

## Yellow Ribbon 'one-stop shop' for Airmen, families

By Tech Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

109<sup>th</sup> Airman & Family Readiness Programs Assistant

What Tricare benefits am I entitled to? What exactly is Military One Source? Who can my family turn to if they need assistance while I'm gone? Can I benefit from Veterans Administration programs? How will things go back to "normal" when I return?

These are all questions deploying members may be asking themselves, and there is a lot of information out there for them and their families. That's exactly why the Department of Defense established the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.

According to the Yellow Ribbon Web site, the program's mission is to: "Provide National Guard and Reserve members and their families with information, services, referrals, and proactive outreach opportunities throughout the deployment cycle."

The 109<sup>th</sup> Airman and Family Readiness Programs Office accomplishes this through a one-day event off base, which usually includes a nice lunch. Previous events have been held at the Glen Sanders Mansion and the Edison Club.

Yellow Ribbon events are mandatory for 109<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing members who are deploying in support of a contingency operations for 90 or more days. Members are required to attend an event before they deploy as well as when they return. The Airman and Family Readiness Programs Office keeps track of Wing members deploying, lets the members and supervisors know details of the event, and sends out invitations to family members. While events aren't mandatory for family members, it's a great opportunity for them to obtain information on all the resources available to them while their loved ones are deployed as well as network with other families who are going through a deployment.

Some of the service providers who are available at the events include representatives from Tricare, the Legal Office, the Chaplain's Office, Military One Source, the VA, Personal Financial Management, the American Red Cross and many others. The event serves as a "one-stop shop" of resources for the servicemembers and their families.

Many servicemembers deploy numerous times, and that's no exception for 109<sup>th</sup> AW members. It's still important that members attend Yellow Ribbon events even if they have previously been to them.

“Regardless of the number of deployments you may have experienced or the information you’ve already received, the Yellow Ribbon Program offers the newest and most current information to participants, such as current eligibility for certain benefits or available resources,” according to the Web site. “ Yellow Ribbon Events give many servicemembers the opportunity to see fellow unit members, or talk to professionals about deployment-related topics such as employment, finances, and health care.”

For more information on the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, visit [www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil). You can also contact the 109<sup>th</sup> Airman and Family Readiness Programs Office at 344-2357 or by e-mail at [109AW.FAMILYSUPP@ang.af.mil](mailto:109AW.FAMILYSUPP@ang.af.mil). The 109<sup>th</sup> Family Programs Office is also on the Web at [www.109aw.af.mil/resources/familyreadiness](http://www.109aw.af.mil/resources/familyreadiness) and has a “109th Airlift Wing Family Programs” Facebook page at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).