



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S MILITARY FAMILIES THROUGH COMMUNITIES

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

As each year proves to bring new opportunities and challenges, there's one thing, in particular, that remains unwavering here at Blue Star Families: our mission to bridge the civil-military divide in communities across the country.

Why is that? We know, not only from research but on-the-ground experience, that while military families are resilient, they are certainly not immune to obstacles or feelings of isolation as a result of frequent moves and time spent apart through deployments and geo-batching, to name a few. Therefore, it's our duty, as Blue Star Neighbors and volunteers, to join forces and serve our military families so they can experience the sense of community necessary to thrive — no matter where they are on their journey.

This past year, we've partnered with a number of committed individuals and organizations to do exactly that. Here's a small snapshot of what we were able to accomplish *together*:

- Our membership numbers grew by over 7,600, a 25% increase over 2018.
- Blue Star Families' volunteers donated 8,047 hours, resulting in a monetary value of \$204,000 to the military community.
- As a direct result of our volunteers' time and dedication to serve, we hosted 1,662 events in CONUS and OCONUS locations, increasing 49.7% over 2018.

- We forged new partnerships with Edy's Ice Cream, Jolly Time Pop Corn, Green Beans Coffee, Campbell's Soup, and Maurices while continuing to build upon past successes alongside organizations such as CSX, Starbucks, Macy's, and Sleep Number.
- As part of the Blue Star Parks program, the Park Passport app engaged 2,929 users, promoting fun learning and exploration opportunities as a family.
- Through the Spouseforce program, a tech-forward online portal geared towards connecting military spouses to employment and resources, we tracked the placement of 550 military spouses into careers, generating an economic impact of \$48,492,179.
- Fielding for Blue Star Families' 10th annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey resulted in the highest response to date (more than 11,000 respondents), which helped capture a thorough representation of the trends and concerns within the military community to be used by decision makers as a vital resource that drives change within programs and policies.

It's worth mentioning that these accomplishments, along with the many more shared within this Annual Report, are only possible with the support of our Blue Star Neighbors. Although, despite making real progress in our efforts to strengthen national security and local communities, there continues to be more work in the days and years ahead.

If you're a current Blue Star Neighbor, thank you for uniting with our organization and remaining steadfast in your commitment to serve those who serve our country. On the other hand, if you're not yet a member of our family, I encourage you to join today.

Arm in arm, we can keep the momentum going. Powerful communities of support between military families and their neighbors can continue to form, and the civil-military divide will inch closer and closer together.

With appreciation,

 *Kathy Roth-Douquet*
Kathy Roth-Douquet
CEO, Blue Star Families

WHO WE ARE

The families of our all-volunteer force 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 \[bluestarfam.org\]\(https://bluestarfam.org\)](https://bluestarfam.org)

CONTENTS

04

RESEARCH

07

POLICY

11

PROGRAMS

18

KEY INFLUENCERS

19

TOP DONORS

20

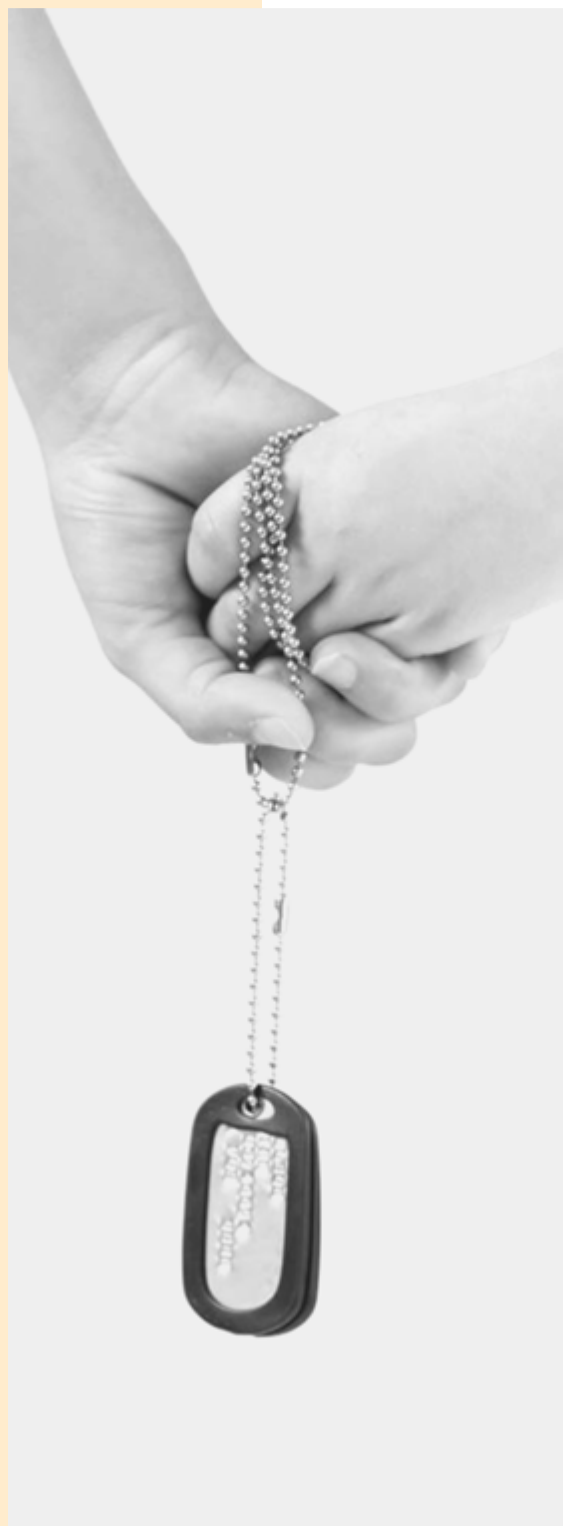
FINANCIALS



RESEARCH

EMPOWERING LOCAL LEADERS TO
EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT MILITARY
AND VETERAN FAMILIES IN THEIR
COMMUNITIES

ANNUAL MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY



Blue Star Families conducted its 10th annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey from May 6 - June 21, 2019.

As in past years, this was a collaborative effort with Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF).

Research Partnership Engagement:

Worked in partnership with USAA and IVMF to develop a preliminary metric of "Military Family Resilience" within the 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey.

11,228

RESPONDENTS

*HIGHEST RESPONSE TO DATE

MILITARY FAMILY STABILITY

Half of service member respondents reported the unavailability of child care negatively impacted their pursuit of employment and/or education

A top barrier to employment for unemployed spouses is service member day-to-day job demands, which make it difficult to balance work and home demands

Military families act to offset the impact of relocation on child(ren)'s education

Nearly half of respondents who have a family member enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) reported they were not able to receive a referral and see a specialist in a reasonable amount of time

Potential impacts on a service member's career is the most common reason for not seeking treatment for active-duty, National Guard, and Reserve family respondents who had seriously considered suicide or attempted suicide in the past year

Three quarters of employed military spouse respondents shared they've experienced some degree of underemployment

VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS

Over one third of respondents who are caring for a child with special needs reported their community does not have all the resources their family needs, including child care and children's education

Military and veteran family respondents who perceived that civilians in their local communities had greater military family lifestyle cultural competence felt a greater sense of belonging to that community

Many National Guard and Reserve family respondents live more than an hour from a military installation, making local resources important

Limited employment options on installation or in the local community is the most commonly cited difficulty among military spouse respondents who have lived and wanted to work overseas at some point in their time connected to the military; over half reported this was the case

The majority of respondents with children enrolled in K-12 education reported their oldest child is thriving in school, has supportive teachers, and has a strong sense of belonging to their school

Many veteran respondents reported they were not well prepared for the transition and the majority indicated their transition was difficult; preparation for and difficulty in transitioning seem to affect female veterans differently and may have long-term impacts on social isolation, financial stability, and navigation of community resources



PROGRAM EVALUATION

Blue Star Families began an 18-month implementation of an internal program evaluation capability, which will be used to assess outcomes for all programs.

In 2019, Blue Star Families developed a theory of change and identified four key organizational outcome goals: increase program sustainability, increase member engagement, increase a sense of belonging (to the local community), and improve military family policies.

These goals were incorporated into a framework for the 2020 of Blue Star Families' chapter metrics and will be further incorporated into individual program logic models in the coming year.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES IMPACT STUDY

Blue Star Families concluded its second year of a three-year pilot program to assess the effectiveness of increasing social capital and sense of belonging among chapter members, particularly in San Diego and New York City.

In its third year (2020), Blue Star Families will build the capacity to conduct an internal program evaluation for all programs and chapter locations.

Final results will be released by February 2021.



POLICY

ENSURING THAT THE UNITED STATES
MAINTAINS A READY, RESILIENT, AND
ADAPTABLE MILITARY FORCE

BLUE STAR FAMILIES IN ADVOCACY

QUARTER 1

- Financial readiness findings from 2017 informed the Federal Trade Commission regarding the implementation of its military credit monitoring rule
- Provided 2018 survey data to the U.S. Air Force regarding spouse licensure reciprocity and the role of schools in community connectedness to incorporate into its strategic basing initiative

QUARTER 2

- Provided MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger with 2016 and 2018 survey data to inform its legislative proposal regarding establishing the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance in the 2020 NDAA; endorsed this proposal thereafter (April 2019)
- Informed Karen Pence on future spouse employment initiatives/policy considerations using military spouse employment findings
- Endorsed legislation to overturn the Feres Doctrine; provided quote for Rep. Jackie Speier's press release
- Provided spouse employment information to Senators Thom Tillis and Kirsten Gillibrand during a closed roundtable session about military family life issues
- Signed onto a coalition letter urging Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act
- Informed the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army of findings related to housing/Base Allowance for Housing (BAH) challenges during a roundtable
- Provided 2018 survey findings to the U.S. Air Force during a roundtable session
- Spoke to Sen. Tim Kaine's office regarding the Jobs and Childcare for Military Families Act of 2019
- Signed onto a letter supporting the passage of Rep. Speier's Non-Discrimination Amendment in the NDAA

BLUE STAR FAMILIES IN ADVOCACY

QUARTER 3

- Provided 2016 and 2018 survey data on military family food insecurity to Kenzi Abou-Sabe (NBC) for use in his article “Why are many of America’s military families going hungry?”
- Shared articles, tweets, and Facebook posts on social media regarding military family food insecurity and the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance (August–October 2019)
- Sent a letter to the chairman and ranking members of HASC and SASC, urging the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance to be included in the final version of the 2020 NDAA
- Signed a joint statement to the House Education and Labor Committee regarding closing the 90/10 loophole

QUARTER 4

- Signed onto the amicus brief to SCOTUS regarding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Signed onto a letter endorsing HR 4625: Protect the GI Bill Act
- Encouraged Rep. Sharice Davids to support HR 2422 to overturn the Feres Doctrine; provided quote
- Provided 2018 top survey findings to acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan during a closed roundtable session



PROGRAMS

WE'RE ALL STRONGER WHEN WE TAKE
CARE OF EACH OTHER



Blue Star Families fosters engagement and leverages partnerships to create recognizable, consistent communities that support the health, social connectivity, and resilience military families need to succeed. Through efforts designed with the unique needs of each local community in mind, Blue Star Families engages military families and community members by delivering solutions to challenges faced by those who serve. Military families depend upon these vital connections as they move from one location to another and look to establish a sense of belonging wherever they live.

1,749

NEW BLUE STAR
NEIGHBORS

8,047

HOURS
DONATED BY
BLUE STAR
FAMILIES

1,662

EVENTS HELD IN
CONUS AND
OCNUS LOCATIONS

\$204K

VALUE OF
VOLUNTEER
HOURS



ENCOURAGING CONNECTEDNESS AND COMMUNITY

Overall 2,600 Blue Star Family Members attended 26 events including A Capital Fourth in Washington D.C., Orlando Magic basketball games, Disney screening events, holiday White House tours and more!

600 *members attended*
**NASA'S INTERNATIONAL OBSERVE
THE MOON NIGHT**

301 *members attended*
**SEVEN PRE-SCREENINGS OF DISNEY
MOVIES**

297 *members attended*
**STARS, STRIPES AND SNOWFLAKES
HOLIDAY PARTY**

2019

38,836

Membership in chapters led by chapter directors

741

Events

2018

31,139

Membership in chapters led by volunteers

562

Events

***Generated a 25% increase in membership**

ESTABLISHMENT OF NINE CHAPTERS:



Baltimore, MD



New York Tri-State area



San Diego, CA



Chicago, IL



Missouri



Tennessee



Jacksonville, FL



National Capital Region



Utah

Strategic partnerships with CSX, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, Boeing, and the Wounded Warrior Project, along with other supporters, made the establishment of nine new staffed and funded chapters possible.

Each chapter is staffed by a local chapter director who serves as a leading advocate and ambassador for military families on the ground, building partnerships and delivering value to both the families and the greater community.

BLUE STAR BOOKS

Blue Star Books remains a core program offering for military families to discover and benefit from the connection created through shared reading experiences. With the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Blue Star Families launched book clubs for families and adult audiences in chapter communities. These four- and six-week programs brought civilian and military families together to discuss themes such as home, service, and friendship, while also offering a chance to create shared experiences, further increasing a shared sense of belonging in the community.



24,756
books distributed
at 207 events



"The START program became a new hub of belonging, in a place where families knew they were welcome anywhere and they were, in our public library!"

***- Kathleen, Youth and Family Services
Librarian in Virginia Beach***

CAREERS

Blue Star Careers supported five new chapters with a part-time careers manager through Spouseforce. Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Maryland, and Utah grew a pipeline during 2019.

As a result, Spouseforce reached 5,567 career-minded military spouses nationwide and generated 266 local chapter career-related events. Within the Spouseforce pipeline, 3,406 military spouses were referred to Onward to Opportunity (O2O) for training and certifications.

In addition, the Grow with Google partnership launched with a special event that brought together 642 registered military spouses. WithYouWithMe joined Blue Star Families' list of training partners, launching a study group with 28 graduates; spouses took advantage of trainings in SQL, cybersecurity, and analytics.

In partnership with JobPath, a new web-based portal was added to the list of career support, allowing participants to have access to additional services such as a job board, industry-specific training, and career assessments.

CAREGIVERS

Caregivers Empowering Caregivers (CEC) builds on-the-ground support networks for military caregivers, connecting them to community resources and self-care opportunities. The programs provide a means to achieve the resiliency needed to succeed in their family roles.



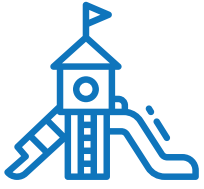
Hosted **14** events with **527** adults and family members in attendance

"Thank you so much for this much needed time away from my duties at home for just a couple hours to concentrate on myself and create something beautiful."

- Wounded Warrior Spouse

Programs like Blue Star Families' CEC are vital to sustaining the long-term burden of caring for wounded, ill, and injured military service members, as well as EFMP children, by creating connections within the communities they call home.

PARKS



2,929 military family members were engaged during 36 Blue Star Parks events throughout the year

The events took place in more than 20 communities and positioned Blue Star Families to secure a Centennial Challenge grant with partner National Park Trust, totalling \$800,000 from the Department of the Interior.

This grant established the ParkPassport app, which allows interactivity in the outdoors as well as funding for ongoing outdoor experiences exclusively for military families.

"That was awesome! I never know how much history was right here in Central Park!"

- Military Kid

MUSEUMS

"I didn't know that the museum had set up a whole indoor park right in my own backyard. Watching my husband and son run around was priceless."

—Military Spouse



Celebrated 10th season of Blue Star Museums with the ongoing support of MetLife Foundation



Increased military family member museum attendance to 746,216 in 2019, a 148% increase since 2010



Expanded partner museums to 2,091 in 2019, a 119% increase since 2010



Hosted 28 Blue Star museums signature events



b

KEY INFLUENCERS AND TOP DONORS

OUR PROGRAMS ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF
COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

KEY INFLUENCERS

EXECUTIVE TEAM



KATHY ROTH-DOUQUET

CEO, Blue Star Families



NOELEEN TILLMAN

COO, Blue Star Families

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Brinna Keilar
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Jennifer M. O'Connor
Nada Stirratt
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Chris Sanborn
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Laura Schmiegel
Diana Shaw Clark
James Sims
Jonathan Soros
Larry Spencer
Malerie Stalker
Dave Stritzinger
Caitlin Thompson
Barbara Thompson
Tracy Thompson
Lou Weisbach
Robert Wilkins
Tonya Wright
Stephen Xenakis



TOP DONORS

American Red Cross
Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA)
Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES)
AT&T
BAE Systems
Blue Shield of California
Boeing
Booz Allen Hamilton
Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation
Campbell Soup Company
CJM Foundation
Cohen Veterans Network
Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. (ConEdison)
Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund
CSX
Cubic Corporation
Delta Dental
Discover Financial Services - West
Disney Worldwide Services, Inc.
Elizabeth Dole Foundation
Fisher House Foundation
George Link, Jr. Foundation
Google
Howard Gilman Foundation
Humana, Inc.
Hunt Companies, Inc.
L3 Technologies
Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund
Leonardo DRS

Lockheed Martin Corporation
Macy's, Inc.
Maurices
May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust
MetLife Foundation
National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)
National Park Trust
Nestle
Northrop Grumman Corporation
OptumServe
Pentagon Federal Credit Union Foundation
Philips North America
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Sandboxx
Schultz Family Foundation
Select Comfort Corporation
Solidarity Giving
Starbucks
Textron
The Safeway Foundation
Tramiel Charitable Trust
United Concordia
UnitedHealth Group
US Chamber of Commerce - Hiring Our Heroes
US Family Health Plan
USAA Corporate Responsibility
Veterans United Foundation
Walmart Foundation
Wounded Warrior Project - Jacksonville HQ

FINANCIALS

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$4,592,519
Accounts Receivable	\$336,885
Donated Assets	\$1,490,112
Prepaid Expenses	\$66,112
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$6,485,628
Property and Equipment, Net	\$2,561
TOTAL ASSETS	\$6,488,189

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$173,987
TOTAL LIABILITIES (ALL CURRENT)	\$173,987

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	\$5,605,287
With Donor Restrictions	\$486,974
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$6,092,261
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$6,488,189

EXPENSES

Communities	\$3,540,922
Research and Policy	\$826,410
Technology Engagement	\$708,042
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$5,075,374
Fundraising	\$619,436
Administrative Expenses	\$490,411
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$6,185,221