

# MilSpouse.com

*Tuesday, August 16, 2011*

By Nicole Hempeck, Navy spouser.

## No Hubby? No Problem.

It's Friday night on the island of Oahu. Five Army wives gather around a table laughing, eating cake and drinking wine while their kids play in the adjoining room. They chat about the trials and tribulations that made up their week and joke about the fact that they haven't had any lovin' in a good long while. They share life stories, play games and sometimes just sit in silence when all they need is to be in the company of others.

The warmth and genuine care for one another is palpable in this group — the No Hubby Clubby.

### **The No Hubby Clubby Gals**

Laura Fleming, Chrissy Clifton, Kellie Grant, Megan Long and Claire Dunsford are joined through the sacrifices of their husbands, who are all in the midst of one-year deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan. Laura, who's married to Capt. Paul Fleming (currently serving his third tour in Iraq), decided that enduring the deployment alone wasn't an option. So, she initiated the No Hubby Clubby with girlfriends who were beginning the same deployment journey.

What started with one Italian-themed dinner evolved into Friday night gatherings that have carried these ladies through the bulk of an otherwise unbearable year alone. The pajama parties, birthday dinners, mac 'n cheese bake-off and a bad-80's-fashion party have given them just what they need to endure.

### **Knowing Companions**

"It gives you something to look forward to — you know, 'if I can just make it through, I'll sit with the girls, we'll have a bottle of wine and we'll laugh about the crap we went through this week,'" Laura said.

Kellie, whose husband, Sgt. Maj. Chris Grant, is serving his fourth tour in combat, added, "It gives us an outlet apart from our identity as moms ... It also gives the kids that outlet to identify with kids going through the same exact thing."

Chrissy's husband, 1st Sgt. Derek Clifton, is on his fourth deployment. "I feel like we're all living, breathing, sleeping the same situation, and I can come talk about my rollercoaster of emotions," she says. "Or I can just be quiet and they can sense what I'm trying to communicate without words. ... It's a language understood by a certain few, and it's nice to be around."

Megan agrees: "The last deployment, I lived at home with my parents, and everyone around me had no idea what military life was or what you go through." Her husband, Capt. Brian Long, is on his second tour in Iraq. "This time around I actually get to talk about it, instead of forgetting about it, like it's not happening."

"I am not really a big talker," added Claire, a newlywed navigating her first deployment with husband Capt. Stephen Dunsford. "Having somewhere to go on a Friday, and not necessarily having to talk about stuff — just having people physically present — helps."

### **Lasting Bonds**

When the husbands return from war, the club will not cease to exist; it will evolve to include the men.

"The friendship is true," said Kellie. "And we've formed this strong bond. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

### **Deployment Words of Wisdom**

Most of the "No Hubby Clubby" wives are seasoned, having experienced two or three yearlong deployments. Here's how they would advise their first-deployment selves:

#### **Take It One Day at a Time**

"You cannot wrap your brain around what it's like to be without your husband for a year," says Laura Fleming. "So you have to do it one day at a time ... It applies whether you have kids or you don't have kids ... if it's your first deployment or your fifth deployment. Just one day at a time."

#### **Set Goals for Deployment**

"You have to realize that it's a whole year. You can't just stop your life. You have to keep going on and do something," advised Megan Long. "It's OK to be successful when they're not here," added Laura. "Allow yourself that. It's OK to have victories that they're not involved in."

#### **Emotions Are Normal**

All of the No Hubby Clubby members also felt it was important to allow the large range of emotions that come with deployment. "Let yourself be upset ... You have to cry and get the emotion out. And know that you'll get through it," said Megan.

#### **Stay Tuned ... Out**

"Don't watch the news," advised Kellie Grant, who served in the Army herself. If a situation develops that you want to find reliable information on, "trust in the military system. They have protocol for a reason. You'll be notified before it even hits the news."

#### **Reach Out**

"Be open," Laura advised. "Don't be afraid to put yourself out there ... I think whatever you put out there, you get back."

#### **Find the Silver Linings**

Chrissy Clifton's parting words summed things up well: "I often remind myself you can't have a rainbow without rain, and although every deployment is one heck of a storm, I always find the most beautiful rainbow at the end."

### **5 Deployment Resources You Need to Know**

#### **Military One Source, [militaryonesource.com](http://militaryonesource.com)**

Military One Source offers support for the many challenges that are a given with military family life — from finances to moves to family stresses.

#### **Morale, Welfare & Recreation Services, [armedforcesfoundation.org](http://armedforcesfoundation.org)**

Military Morale, Welfare and Recreation services provide families with access to resources that

support the family as a whole - including child and youth programs, fitness programs, travel opportunities and recreational rentals.

**Operation Military Family, [operationmilitaryfamily.com](http://operationmilitaryfamily.com)**

This site offers resources and event connections to support the strengthening of the whole military family.

**Faith Deployed, [faithdeployed.com](http://faithdeployed.com)**

A site built for the support of those left behind when a service member deploys. It has heartwarming stories, daily encouragement and resources as well as faith-based messages.

**Sittercity, [sittercity.com/dod](http://sittercity.com/dod)**

DOD funds free memberships to this site for military families. It provides connections to reputable sitters as well as military-subsidized child care services.