40 Years
of Meeting Your Needs ... at Home and at Sea
For four decades the Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP) has been on the proverbial “tip of the spear” sustaining, enabling and supporting the fleet, fighter and family with services and programs throughout the globe. It began with a few Sailors and volunteers at Naval Base Norfolk, Va., and today the FFSP has grown to hundreds of professionals located at 81 Fleet and Family Support Centers and offices throughout Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC).

In 2019, we will mark “40 Years of Meeting Your Needs ... at Home and at Sea.” This booklet is a small piece of history that commemorates where CNIC’s Fleet and Family Support Program has been, where we are today, and where we are headed in the future.

Throughout this booklet you will see quotes from former and current Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) professionals. With your permission, I would like to share my experience with our FFSCs as a Navy spouse and a Navy professional.

I joined the Navy family in November 1991. At our initial duty station, Charleston S.C., I reached out to our local FFSC and they connected me with my command ombudsman, who ensured that I was aware of command events and Family Readiness Group (FRG) meetings. Being new to the area, I attended the FFSC welcome aboard workshop, and this not only helped to indoctrinate me to the area, but also helped me understand the process for finalizing our Permanent Change of Station (PCS) claim. As a new Navy spouse, I was grateful for the FFSC, and knew then that I wanted to be part of the FFSC family. At two duty stations, one stateside and one overseas, I volunteered and was elected to serve as the president for our command FRG. At that time, I was unaware of any training to prepare me for this role, but with the support of command leadership spouses, we were able to achieve our goals!

When we relocated to Japan, I was in culture shock, but the FFSC Area Orientation Brief inspired me to embrace the culture and learn the language! I will never forget hiking Mt. Fuji with the team from FFSC Yokosuka.

Upon our return stateside, I visited the local FFSC to seek employment assistance services. I was amazed at how invested the Family Employment Readiness team was in my success. I received one-on-one assistance with my resume, interview coaching, and they taught me how to dress for success. They also celebrated my success when I was selected as the Deployment Support specialist at FFSC Norfolk!

I am filled with emotion when I think of how the FFSC Career Development Resource Center at Naval Air Station Oceana prepared me to embark on this phenomenal journey in the world of Fleet and Family Readiness.

Throughout my journey as a Navy spouse, I have worked for the DoD Military Community and Office of Family Policy and every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, but I feel great pride and humility to serve as the director of the Navy’s Family Readiness Program.

From the Director

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History of the Fleet and Family Support Program

For 40 years, the Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP) has supported the individual Sailor and family readiness, as well as the adaptation to life in the Navy for service members and their families.

On July 16, 1979, the first Navy Family Service Center was officially opened in Norfolk, Va., with a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Rear Adm. Richard E. Nicholson, commander, Naval Station Norfolk, and Norfolk Mayor Vincent Thomas.

The idea for the Navy Family Service Center (NFSC) grew out of the Family Awareness Conference held in Norfolk in November 1978. It became evident that a greater effort was needed to meet the needs of the Navy family. Under the leadership of Rear Adm. Nicholson, a task force was set up to explore how to meet this commitment to families. The concept of a centralized family location was developed, which was then quickly implemented with the opening of the Navy's first Family Service Center on that sunny day in July 1979. The active-duty staff provided 24-hour information and referral services, while a group of volunteers assisted with casework follow-up, financial counseling, child welfare liaison, relocation information, special assistance and family enrichment. The center also worked closely with the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, American Red Cross, Ombudsmen, Navy Wives Organizations and commands.

Over the next decade, other support programs were added. The staff transformed from an active duty and volunteer staff to a diverse mix of full-time employees that included civilian service (GS), non-appropriated funds (NAF) and contract employees.

In 2001, the name was changed from Navy Family Service Center to Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) to emphasize that the mission of the center was to support the Sailor and the family.

In 2002, the FFSCs incorporated a new lighthouse logo and theme line: “Meeting Your Needs, At Home, At Sea.” The new logo was designed to give the centers a uniform identity at naval bases around the globe. Today, this lighthouse logo still beacons the doors of centers worldwide.

"Prior to working for Fleet and Family Support and CNIC, I worked in law enforcement for 34 years, of which 26 years was with Naval Criminal Investigative Service. So, when folks ask me, ‘How has the transition been from NCIS to Fleet and Family Support?’ I like to respond, ‘I went from looking for the bad in people to looking for the good.’”

David L. Cronk
Regional Program Director
Fleet and Family Support
Navy Region Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia

"I joined the Fleet and Family Support Center in June 2002. Over the last 17 years, I’ve seen the program grow and change in many ways – but one thing that has always remained constant is the desire by our team to provide relevant and meaningful support to our fleet, fighter and family. It is an honor to work alongside such dedicated professionals. I grew up in a Navy family that experienced many of the challenges for which our programs are designed, and I am so grateful to serve military, retirees, Reservists, and their families.”

Mary Kirby
Regional Program Director, Fleet and Family Support
Navy Region Southwest

About Commander, Navy Installations Command

Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) began on Oct. 1, 2003, as an echelon II command under the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). As the overall authority for shore installation management, CNIC focuses on installation effectiveness and improving the installation management community’s ability to sustain the fleet, enable the fighter, and support the family. Navy Family Readiness Program management, implementation, execution and programming have been under the direction of CNIC since 2005. This alignment has resulted in increased effectiveness, flexibility and responsiveness in program management and service delivery from the headquarters to the installation level. It has also ensured that program development and resourcing decisions are not separated from the practical realities of delivering ground-level support and responding to the challenges faced by Navy families.

The Navy’s family support programs provide the highest visibility, advocacy and priority. In practical terms, this has resulted in increased services to family members, increased individual assistance and more varied educational programs, more proactive outreach, and a delivery of family support services in locations most conducive to family member engagement.

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Today’s FFSP

The Fleet and Family Support Program headquarters (HQ) staff, who work at the Washington Navy Yard (WNY) in Washington, D.C., develop innovative materials and curricula to ensure that Sailors and families consistently receive quality services across all Fleet and Family Support Centers, in person, and online via webpages, webinars and social media. FFSP staff manage the programs, policy, training, information and referral, individual clinical and non-clinical consultation, educational classes and workshops.

Military families of today now have the opportunity to go to any of the FFSP’s 81 service delivery sites worldwide, with 58 sites delivering a full portfolio of programs and services.

It is clear that the efforts of CNIC’s Fleet and Family Support Program and the FFSCs have provided the right services at the right time to support Sailor and family resiliency. The culmination of this expansive support helps Sailors and family members adapt to the unique challenges of the military lifestyle. Thank you to those Navy families’ foresights in 1978 and to Rear Adm. Nicholson’s leadership for creating such an important resource for our Navy.

“I’ve been privileged to be able support service members and their families for almost as long as the Fleet and Family Support Program has been in place. Starting as a volunteer, when I was a teenager in the 80s, working in all the programs at the centers, to now getting to support a region. I’m very proud of the work Fleet and Family Support does to support service members as they do their job supporting and protecting us.”

Kathy Selves, LICSW
Regional Program Director, Fleet and Family Support Naval District Washington

“It is hard to believe how long ago we opened. It is a program I will always feel is very special for our Navy family. I started volunteering in 1977 at the newly opened FFSC in Norfolk because I’d just gone through a nine-month deployment with six kids and a ton of good and bad experiences trying to handle everything I could have used the help of FFSC that is for sure.”

Cathy Stokoe
Former Family Readiness Director
At the time, Zumwalt's patriotism was clear. It seems Zumwalt had been assigned as a liaison officer to the Reagan administration to work on a commission to study how to involve families more in Navy life. And when Adm. (Elmo) Zumwalt became CNO.

By 1978, when Adm. Thomas B. Hayward became CNO, the pay cap on military pay had been lifted and the main thrust for recruitment was to focus on retaining the Navy's talent. Hayward came into contact with needs being identified by families and families' awareness of the special hardships families faced. Naysayers were convinced that the Navy needed to do more for its families, if the best of the Navy were to be retained. He told me that he and his young family were treated like flotsam.

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"I started my career with the Navy Family Center (that’s what it was called then) in 1995 as an intern in what was then the Clinical Counseling Program at Naval District Washington (Anacostia). The training and development I received there was an integral part of who I am as a social worker today. Along with my chief of social services, we, in an effort to build on my community organization track, developed and launched the first community counseling center in Woodbridge, Va., to serve military families. The community center was maintained for a year and a half, and there was a steady caseload of 30 clients. It was a very out-of-the-box approach to the old adage, ‘meet the client where they are,’ and was an outreach effort that proved to be very successful."

Lolita Allen, LCSW
Acting Counseling, Advocacy and Prevention Program Manager
Commander, Navy Installations Command

"I have been with Fleet and Family Readiness since the beginning, and it has provided me with unlimited opportunities to successfully assist commands, Sailors, military family members, and retirees get connected to resources, programs and services to meet their needs and answer their questions. Over the years, it has also allowed me to continually increase my knowledge of both military and local helping agencies’ services to the benefit of all clients, customers and my FFSC counterparts."

Jody Flavin, CIRS
Information & Referral Specialist and Volunteer Program Manager
Fleet and Family Support Center
Naval Air Station Oceana

"What was the first NFSC like? It was a renovated second story of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS), all functionally painted in the 1979 style. There were dropped ceiling tiles, making the overhead lower than a normal office setting. All in all, quite nice for an old building. The furnishings were new—desks, chairs, file cabinets, waiting room furniture, and a lovely large kitchen/lunchroom. The main entrance was through NMCRS."

Anita Keegan
Administrative Coordinator
FFSC Norfolk
July 1979‒August 2007

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Joey Filiav, CIRS
Information & Referral Specialist and Volunteer Program Manager
Fleet and Family Support Center
Naval Air Station Oceana

"The FFSC is all about taking care of families — they take the weight off the anchor, and the anchor is heavy."

Anonymous
Master Chief Petty Officer attending a Certification Focus Group in 2017 at Fleet and Family Support Center, Naval Weapons Station Yorktown