



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## SUPPORTING THE FAMILIES WHO SUPPORT OUR TROOPS: SENATOR RITCHIE'S WEEKLY COLUMN

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As members of the United States Armed Forces, our troops are forced to meet very tough demands each and every day. Long deployments that separate soldiers from their loved ones, working in dangerous situations and having to frequently move are just a few of the unique challenges faced by those who serve.

During the month of November, we pause to remember that not only do members of our military make tremendous sacrifices—their family members do too. Through “Military Family Appreciation Month,” we honor the spouses, children, parents and other loved ones who stand behind those in uniform, dedicating themselves to supporting them and the commitment they’ve made to our country.

With our close proximity to Fort Drum, we have a unique opportunity to recognize Military Family Appreciation Month by showing those who serve and their families that we are thankful for their sacrifices. Here are a few ways you can do so:

***Lend a helping hand:*** If a neighbor’s spouse is deployed, offer to take care of some of the tasks he or she would complete, like raking leaves or shoveling snow.

***Practice a random act of kindness:*** Go out of your way to do something kind—for example, send a personal note of thanks, make a home cooked meal or pick up the tab for a military family at a restaurant.

***Extend a warm welcome:*** Acclimating to a new community can be a challenge for anyone. Make an extra effort to help military families get connected and comfortable in our community by letting them know about activities you might be involved in or taking them out to show them your favorite spots.

***Offer to babysit:*** When a member of their family is deployed, it often times can be difficult for the spouse at home to juggle responsibilities. Offer to babysit for a couple hours to give a military spouse you know an opportunity to go out with friends, run errands or just have some alone time.

***Make a military family part of your family:*** Know a family with a spouse who is deployed? Offer to have them join your family once a week for dinner. If their spouse won’t be around

during the holidays, consider inviting them to take part in your family's celebrations.

Military families are unique—and face a number of challenges that many civilian families don't face. It's so important that we remember that while only one person might be on the front lines of fighting for our freedom, the entire family serves. This month, I hope you'll join me in finding a way to say "thanks" for the sacrifices made by our military families.