

2018

# Annual Report

# A Letter from the CEO

## DEAR BLUE STAR NEIGHBORS,

Year after year, I continue to be in awe of the number of stories shared from deep within our military community.

From repeated deployments and the inevitable aftershocks of time spent apart to spouses achieving career opportunities that move with them throughout their journey, overcoming adversity through countless cross-country moves, and neighbors and volunteers stepping in to show their support, it's stories like these that boldly showcase both the beautiful and beautifully trying moments of military life. And, as a result, the civilian-military gap continues to inch closer and closer together.

But what continues to be true is that the voices of our community are only one piece of the puzzle. It's what we choose to do with these poignant narratives that will help make a lasting impact on our nation's military family members.

Therefore, here's just a snapshot of what we were able to achieve in 2018 as a result of honoring the voices of our military families and amplifying their experiences:

- Our membership numbers grew by over 22,000 military family members, a 21% increase reflecting organic growth.
- Nine fully-funded Blue Star Families chapters were identified with the majority of funding secured, improving the possibilities for military families to get connected with the communities they serve.
- Blue Star Families' volunteers donated 14,763 hours, resulting in a monetary value of \$364,498 to the military community.
- We launched important new corporate relationship relationships with Macy's and CSX, and expanded our relationship with Starbucks allowing us to maximize our visibility among non-military audiences.

- Launched exciting new lifestyle programs with Blue Star Parks - opening up engagement with the National Parks, and with our START program - book clubs for military kids and civilian kids.
- Thanks to the generosity of our volunteers, we hosted 1,110 events in CONUS and OCONUS locations, an increase of 22 percent over the previous year.
- As a result of Spouseforce, our tech-forward online career portal, we tracked the placement of 176 military spouses into careers, generating an economic impact of \$27,821,206 on those families.
- Fielding for Blue Star Families' 9th annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey resulted in the highest response to date (10,192 respondents), further helping to capture a thorough representation of the trends and concerns within the military community. Impressions and citations of the survey results throughout the year brought information about our community to tens of millions of people.

These accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without our partnerships alongside Blue Star Neighbors like you. There's still much hard work to be done, however, to continue making a positive impact on the lives of those who so dutifully serve our country.

All that to say, if you haven't yet joined our family as a Blue Star Neighbor, I personally invite you to do so today. Our military families need friendly faces and helping hands—no matter where they live. And that's where you come in. Together, we have the power to make a difference.



With appreciation,  
Kathy Roth-Douquet  
CEO of Blue Star Families



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## Who We Are

The families of our all-volunteer military make unprecedented sacrifices these days to serve our country. Blue Star Families was founded by military spouses in 2009 to empower these families to thrive as they serve. We're committed to strengthening military families by connecting them with their neighbors – individuals and organizations – to create vibrant communities of mutual support. We believe we're all stronger when we take care of one another.

Our groundbreaking research is raising the nation's awareness of the unique challenges of military family life. With the help of neighbors across the country, Blue Star Families is overcoming the isolation and alienation of frequent moves, deployments, and reduced support from the government. Our innovative programs are solving specific challenges for military families, including fighting economic

insecurity with resources that foster spouse career development, creating family strength with rich family programming, and providing critical peer support for caregivers, whose numbers are only increasing.

With more than 150,000 members in our network, including those in chapters all over the world, Blue Star Families touches more than 1.5 million military family members every year. Through our research and program partnerships, Blue Star Families ensures that wherever American military families go, they can always feel connected, supported, and empowered to thrive – in every community, across the nation and around the globe.

For more information, visit [bluestarfam.org](http://bluestarfam.org).

# Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey

Blue Star Families conducted its 9th annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey from April 23 - June 2, 2018. As in past years, we collaborated on this effort with Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF).

- 10,192 Respondents (the highest response to date)
- Research Partnership Engagement:

Worked in partnership with USAA to define "Military Family Resilience" and the protective factors that support it. A preliminary metric to measure those factors was developed as a result.

Concluded consulting agreement with Microsoft in support of its new Military Spouse Technology Academy, which launched in 2018.



*Microsoft's Military Spouse Technology Academy pilot graduates are ready to enter the tech workforce.*



## IMPACT OF SERVICE ON QUALITY OF LIFE

- Ease relocation stress from unreimbursed expenses and adjusting to new location (finding reliable childcare, education)
- Offer improved housing options or increase BAH
- Adequate manning levels and reduce OPTEMPO

## COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS & BELONGING

- Need for increased military-friendly employment opportunities for spouses
- Improve possibilities for families to get connected with the communities they serve
- Provide early transition support to positively impact veteran families' sense of connectedness to their local civilian community
- Increase the general public's understanding of military service through honest messaging

### CIVIL-MILITARY DIVIDE

18%

feel the general public ***understands*** their sacrifices

19%

feel the general public is ***aware of challenges*** military service places on families

96%

working with neighbors to ***improve communities*** is important



### SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT



40% Employed



30% Unemployed  
(actively seeking work)



24% Not in Labor Force



56% of employed military spouses indicate they are underemployed

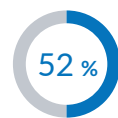
Frequent relocation causes spouse underemployment

47% want large corporations to design military spouse-friendly ***flexible work options***

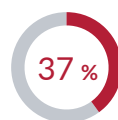
### FINANCIAL READINESS



experienced ***stress*** due to current financial situation



***spouse un/underemployment*** top financial obstacle



feel ***insecure*** about financial future

# How the Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey Strengthens Military Families

**Q1**

Shared results to support the discussion on the future of the all-volunteer force at an event hosted alongside the Bipartisan Policy Center (Citizen Soldiers or Warrior Caste: Who Will Serve in America's Future Military?)

**Q1**

For the third consecutive year, the Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Personnel invited BSF to testify on military and civilian personnel programs and military family readiness

**Q1**

Published the Corporate Playbook 2018, a guide for corporations looking to support and get involved with the military family community through corporate social responsibility efforts

**Q1**

Informed the development of the bipartisan Jobs and Childcare for Military Families Act of 2019 to expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to include military spouses and provide flexible spending arrangements to help military families pay for childcare

**Q1**

Presented results to the Defense Health Agency on Tricare improvements, especially alternative care coverage

**Q2**

Results informed the VA MISSION Act, expanding caregiver training and eligibility for financial resources and legal services

**Q2**

Congress enacted provision of the Military Spouse Employment Act in the 2019 NDAA to temporarily expand non-competitive hiring authority to all military spouses, not just those who relocated

**Q4**

Represented as a panelist at the 2018 Congressional Military Family Summit hosted by Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers

**Q4**

Represented as a panelist at the Symposium on Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Congress in Bridging the Divide

# White Oak VII

*Lansdowne, Virginia*  
*September 21–23, 2018*



**34 Participating  
Organizations &  
Government  
Offices**



**56 Attendees**

“White Oak” is the informal name used to denote a series of conferences titled “America Joins Forces for Military Families,” which encourage creative thinking and collaboration in support of the veteran and military community among major military-related nonprofits, government leadership, and other major public and private contributors.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recognize that while using facilities and “joint zones” on installations is a powerful idea to bring military and local community members together for social programs and services, many aspects of current installation life are no longer required as they duplicate services available in town with reasonably competitive pricing.
- Create a “seamless transition” from DoD to the VA, ensuring the whole of family health, while it may never be 100 percent achievable due to legal differences, is strengthened.
- Improve the messaging of Transition Assistance Program (TAP) classes, increase spouse attendance, and extend the window of access to critical transition information by marketing directly to families and tailoring approaches to generational preferences for more personal interactions.
- Work to remove silos and gaps across all sectors—government, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations—to change the system’s challenge of “whole family success.” Legislative barriers and legal limits often divide agencies, complicate public-private partnerships, and result in “disconnect across government.” Families find it difficult to understand what entities provide while nonprofit and philanthropic organizations lack knowledge of where services are needed most. Overall, fostering a shared understanding is encouraged to resolve disruptive impacts on children and boost family success.



# Programs



**5,553 New  
Neighbors**



**14,763 hours  
donated by  
volunteers to BSF**



**\$364K value of  
volunteer hours**



**1,110 events held  
in CONUS and  
OCONUS locations  
(a 22% increase  
from 2017)**

Blue Star Families is establishing and fostering engagement and partnerships to create recognizable, consistent communities that support health and resilience military families need to succeed. We engage military families and community members by delivering solutions to the challenges faced by military families within our local communities. Military families count on these vital connections as they move from one location to another.

## ENCOURAGING CONNECTEDNESS AND COMMUNITY:

- 300 backpacks were stuffed with school supplies for military children.
- 50+ Military kids received free bikes!
- 230 military family members attended Good Morning America!
- 40 BSF members attended a pre-screening of Disney's Christopher Robin.
- 200 BSF members celebration on the Red Carpet with SEAL Team and CBS in LA.
- 95 military family members were treated to Club level seats with the San Francisco Giants.



*Peoria Playhouse Museum attendees and volunteers.*

# New Initiatives in 2018

## **We Connected Job-Seeking Military Spouses with Employers & Training Partners through Spouseforce**

Spouseforce, our career program, enabled us to place 176 military spouses into careers and reach 4,252 members of Blue Star Families through career-related events. Also worth mentioning, the data collected in the Spouseforce platform is helping Blue Star Families inform policy and legislation surrounding military spouse employment.

## **We Laid the Groundwork for BSF Chapters**

Blue Star Families set the wheels in motion to change our current volunteer-led chapter structure to a funded-chapter structure, with a focus on neighborhoods, for official relaunch in January 2019. Through strategic partnerships with CSX, Boeing, and the Wounded Warrior Project, we established nine fully-funded chapters. Key Performance Indicators were determined for each chapter, and we hired a Senior Chapter Advisor to lead implementation efforts moving forward.

## **We Generated Greater User Engagement with a New Website**

Driving user engagement is key to attracting and retaining the attention of our audience, and ultimately growing our membership numbers. That said, we knew we needed to make necessary improvements to the BSF website to boost engagement and conversions. And the results illustrate the effectiveness of those efforts. In fact, since the beginning of 2018, we saw a 457% increase in website pageviews and a 473% increase in unique website sessions.



# What We Delivered in 2018

## MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

2018 Membership

**126,786**

2017 Membership

**104,638**

## SOCIAL



2018 Facebook (National Page) followers: **81,049**  
(Compared to 77,265 in 2017)



2018 Twitter followers: **29,431**



2018 Instagram followers: **5,227**

## PRESS

**71 pieces of coverage** was generated by Blue Star Families, with a **5.5 billion estimated readership** (Q1-Q4)

Q1

Recruited 2,768 new Blue Star Families members during Sleep Number's #GoodNightMilKid campaign

Q2

Generated more than 10,000 survey respondents—the largest fielding to-date—through a comprehensive digital strategy

Q3

Raised \$500,000 for military families via the Macy's Big Give Back campaign using a comprehensive digital and in-person strategy; Upworthy.com covered the campaign

Q4

Drove 15,303 people to the #GoodNightMilKid sweepstakes and garnered online and TV media attention (including regional NBC, CBS, and ABC affiliates) through the involvement of Dallas Cowboys' own Amari Cooper in one family's reveal

Q4

Raised \$184,000 for military families via Starbucks' *More Than a Cup of Coffee* campaign for Veterans Day through a comprehensive digital and in-person strategy; *The Chicago Tribune* and Thrillist covered the campaign

Q4

Generated more than 681,709 Twitter impressions through a dedicated digital campaign surrounding Michelle Obama's #IAmBecoming book tour; Received coverage from outlets like *IJR*, *Good Morning America*, and *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*



# Blue Star Careers



Placed **385**  
spouses in jobs

## SINCE THE LAUNCH OF SPOUSEFORCE IN 2017, BLUE STAR FAMILIES HAS:

- Placed 385 spouses in jobs (an economic impact of \$27,821,206 to those military families).
- Used the data collected to help inform policy and legislation for the following:
  - Military Spouse Employment Act of 2018.
  - 2018 NDAA that authorized DoD to reimburse spouse licensure.
  - Future NDAA on SOFA review and tech capabilities, as well as federal student loan deferment.
  - Senate Armed Services Committee (particularly input and feedback on military spouse employment).



# Blue Star Chapters

While rebranding our volunteer-led chapters, we conducted a community landscape analysis to determine locations where we could leverage industry presence and military service members, and the following were selected: Washington, D.C.; St. Louis, Missouri; Jacksonville, Florida; Salt Lake City, Utah; Nashville/Clarksville, Tennessee; Chicago, Illinois; Baltimore, Maryland; San Diego, California; and New York City.



**NINE** fully-funded chapters were established



# Blue Star Parks



**905** military family members were engaged on Blue Star Families' Kids to Parks Day through 19 opportunities led by 41 BSF staff and volunteers in 11 communities across the nation

- **82%** of respondents stated that the program made them feel more connected to their family and community
- **88%** agreed that Kids to Parks Day made them more likely to visit another national, state, or local park in the future

*"We love nature and getting out and exploring it as much as we can. Having Blue Star Families sponsor the event to go kayaking was really a wonderful experience that we probably wouldn't have done on our own. Thank you!"*

- Military Family Member



# Blue Star Museums



**690K** military family members visited a participated Blue Star Museum

- **86%** of respondents felt that visiting a Blue Star Museum provided their family an outlet from the stress of military life

*"Being a military spouse is hard, especially when you move more often than most. We had just moved and the Blue Star Museums experience allowed me to get to know and meet new people that I otherwise wouldn't have met."*

- Military Family Member



# Blue Star Caregivers



**290** events hosted by BSF with 1,364 adults in attendance

*"I have missed this so much. With the move, a surgery, and everything else, I forgot myself in all of it. I'm so thankful to know this is always here, even if my life gets turned upside down. It's a comfort knowing that it's at the same place and time each month."*

- Military Family Member



# Blue Star Books



**31,645** books distributed at 260 events

*"These books are my kids' favorite books to read all year."*

- Military Family Member



# Key Influencers

## EXECUTIVE TEAM



**Kathy Roth-Douquet**

CEO, Blue Star Families



**Noeleen Tillman**

COO, Blue Star Families

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Sheila Casey** Chairman, Board of Directors

**Mary Murphy** Chairwoman, Advisory Board

**Whit Cobb**

**Charles Eggleston**

**Todd Finger**

**Mark Henry**

**Koby J. Langley**

**Craig Newmark**

**Jennifer M. O'Connor**

**Diane Linen Powell**

**Nada Stirratt**

## BOARD MEMBER EMERITUS

**Constance J. Milstein** Founding Blue Star Families Board Member Emeritus

**Les Brownlee**

**Steve Hilton**

**Laura Schmiegel**

**Doug Wilson**

# Key Influencers

## ADVISORY BOARD

**Colonel Lorna Mahlock**

**Sam Meek**

**Dorsey Newcomb**

**Missy Perlis**

**Jackie Bolden**

**Robin Kelleher**

**Ward Carroll**

**Chris Bogdan**

**Laura Schmiegel**

**Ingrid Herrera-Yee**

**Donna Hoffmeier**

**Dana Born**

**Ellyn Dunford**

**Doug Belair**

**Edward Meagher**

**Val Nicholas**

**Douglas Rozman**

**Greg Douquet**

**Robin Bronk**

**Jordan Brown**

**Leslie Leggett**

**Sujata Luther**

**Aimee Malnati Stromberg**

**Marcia Nelson**

**Chris Sanborn**

**Jonathan Soros**

**Peter Bloom**

**Rebekah Sanderlin**

**Katie McMaster**

**Dave Stritzinger**

**Holly Page**

**Robert Gordon**

**Mike Meese**

**Caitlin Thompson**

**Malerie Stalker**

**Susan Blumenthal**

**Fred Hannett**

**Emil Hill**

**Steve Hilton**

**Reta Jo Lewis**

**Ron Manderscheid, PhD**

**Doug McCormick**

**Barbara Thompson**

**Tonya Wright**

**Patricia Ochan**

**Adam Rocke**

**Diana Shaw Clark**

**Lou Weisbach**

**Stephen Xenakis**

**Paul Meyer**

**Tracy Thompson**

**Karla Ballard**





# Top Donors

**BAE Systems**

**Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation**

**CarMax, Inc.**

**CJM Foundation**

**Consolidated Edison Company  
of New York, Inc. (conEdison)**

**Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund**

**craigslist Charitable Fund**

**CSX**

**Elizabeth Dole Foundation**

**Facebook**

**George Link, Jr. Foundation**

**Leonardo DRS**

**Lockheed Martin Corporation**

**Macy's, Inc.**

**Mars Wrigley**

**MetLife Foundation**

**National Endowment for  
the Humanities (NEH)**

**Northrop Grumman Corporation**

**Robert R. McCormick Foundation**

**Rosalynn Carter Institute for  
Caregiving (RCI)**

**Schultz Family Foundation**

**Select Comfort Corporation**

**Solidarity Giving**

**Starbucks**

**The Boeing Company**

**The May and Stanley Smith  
Charitable Trust**

**The Safeway Foundation**

**The Walt Disney Company**

**United Concordia**

**UnitedHealth Group**

**USAA**

**Veterans United Foundation**

**Walmart Inc.**

**Wounded Warrior Project**

# Financials

## ASSETS

### CURRENT ASSETS

CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	\$3,295,624
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	\$578,485
PREPAID EXPENSES	\$44,201
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,918,310</b>
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, NET	\$180
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,918,490</b>

## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

### CURRENT LIABILITIES

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & ACCRUED EXPENSES	\$290,317
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES (ALL CURRENT)</b>	<b>\$290,317</b>

### NET ASSETS

WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	\$1,862,200
WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	\$1,765,973
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,628,173</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$3,918,490</b>

# Financials (Cont.)

## EXPENSES

### PROGRAM EXPENSES

COMMUNITIES	\$2,755,379
RESEARCH AND POLICY	\$828,399
TECHNOLOGY ENGAGEMENT	\$393,979
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$3,977,7557
FUNDRAISING	\$535,947
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	\$455,740
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,959,444