



# **2011 Annual Report**





# Letter from the Chairman



Dear Friends,

2011 was marked by extraordinary growth for Blue Star Families, underscoring for us the strong demand among both military families and the larger civilian society for what we offer. Blue Star Families has created a platform through which military family members and their supporters can work directly to address the challenges that face our community during this period of long war, and into the transition home. Over a half a million military family members and millions of civilians participated in our programming this year.

In 2011, we strengthened many of our signature programs, including our annual Military Family Life Style Survey, which is becoming a Washington institution. With the Survey, we bring the insights and experiences of military families directly to law makers, and use the responses to inform our own programming all year long. This Survey continues to be frequently quoted by the White House, the Department of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs office, Congressional Members, journalists, and others. Additionally, the Blue Star Museums program grew to over 1,500 museums nationwide, and continues to attract hundreds of thousands of military families annually to our nation’s museums and cultural centers. BSF also expanded our Books on Bases program and Operation Appreciation letter-writing program, and we were featured in dozens of hearings, conferences, and panels, with Congress, think tanks, and other non-profits.

In 2011, we launched some important new programs, as well. Our Operation Honor Card program was launched by the First Lady when it launched in April 2011. In partnership with the First Lady’s Joining Forces Initiative, with the American Red Cross, Service Nation, and the Points of Light Institute, Operation Honor Card has accepted pledges of over 20 million hours of community service nation-wide, in honor of the service of military people. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (the former Prince William and Kate Middleton) graced an Honor Card event in July.

Our suicide-prevention PSA series launched in 2011, filmed at the Oscars. The series grew from an idea by one of our members, and in partnership with The Creative Coalition, we secured participation of dozens of celebrities. This series helped spur the current broader awareness of the issue of service member and family suicide. These PSAs played on network and cable television, on airline flights and on taxicab screens, at baseball games and in military and veteran related sites. Blue Star Families was named a Champion of Change by the White House for this groundbreaking series.

We are also proud to continue to be a leader in social media for military families. We teamed up with Facebook to draft the Social Media Guide for Military Families, launched in November 2011, and downloaded by tens of thousands of military families.

In 2011, Blue Star Families continued its growth towards becoming a firmly established institution. Our core mission remains constant: to allow family members around the country to make a difference; and to reach out to the larger community, forming powerful partnerships that both strengthen military families and strengthen our country.

Thank you for taking the time to look through this 2011 annual report of Blue Star Families. To those who support us, and to all who serve, in all the ways there are to serve, we say thank you.

Kathy Roth-Douquet  
Chief Executive Officer





# About Blue Star Families



## Our Story...Is Military Families Supporting Each Other



Blue Star Families was formed in December of 2008 by a group of military spouses to raise the awareness of the challenges of military family life within our civilian communities and leaders. BSF has grown to include spouses and families from all services and all walks of life, including National Guard and Reserve, as well as veterans and civilians who strongly support us.

There are currently millions of active duty, Reserve and National Guard service members serving our country. Each of them leaves behind a family when they deploy – a family that participates in the service member’s sacrifice but is often overlooked by government and civilian organizations. And because we in military service make up only one percent of the country’s total population, most Americans do not have first-hand knowledge of the military experience.

## Our Mission...Is to Support, Connect and Empower Military Families

Blue Star Families is a nonprofit organization passionately dedicated to helping military families across America. Our mission is simple: to support, connect and empower military families to each other, to their communities and to people in power. To do so, we work directly with the Department of Defense and senior members of our local, state and federal governments - including the Senate, Congress and the White House - to bring military families’ most important issues to light. Blue Star Families also works with other nonprofits and community advocates to develop and offer programs that help military families; from children’s literacy initiatives to programs that help communicate the public’s often-unexpressed appreciation for everything military families do every day.





## Our History

Blue Star Families was formed in 2008 by a group of military spouses eager not just to support others in the community, but to empower military families everywhere to speak. The organization struck a chord with military families, quickly growing to more than 26,000 members in 2011. Blue Star Families also provides civilian and military leadership, as well as elected officials on a national and local level, with unfiltered feedback from military families. Through outreach among leading nonprofits, Blue Star Families has become the go-to service organization for national and local nonprofits seeking to connect the service they provide to military families.



## Support.

Blue Star Families and our worldwide membership support military families of all branches, ranks and backgrounds through the unique challenges of military service. BSF and our local chapters also reach out to the larger civilian population to support military families.

## Connect.

Through our local chapters and our online community, Blue Star Families connects military families locally and internationally. Our outreach into the civilian community also helps bridge the gap between military and civilian life and connect families together.

## Empower.

With our wide array of resources, research into military family life and partner organizations, Blue Star Families empowers military families to create the best personal and family life possible.





# 2011 Highlights



## Operation Honor Cards

In 2011, Blue Star Families launched Operation Honor Cards (OHC) to honor the service of our nation's military and their families, and to encourage the civilian community to be more involved in military family issues. Operation Honor Cards was inspired by Joining Forces, an initiative by the First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden to garner widespread support for military families.



More than **fourteen million hours** of community service were pledged in honor of military families, veterans, and service members in 2011, including the personal pledges of First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden at an OHC event for military families at the NASCAR finals in Miami, Florida. In our most visible event of the year, Blue Star Families teamed up with ServiceNation: Mission Serve to bring an Operation Honor Cards event to a massive hiring fair and service event with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at Sony Studios in Los Angeles.

The program continues to grow through a new partnership between BSF, the Points of Light Institute, the American Red Cross, and Service Nation.



## Social Media Guide for Military Families

In 2011, Blue Star Families continued to break social media ground, participating in the first White House Twitter Town Hall and teaming up with **Facebook** to draft the **Social Media Guide for Military Families**. Since the launch in November of 2011, tens of thousands of military families have downloaded the groundbreaking guide, firmly establishing Blue Star Families as the go-to organization for social media and military families.





## Blue Star Museums

In partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Museums was launched in 2010. This national program grew from over 950 participating museums in the first year, to more than 1,500 in 2011, an increase of over 60%. An estimated 350,000 military family members visited a Blue Star Museum in 2011, enjoying free admission from Memorial Day through Labor Day.



## Creativity Contest

In this second year, participation in the children's Creativity Contest increased by 150% and Blue Star Museums and the creativity contest were featured in hundreds of media outlets across the country. Any military child who had visited a Blue Star Museum during the summer could enter by drawing a picture and writing a description of the visit. BSF awarded \$1,600.00 in U.S. savings bonds to the MilKid winners.



## Books on Bases



Launched in 2009, Blue Star Families' Books on Bases program works with sponsors to bring the healing power of books to military children and their schools, positively impacting their lives through reading. With the generosity of partners such as Random House, BAE Systems, First Book, Sleeping Bear and Operation Paperback, Blue Star Families donates books to military children, base libraries, Department of Defense schools and military-impacted public schools.



In 2011, Books on Bases touched more than 64,000 military children, through 38 events across the country and 34,000 books donated to military children and military impacted schools and libraries.



## Community Blueprint

In 2011, the Community Blueprint began. The program is the major collaborative project between veterans service organizations, military family groups, and community organizations resulting from the 2010 White Oak conference "America Joins Forces For Military Families," conceived and convened by BSF.

Seventy-five organizations helped design and endorsed the blueprint, now housed at The Points of Light Institute.

BSF continues to serve as a key advisor to the project.





## Operation Appreciation



Operation Appreciation (OpApp) is a program that aims straight for the hearts and minds of our troops and their families, allowing volunteers to make a personal connection with those who sacrifice so much for our country. OpApp supports Blue Star Families' goal to connect the military and civilian communities and to offer ways for civilians to show their support for military families.

OpApp encourages and organizes the writing of letters to military families, those in current service and veterans. The writer can choose to write a card to the parent, spouse or child of a military member or to a veteran of the armed services. OpApp effectively bridges the gap between the civilian and military communities that otherwise leaves families feeling isolated. By offering direct communication of individual's feelings and gratitude, OpApp does not just support, it uplifts.

In 2011, OpApp distributed more than 12,000 letters of thanks to military family members, a 240% increase over 2010.

## Military Family Suicide Prevention PSAs



Blue Star Families' series of Military Family Suicide Prevention PSA's entitled "I don't know what it's like" launched in 2011. The series idea came from an editorial written by a BSF member asking, "Where is the 'It Gets Better' campaign for military suicides?"

Working with advisory board member Robin Bronk from The Creative Coalition, the PSA's became a reality, featuring actors like **Cher**, **Minnie Driver**, and Tim Daly. The PSA's launched in April with a star studded event and dramatic reading at the American Red Cross. The PSA's have aired on ABC, A&E, CBS, History Channel, International History Channel, Lifetime, and Discovery's Military Channel. The PSA's also appeared on Virgin America flights and taxicab screens, at Milwaukee Brewers and Nationals baseball games, as well as dozens of websites, and have been viewed by millions.

**Blue Star Families was named a Champion of Change by the White House for this groundbreaking series.**





## Supporting. Connecting. Empowering.



Blue Star Families grew to more than **26,000 members** by the end of 2011. We have an even greater reach through social media, with the sharing of more than 14,000 Facebook fans and Twitter followers and over 11,200 visits per month to our website and blog in this year. At the end of 2011, BSF had 16 chapters and representation on the East and West coasts as well as the Midwest and volunteers involved in more than 50 events nationwide. Through newsletters, social media, nationwide events, programs, media coverage, the new BSF MembersConnect site for volunteers, and the visibility of the national staff, **Blue Star Families touched millions of people in 2011.** Blue Star Families continues to add innovative and compelling programs, such as our star-studded Military

Family Suicide Awareness PSA series and Operation Honor Cards, and to grow our existing programs.

Blue Star Families has been working to **engage and connect our volunteers** through the new MembersConnect website created for chapter directors, volunteers, and program managers to interact and share programs, forms and information. Our volunteers were involved in more than 50 events in 2011, including our annual Holiday Party at Walter Reed for the families of wounded warriors. This year, more than 200 volunteers and families participated in the event.

Blue Star Families' **media coverage** also continued to grow with interviews and mentions in hundreds of media outlets, including CNN, *People Magazine*, MSNBC, NPR, Lifetime, Fox News, PBS, and *The New York Times*. BSF also worked with the *Washington Post* to create a bi-weekly live chat dedicated to military family issues on [WashingtonPost.com](http://WashingtonPost.com). Blue Star Families continues to regularly place essays in military-oriented outlets such as the Department of Defense Family Matters Blog, [military.com](http://military.com), the Veterans Administration blog, and *Military Spouse Magazine*.



Blue Star Families has also increased its reach through the visibility and expertise of the national staff. BSF has been featured in dozens of hearings, conferences and panels, such as the Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Personnel, DoD's "Forging the Partnership," and Pew Research Center's "War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era." BSF also worked closely with the House and Senate Military Family Caucuses and co-hosted the Center for Naval Analysis' child centric symposium, "Workshop on the Scientific Study of Military Children." This first ever conference of its kind brought together military and child developmental health experts to look at the challenges facing our children scientifically and holistically, and to create a research agenda. BSF will co-host the conference again in 2012.





# Board of Directors



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CEO & BSF Director  
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# 2011 Top Donors



It's a well known fact that a fulfilling military family lifestyle is not possible without the encouragement, support and resources provided by both other military families and the many organizations devoted to supporting us. The same can be said for the success of Blue Star Families. BSF is proud to be partnered with great organizations united to support military families, and is appreciative of the generous contributions from the following companies, foundations, organizations and individuals.



## \$25,000 and Above

**A&E Television Networks**

**BAE Systems**

**Blue Shield of California Foundation**

**BNY Mellon**

**CJM Foundation**

**Express Scripts**

**George Link Foundation**

**Health Net**

**History Channel**

**Jack and Helen Tramiel**

**Leichtag Family Foundation**

**Met Life**

**TriWest Healthcare Alliance**





# 2011 Statement of Financial Position



## Assets

### Current assets

Cash and cash equivalent	\$ 363,607
Accounts receivable	6,427
Undistributed books	158,228
Prepaid expenses	<u>3,000</u>
	<b>\$ 531,262</b>

## Liabilities and Net Assets

### Current liabilities

Accounts payable	\$ 969
Accrued compensation and payroll taxes	<u>26,829</u>

**Total liabilities (all current)** 27,798

### Net assets

Unrestricted (deficit)	(42,714)
Temporarily restricted	<u>546,178</u>

**Total net assets** \$ 531,262







# Support Blue Star Families



2011 has been a year of huge growth for Blue Star Families. In a short period of time, BSF has grown to touch the lives of millions of people across the U.S. At the same time, our programs have grown in depth and reach with the support of our network of dedicated volunteers. The generosity of individuals, foundations and corporate partnerships also worked to effect real change for military families.



In the years to come, Blue Star Families will embark on an aggressive plan to grow our membership around the country. We will also use innovative partnerships with corporate and nonprofit organizations to bring events and programs to more military families, including more National Guard and Reserve families. Blue Star Families will also work to empower military families as volunteers and professionals, using the potential of military family networks to expand the reach of our membership and programs.



## Contact Blue Star Families

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