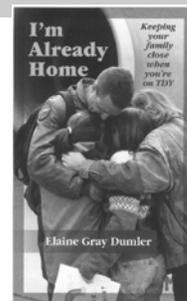


In Touch

Idea update for military families facing separations

Based on the book "I'm Already Home"

Elaine Dumler • 6460 W. 98th Ct. • Westminster, Colorado 80021 • 866-780-0460 toll free
www.ImAlreadyHome.com • Elaine@ImAlreadyHome.com



ANNOUNCEMENT

2nd edition - expanded version of "I'm Already Home" is almost ready! It's called, "**I'm Already Home...Again**" and will be available by the 24th of March, 2006 (sorry it didn't make it for 2005). New book includes:

- Reunion, Reintegration and Redeployment
- 100+ Additional Ideas
- Ideas for Communities, Schools and Churches
- Pets and deployments
- 100+ new web resources

Watch for it!

Inside this issue:

Message from Elaine Dumler	1
All about YOU!	2
Unit and FRG meetings—ideas	3
On March 24th	3
Bookmark these Websites	3
Protect your pets	4
Tax prep for free	4
Fun facts, useless information	4
Book 2006 Dates	4

Volume 1, Issue 6

Winter 2006



Message from Elaine Dumler - Welcome 2006!

Why is it that we are expected to end a year by looking back on what we *haven't* accomplished instead of all that we *have*? Maybe that's my message for 2006. Every time I speak to a group of spouses and FRG volunteers, I see the culmination of all the work and sacrifices that you've gone through just to get through one month and begin another. New things pop up, kids and parents need you in new and different ways, and you realize that you're not sure you've even had time to take a bath for any other reason than to get clean! Just once a bubble bath would be nice. Sure. That's the commitment I encourage you to make this year...to YOU. I know you give "lip service" to finding time to take care of you, so instead, take control. A friend of mine, Tom Dearth, shares a wonderful analogy: When you travel on an airplane, your flight begins with the flight attendant giving the "safety announcements." One of them concerns the oxygen mask that drops from above you if the cabin pressure changes. If you are traveling with small children, you're instructed to put your mask on first before helping the children with theirs. Every self respecting mother cringes at this! It seems so wrong. I'd immediately want to help my kids first...then myself.

So why are those instructions so important? Because if you "pass out" from lack of oxygen, then you won't BE there to help the kids! That's the key. If you don't take the time to take care of yourself, then you won't be in any condition to take daily care of those who really need you. Trust me, I know how my patience can be drawn to it's limit...quickly...when I haven't had enough sleep or time to "regroup." Thanks, Tom!

So here's my assignment for you:

1. First, take a moment to make a list of your five favorite things to do to relax. (simple things like a warm bath, glass of wine or tea, read from a good book, garden, etc.)
2. Set aside a block of time (even 15 minutes) that's just yours for 5 of the next 7 days. This is time for you to pamper yourself.
3. Tell the family members that this is to be uninterrupted time! If the kids are small, ask a neighbor if they would take them for this much needed time, and remember, that that's one of the reasons for grandparents.
4. Enjoy! Guilt is not allowed! Remember, that you're doing this for those who need you at your very best.

This issue is about YOU!

I'm doing something special with this issue. It's all about you. It began on the front page with ways that you can take care of yourself. Inside this issue, I'm bringing back to you some of what you have shared with me so I can share it with everyone else. I've received lots of fun new ideas over the past two years so I'm filling these pages with as many of the really good ones that I can. Many of these you won't find anywhere else...not even in the 2nd edition of "I'm Already Home." - others you will. Enjoy them, adjust them for your needs, and take care of your family.

1. Make a big heart out of oversized red paper and write a very special message on it to your deployed loved one. Cut it up into a number of puzzle pieces and mail a single piece every month or two weeks. When he/she returns, meet them at the reunion site holding the last piece of the "puzzle" and complete it together.

2. "Every night we look up at the sky and find the brightest star and pretend that the star is the person I'm missing." This idea reminded me of a short poem by Antoine de Saint-Exupery in *The Little Prince*:

In one of the stars I shall be living,

In one of them I shall be laughing,

*And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing
when you look at the sky at night.*

3. "Kids can make their own special stationary using their fingerprints and colored ink to create animals and designs."

4. "If you and your spouse have an 'inside joke', try to keep it going in all your letters, emails, packages and phone calls."

5. Make 'kiss cards' by cutting small rectangles of card stock paper (about the size of business cards). Put nice red lipstick on and kiss the card creating a kiss print. Now drop one of these cards into every letter and package you send to your spouse or loved one.

6. "Make two sets of pillowcases before they leave. One case with the deployed parent's pictures on it for each of the children, and one with the children's photos on it for him/her to take when they are gone.

7. "Please don't forget that if you've been through a number of deployments or assignments, you have a wealth of information that can be shared. Become a mentor to another family or spouse to help them through. Maybe your older children can mentor the younger ones. It's good for all of those involved."

8. I liked this one enough to share here and in the new edition of the book: One of the wives of a deployed airman was to give birth soon and Dad couldn't be there. So the community held an old fashioned bake sale and raised enough money to fly in one of the wife's relatives to be with her instead! Is there someone in your unit who would benefit from such a fun, kind community event?

9. Have the families in your FRG prepare and serve a sit-down breakfast to all the servicepersons on a special holiday morning like Valentines Day, Father's Day or the 4th of July. It's a nice way to say Thank you.

10. Have the kids send a years worth of Hersey© Kisses so their dad can have a "kiss" every day.

11. If you are completing a home improvement project while your spouse is away, record the progress from beginning to end on a tape/DVD and send it. It helps them feel they are a vital part of things. Maybe they can even offer some suggestions.

12. "Forward a copy of any newsletter or weekly update emails to his co-workers and friends so they can keep tabs on him/her during the deployment. It's not only an easy way to keep them in the loop, but it cuts down on the update phone calls I have to make."

13. Another way to keep family members involved is to set up an Ofoto© account where you can download pictures that are sent. Give each family member a password so they can view the site. Pictures can be ordered from this site, too.

A Memory is a photograph taken by the heart.

Make those Unit meetings fun and informational (a sample from "I'm Already Home...Again")



1. "We have each family bring the children in to the armory and take recent photos of each child individually. Check out your unit members for someone who has the equipment—and talent—to take good pictures. Have copies of these pictures made and give them to each child who then glues them to the front of their very own note cards."
2. One group did a banner at a FSG meeting. The kids and adults dipped their hands in paint and then put handprints on the banner. Everyone there wrote a message, too. It was then rolled and mailed to the unit.
3. A unit had pictures taken of each soldier with their families at the armory. The soldier was dressed in uniform against an all black background, so these photos were beautiful and a bit more formal. Stamped on the back is the soldier's name, email address and "Thank you for your prayers." Wallet size copies were made and each family had a stack to carry with them. Whenever they met someone who wanted to send a kind message to the soldier, they could hand out one of the cards with the necessary information on the back!

See what's happening on...

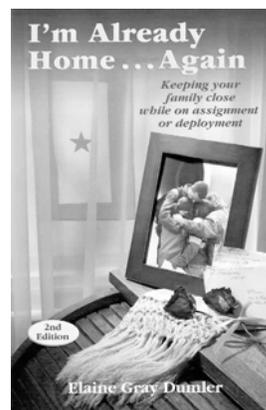
March 24, 2006

The New, Updated, and Expanded 2nd edition of
"I'm Already Home" is set to be released!

***"I'm Already Home...Again -
Keeping your family close while on
Assignment or Deployment"***

I've kept your favorites, and added:

- **160+ NEW ideas**
- **100+ NEW resources**
- **New Chapters on:**
 - * *Community support*
 - * *Church support*
 - * *Extended families*
 - * *Pets and deployments*
- **Expanded Chapter on:**
 - * *Reunion & Reintegration*
- **More fun Stories!**



If you are the **FRG Leader** or **Key Volunteer** for your unit, I'll send you a **Free copy!** I also provide complementary copies for libraries and some other military personnel. Call toll free **1-866-780-0460** to see if you qualify. Free copies will be mailed on March 28, 2006



*Bookmark these
Websites*

This is an excellent site for our Army Reserve members who are returning from being mobilized for the war. It has a lot of benefits information.

<http://www.seamlesstransition.va.gov>



Anheuser-Busch's "Here's to the Heroes" program has been extended **through 2006**. The program provides a single day's free admission to any one SeaWorld or Busch Gardens park, Sesame Place, Adventure Island or Water Country USA for the servicemember and as many as three of his or her direct dependents.

Any active duty, active reserve or Ready Reserve servicemember or National Guardsman is entitled to free admission under the program. Register in the entrance plaza of a participating park, and show a Defense Department photo ID, or register online at :

www.herosalute.com



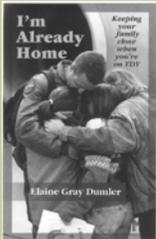
For your love of Arts and Crafts: Your guide to arts and crafts on the internet. Search over 100 categories for sub-categories and related listings. For anyone who has a craft oriented hobby.

<http://www.craftsitedirectory.com>

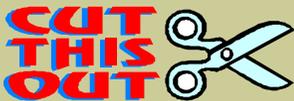
ELAINE DUMLER "I'M ALREADY HOME"

6460 W. 98th Court
Westminster, Colorado 80021

Phone: toll free 866-956-0316
Colorado 303-430-0592
Elaine@ImAlreadyHome.com
Elaine@ElaineDumler.com



We're on the web:
www.ImAlreadyHome.com



Protect your pets

Pet Poisons

According to ASPCA, these foods are dangerous to your pets:

1. Onions/onion powder
2. Chocolate
3. Alcoholic drinks
4. Yeast dough
5. Coffee
6. Caffeinated tea
7. Salt
8. Grapes and raisins
9. Macadamia nuts
10. Tomato leaves/stems
11. Potato and rhubarb leaves

"The military recruits...the family retains."

Weekends are filling fast in 2006! Get Elaine booked for your State Readiness Conference, training, or briefing. **NEW:** Fun and informative sessions on **Deployment** or **Reunion**. Stories and Connection ideas. Call 1-866-780-0460 toll free or visit www.ImAlreadyHome.com

File your taxes for Free!

Military members and their families can now file their taxes for free, thanks to a partnership between a group that helps military people deal with financial issues and a civilian financial services company.

"Military OneSource" has partnered up with Intuit, a financial services company, to provide the TurboTax basic product for federal and state returns at no cost. Military members can download this program and also benefit from tax consultations and have access to appropriate resources. The Military OneSource Web site will provide annual upgrades to the TurboTax software at no cost.

"This tax consultant support for filing 2006 taxes is available telephonically toll free (800-342-9647) and at no cost to the servicemembers from any deployment location in the world." Go to www.militaryonesource.com/ and the link is on the home page.

Fun and Useless information—be ready for your next Trivial Pursuit game!

- Donald Duck comics were banned from Finland because he doesn't wear pants.
- Every person has a unique tongue print.
- The most extras ever used in a movie were 300,000, for the film Gandhi in 1981
- Only 55% of all Americans know that the sun is a star.
- 40% of dog and cat owners carry pictures of their pets in their wallets.
- When Bugs Bunny first appeared in 1935, he was called Happy Rabbit.