chat.

### Returning Warrior Workshops (RWW)

Returning Warrior Workshop Schedule and IA Family Events — [www.ia.navy.mil](http://www.ia.navy.mil). Click "Resources" then "IA Services."

### Family On-Demand Courses Get a New Home

Military Families in Transition now lives at [www.militaryfamiliesintransition.com](http://www.militaryfamiliesintransition.com).

New Spouse Orientation is now [www.newspouseorientation.com](http://www.newspouseorientation.com).

Be sure to update your favorites.

**JSS**  
Joint Services Support  
[www.jointservicesupport.org](http://www.jointservicesupport.org)

**JSS Dial-in Access 24/7?**  
**1-877-JSS-NOW1**  
(577-6691)

### Relocation Tip

A few tips to help you find ways to stay [healthy](#), even during the most hectic part of your move.



### New Spouse Orientation



New Spouse Orientation is offered as an [on-demand course](#) designed to support new Navy spouses. It provides information on benefits, support services, military culture and resources to help spouses adapt to the military lifestyle.

### IA Discussion Group Schedule

[View the Fleet-wide list of classes, support groups and events.](#)



## Veterans Employment Center – For Job Seekers

The Veterans Employment Center (VEC) is the federal government’s single online tool for connecting transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans and their families to meaningful career opportunities in the public and private sectors. The VEC is a government-wide product that brings together a reputable cadre of employers with real job opportunities, and provides transitioning Servicemembers, Reserve Component Servicemembers, Veterans and their families with the tools to translate military skills into plain language and build a profile that can be shared – in real time – with employers who have made a public commitment to hire Veterans. The VEC was created in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Defense and Education, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management.

The VEC can be found at [www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs). For a tutorial video on how to use the VEC, please visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWfhI-eSoWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWfhI-eSoWk).

### **As a job seeker, you have access to the following resources:**

- **Skills Translator**: Translate your military occupational codes into civilian skill equivalents for a powerful public profile and résumé; and learn about related civilian career paths.
- **Profile & Résumé Builder**: Seamlessly import results from the skills translator into an online profile that you can save for future use, publish for employers to search, or download to help you develop a résumé in any format. Publishing your profile on the VEC instantly connects you to thousands of employers looking to hire Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers, Reserve Component Servicemembers and family members.
- **Veterans Job Bank (VJB)**: The VJB allows you to search over 1.5 million jobs—including federal, state, local government and private sector jobs. In fact, some employers are specifically recruiting transitioning Servicemembers, Reserve Component Servicemembers and veterans through the VJB.
- **Employer Commitments**: View a list of hundreds of employers and organizations that have made a commitment to hire or train individuals like you, and then link directly to their site to get more information, start the conversation and apply for jobs.
- **Other Resources**: The VEC contains or links to a broad set of other informational resources designed to help you find meaningful career opportunities and take advantage of special government and partner programs, such as the new Department of Defense SkillBridge pilot program to promote civilian job training for transitioning Servicemembers.

If you have any questions or need technical assistance with the site, please contact the Department of Veterans Affairs VEC support team at: [oeoecsupport.vbavaco@va.gov](mailto:oeoecsupport.vbavaco@va.gov)

