

Blue Star Families
2013 Annual Report



Connect. Strengthen. Lead.



Dear Friends,

Our fourth year saw the continued expansion of Blue Star Families into new communities and with new programs. As the largest chapter-based organization for military families, we continued to expand our reach in 2013.

Our service members are situated all over the world and their families are with them in many of those locations. The military family also spreads across all branches from active duty to National Guard and Reserves to veterans. They represent countless deployments, injuries, and moves. They encounter the same issues that impact our non-military neighbors also experience: job loss, financial stress.

The mission of Blue Star Families to connect communities and foster leadership to strengthen military families is apparent throughout our programs and the valiant efforts of the hundreds of volunteers that support the organization every day. We would not be able to continue to boast about growth without volunteer and member support. This year, we counted 43 chapters including new branches in Osan, the United Kingdom and across the United States and count over 70,000 members worldwide.

Blue Star Families has numerous programs in place to help military families not only cope but thrive. Over 2,000 museums across the country joined Blue Star Museums this year, offering free admission to military families between Memorial Day and Labor Day. More than 34,000 books were distributed to military kids across the country through the Books on Bases program.

New in 2013, caregivers were presented a resource to connect with other caregivers and share their experiences via a new program. Caregivers Empowering Caregivers offers workshops across the country to support caregivers and the stresses they may face with their new life.

Our annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey continued to bring to light the concerns military families have such as military pay/benefits, changes in retirement benefits and spouse employment. In addition to being widely regarded as the gold standard among military family surveys, the annual assessment was cited by First Lady Michelle Obama in TIME Magazine.

Blue Star Careers was nominated and won awards for "innovative programming to improve military quality of life," including receipt of a grant from Newman's Own.

Volunteerism is a key component of Blue Star Families and in 2013, more than 26 million volunteer hours were pledged in honor of our nation's military and their families through Operation Honor Corps.

This is just sample of the incredible accomplishments made by Blue Star Families in 2013. We look forward to sharing our story with you in the coming pages. Thank you for your interest in our organization. We hope to see you soon at a Blue Star Families event.

Best regards,

Kathy Roth-Douquet

Blue Star Families connects communities and fosters leadership, strengthening military families and our nation.

We Are Military Families Supporting One Other

A group of military spouses formed Blue Star Families in 2009 to raise awareness with leaders and civilian communities about the challenges of military family life. In those four short years, BSF has expanded to welcome spouses and families from all branches of service, past and present, including National Guard and Reserve, as well as civilians who strongly support us.

Millions of active duty, National Guard and Reserve members currently serve our country, and millions of veterans served before them. Each service member has a family, including parents, siblings, partners, children and friends who participate in the service member's sacrifice, yet families often are left behind to carry on without their loved one present or without the support of government and civilian organizations.

America's military makes up less than one percent of the total population therefore most citizens do not have a thorough understanding of military life and culture. Blue Star Families connects America to the military and supports military families through a chapter-based approach, allowing us to expand our support arm across continents.



We Are Connecting, Strengthening, and Leading

As a whole, Blue Star Families is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping American military families across the globe and there are many instrumental layers beneath the surface, which enable BSF to be the flourishing organization it is today. At the heart of the organization are BSF's volunteers and staff living on or near military bases, interacting with their communities, bringing BSF's goals to fruition. With a mission to connect communities and foster leadership to strengthen military families and our nation, these dedicated people host interactive and issue-based programs and events, morale-boosting activities and children's literacy initiatives that communicate the public's often-unexpressed appreciation for everything military families do every day.

Everyone is instrumental to our success from Congress and the White House to members of state and local governments to friends and neighbors. We rely on the hard work and dedication of our staff and volunteers across the country and beyond our borders to bring military families' most important issues to light.

Our History

During the height of the war in 2008, our forces were heavily engaged in combat or supporting our troops. Unfortunately, there was little being done at home for our military families. That's when a group of military spouses gathered to discuss how to not only empower military families everywhere to speak but to engage our civilian community with their local military families. Blue Star Families was born and the organization has since grown to 45 chapters around the world and more than 70,000 members in 2013. 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.



Connect.

Through our local chapters and our vibrant 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, bringing families together and connecting America to our military.

Strengthen.

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. Educating military caregivers, military families reintegrating, and those facing the daily challenges of military life, strengthens military families and our nation.

Lead.

Fostering leadership among our members is one of the principles of Blue Star Families. We have a network of volunteers across the globe that spend countless hours working with Congress and the White House or local community organizations to increase understanding of the unique challenges of military service.

Military Family Lifestyle Survey

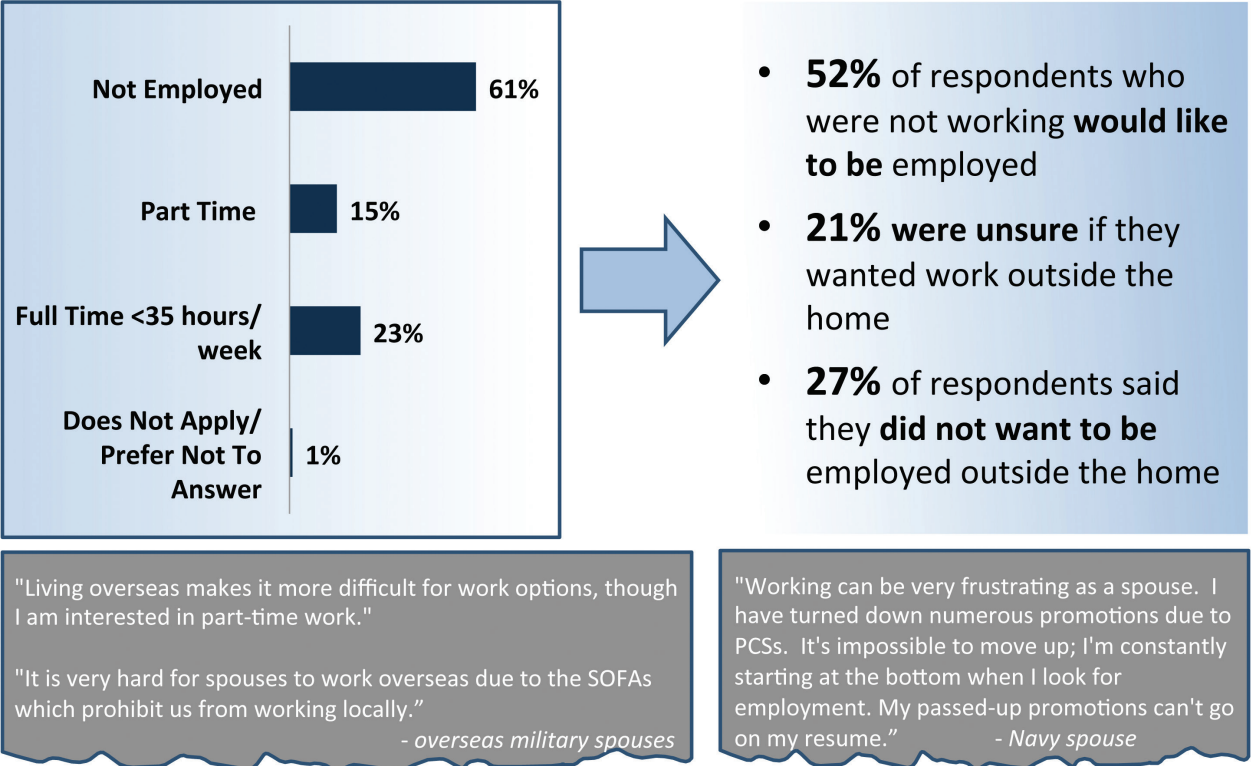
Widely regarded as the gold standard among military family surveys, the 2013 Military Family Lifestyle Survey drew over 5,100 participants, and once again revealed military families’ top and most pressing concerns. This valuable insight into the daily lives of our military families, friends and caregivers revealed military pay/benefits, changes in retirement benefits, and spouse employment opportunities continue to be top issues. Additionally, the survey found many families were concerned about the impacts of deployment on their children, and the impact of the military lifestyle on children's educational opportunities. Leveraging these results and continuing to build upon past survey findings, BSF explored ways to directly address the issues cited through focused programs.

For example, the 2013 survey showed that 68% of spouses felt that being a military spouse had a negative impact on their ability to pursue a career. Blue Star Careers addresses this by offering a wide range of programs designed to make the military life work for spouses, including Blue Star Jobs, an online job-matching database where military spouses can find one-time jobs or short-term contract projects that allow them to work remotely and within their unique schedule constraints. This year’s survey also continued to track how military families support each other, seek out resources, and stay connected to their communities and to their service members, all of which align with Blue Star Families’ vision.

Of note, the Military Family Lifestyle Survey was quoted by First Lady Michelle Obama in the December 9, 2013, issue of Time Magazine.

Sixty-one percent of military spouses were not currently employed, and of those, 52% wanted to be. Eighty percent cited job market alignment as a reason for not working.

Financial Security: Spouse Employment Outside of the Home



Blue Star Museums

In partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, Joining Forces, the MetLife Foundation and museums across the country, this national program has exploded from just 950 participating museums in the first year, to 2,175 participating museums around the country in 2013. More than 700,000 military family members visited a Blue Star Museum, enjoying free admission from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

From every corner of the nation, Blue Star Museums has flung open the doors to history, art, science, music, architecture and literature –influencing perhaps the next great jazz musician, painter or writer. The gift of the arts is one that connects all of us, and thanks to Blue Star Museums, military families can find respite in the halls of museums and inspiration from the great works of art. We applaud the arts community for extending this opportunity to our families and look forward to each summer.

The Way Cool Creativity Contest awards way cool prizes like cameras, e-readers and savings bonds to children ages 6-17, who submit artwork inspired by a Blue Star Museum visit. Submissions have included glass pieces, a temporary tattoo, YouTube videos, and drawings.

Since the contest began, Blue Star Museums and the unique projects created by talented military kids have been featured in hundreds of media outlets across the country.

And each year, military kids impress us, not only with their designs but also their enduring positive attitudes and palpable excitement about Blue Star Museums.

"I've personally experienced the results of this organization in their participation of my family readiness events- Books on Bases & Operation Appreciation. Also, my family will be attending museums for the Blue Star Museums program which we look forward to every year. No matter which duty station the Marine Corps takes us to, there is a museum that welcomes us through this program." Navy spouse, Bianca Martinez





Blue Star Theatres

When Blue Star Theatres debuted in September 2012, it was immediately recognized by First Lady Michelle Obama who said in a letter, "By participating in the Blue Star Theatres initiative, fifty-five theatres from across our country have dedicated themselves to honoring and supporting our military families, and I am inspired by their commitment to those who sacrifice so much for our Nation."

Thanks to our partners at the Theatre Communications Group with leadership support from the MetLife Foundation, Blue Star Theatres grew to 105 theatres offering special programming or discounted tickets for active duty personnel, veterans and their families in 2013.

Books on Bases

Launched in 2009, Blue Star Families' Books on Bases program brings the power of books to military children and their schools, positively impacting their lives through reading. Generous partners and sponsors including The Walt Disney Company, Random House, BAE Systems, First Book, Sleeping Bear and Operation Paperback, donate books to military children, base libraries, Department of Defense schools and military-impacted public schools. In 2013, we distributed 34,786 books, impacting more than 116,200 military children. In 2013, BSF hosted four tent-pole events supported by Disney in California, Hawaii, Virginia, and Florida. More than 1,000 military kids and families attended the special Disney Books on Bases events, distributing over 25,000 Disney books around the world.

Through Books on Bases, celebrity readers, base leadership, teachers and parents celebrated our milkids as they journeyed through stories and tales to fanciful places and – just for a moment – to a world where camouflage and deployments are nonexistent.



"As an educator I understand the value of books and the importance of reading.

Reading can help children travel to new places...

especially when things at

home can be challenging due to deployments, PCS moves, and changing schools."

– Marine Corps spouse Nicole Webb

White Oak Conference

Blue Star Families hosted the America Joins Forces with Military Families Summit Series at the White Oak Conference Center in Jacksonville, Florida once again in 2013. Over 55 participants from key military family and government organizations attended both Summits. Attendees included representatives from the White House, The American Red Cross, United Service Organizations (USO), Service Nation, Veterans Innovation Center, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council and the Senate Armed Services Committee, The Howard Gilman Foundation and others. Participants discussed innovative public-private strategies to meet the needs of military families. Through the White Oak Summit Series, these diverse entities discuss opportunities for joint initiatives and a common approach to support military families and transitioning veterans in a productive and collaborative environment. Contributions from the conference led to the First Lady's Joining Forces Initiative, the Military Community Blueprint Initiative now housed at Points of Light and championed by 40 non-profits, the Secretary of Defense roundtable meetings with nonprofits, preliminary work on a formal collaborative body for nonprofits in the military family field, and countless collaborations between the nonprofit participants.

MilKidz Club

The MilKidz Club, allows our military children to take advantage of unique programming, events and platforms to share their experiences and perspectives. This club includes social, volunteer, educational, and support opportunities for the children of all ranks and branches of military—including Guard and Reserve. In 2013, the MilKidz Club saw large growth, creating seven new clubs. Additionally, the MilKidz Club strengthened existing relationships: The Sierra Club partnership of the Celebration of the Military Child Outdoors grew from one event in 2012 to four events in 2013; The National Wildlife Federation contributed snacks and giveaways for the Fort Belvoir MilKidz Club launch; the Fort Belvoir USO provided a space for monthly meetings, while the USO Ticketline promoted the MilKidz Club; DC MilKidz Club members attended the Red Cross Holiday Mail for Heroes event; D.C. United sent their mascot, Talon, to the Ft. Belvoir event, and plans to involve members in their 2014 plans. Within the Blue Star Families programs, the MilKidz Club strengthened the connection with the Books on Bases program by hosting BoB events to recruit new members.



Caregivers Empowering Caregivers

Launching in September 2013, Caregivers Empowering Caregivers is a fully-functioning network forum which provides the resources, support and tools caregivers need to adjust to their new life that may involve unexpected dedication, time and energy in caring for the service member's physical and invisible wounds of war – all while tending to the day to day tasks at home and work.

The CEC program offers workshops at several locations across the country. Seven workshop locations have been identified for 2013-14. More than 50 Blue Star Families Chapters around the world will participate in an online awareness session. During these casual get-togethers, qualified caregiving experts and BSF staff members speak with caregivers, sharing tips, ideas and offering a sounding board to express concerns or challenges.

A generous partnership with Veterans United Foundation, the charitable arm of Veterans United Home Loans, makes this program possible.

Douglas Bryant is not your typical caregiver. An Army veteran, Bryant cares for his Army veteran sister Diane, who served her country for 22 years, and his mother who has Alzheimer's. Bryant attended the Caregivers Empowering Caregivers workshop in Norfolk and lauded the camaraderie among caregivers and the expertise of leaders Pamela Stokes Eggleston and Linda Kreter, Founder of VeteranCaregiver.com, calling it "the best three hours I've spent in a while."

Operation Honor Corps

Blue Star Families' Operation Honor Corps is a major avenue for bringing the civilian and military communities together, and for civilians to express their appreciation for service members and their families. Launched in 2011, Operation Honor Corps encompasses Operation Honor Cards, enabling both large organizations and individuals to make significant pledges of volunteer service.

By the end of 2013, Operation Honor Corps (OHC) had received pledges of over twenty-six million volunteer service hours dedicated in honor of our nation's military and their families. Inspired by Joining Forces, an initiative by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden to garner widespread support for military families, this powerful program connects civilians and military families and betters our nation through service.

In 2013, OHC continued to engage civilians in the military family and veteran community. OHC mobilized volunteers with Honor Flight to welcome veterans at the World War II Memorial, organized a MilKidz Service Project during DC Beautification Day, and coordinated a 5,000 letter Operation Appreciation campaign with the non-profit RSVP. OHC launched another letter writing campaign for Veteran's Day, which culminated in handing out letters to WWII Veterans at an Honor Flight volunteer event.

Operation Appreciation (OpApp) encourages volunteers to make a personal connection with those who sacrifice so much for our country through the written word. Civilians write letters to military families, service members and veterans to say thanks. It's a personal and touching way to recognize the challenge that modern milfams face today. In 2013, over 2,500 letters to the military community were distributed; bridging the gap that 98% of service members feel exists between the military and civilian populations.



Blue Star Careers

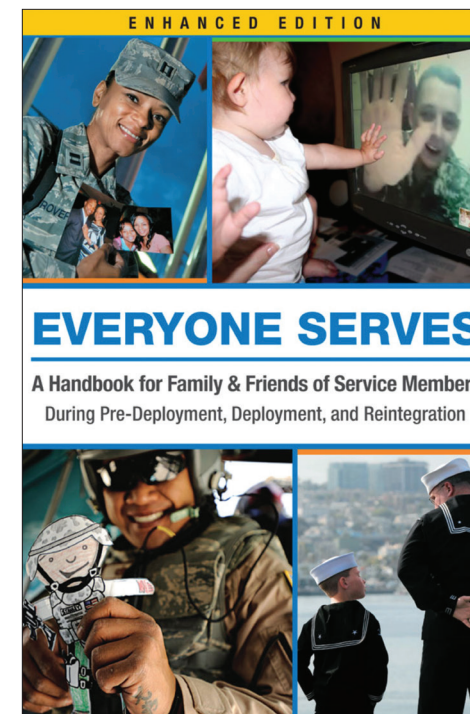
Debuting in early 2013, Blue Star Careers offers military spouses a variety of education and employment services to help further their career potential. Within BSC is the Military Spouse Resume Toolkit, which addresses the unique challenges faced by military spouses and how to tackle those issues in the job search and during employment. Thanks to a partnership between Blue Star Families, the US Chamber of Commerce's Hiring our Heroes Military Spouse Career Fair Program and Toyota, the Blue Star Spouse Employment Toolkit is also now part of the new CareerSpark online resume tool for military spouses.

Blue Star Jobs, a partnership with oDesk, the world's largest online workplace, allows members to search a database of employment opportunities with short-term contracts or one-time jobs. Nearly 700 members joined oDesk via Blue Star Jobs in seven short months.

"Blue Star Families has provided a sense of community for me that I relied heavily upon," said Amber Turner, Air Force spouse. "We are not stationed near an installation and I was still able to communicate and network with other military spouses and families." For Turner, she capitalized on an opportunity to do something she had wanted to do for a long time – start her own business. She used different resources within Blue Star Careers, including Blue Star Entrepreneurs, as a learning tool and connected with other military spouse entrepreneurs to build relationships. "The organization has really helped me stay motivated and inspired with my entrepreneurial endeavors," said Turner. "Blue Star Entrepreneurs also helped me gain the confidence to pursue my passion in multimedia, including hosting and reporting."

Blue Star Careers also includes networking and educational opportunities to help expand the marketability of members as well as guides to help military family entrepreneurs.

This program received a Newman's Own Award and grant in recognition of "Blue Star Jobs' innovative programming to improve military quality of life." Blue Star Careers was nominated for a Classy Award, the largest social impact awards ceremony in the U.S, and was a finalist in the competition. In a Huffington Post Impact blog, Craig Newmark, founder of Craigslist, also featured Blue Star Careers as a "best practice" example of addressing spouse unemployment. More than 3,000 people downloaded the expanded 4th edition of the Blue Star Spouse Employment Toolkit and the link was widely shared by the end of 2013.



Everyone Serves

In June of 2013, Blue Star Families officially launched Everyone Serves: A Handbook for Family & Friends of Service Members During Pre-deployment, Deployment, and Reintegration with the support of Vulcan Productions, NBC Publishing, Hunt Development, Health Net Federal Services, and the Wounded Warrior Project. The eBook features information for caregivers and their families, as well as families transitioning from active duty to civilian life. Complimenting the eBook is a micro-website where families can download the book or access the information and resources online at <http://www.everyoneservesbook.com/>.

Connecting communities and fostering leadership, strengthening military families and our nation.

Blue Star Families grew to more than 70,000 members by the end of 2013, while our chapters and volunteers held more than 200 events across the country. Blue Star Families' online and social media strategy resulted in a staggering 70% engagement growth. Blue Star Families continues to lead military family nonprofits in the online space, engaging members and building community through early adoption of social media platforms.

Because of this approach, Blue Star Families' website engagement grew nearly 50% and our Facebook and Twitter followers grew more than 70%. Our online reach continues to grow exponentially, reaching and educating millions of Americans in 2013. Blue Star Families continues to add innovative and compelling strategies and grow our existing programs. This year, more than 175 volunteers participated in events and membership has increased rapidly due to more effective engagement.

Blue Star Families was widely featured in the media in 2013. Outlets featuring BSF and its programs and resources include NBC, CNN, NPR, Fox News, MSNBC, the Washington Post and The New York Times. Blue Star Families continues to regularly place essays in military-oriented outlets such as the Department of Defense Family Matters Blog, Military.com, the Veterans Administration blog, and Military Spouse Magazine.

Blue Star Families continues to increase 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 Points of Light Institute, Facebook Live, the National Conference on Volunteerism, the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission public hearing, the Military.com Spouse Summit, The Aspen Institute's Vets Initiative Summit, and the Military Spouse Employment partnership annual meeting, among many others.

"Blue Star Families is the most dynamic service organization I have ever known. This is one big family taking care of each other. Their sense of purpose and dedication to supporting each other is exemplary. They have done more in less time with the least amount of resources than any organization I am aware of. From "Books on Base" to Suicide Prevention Education and all of their other programs they have been laser focused on identifying real needs within the military family community, identifying real solutions that come from within the community and most importantly quickly and effectively deploying the solutions." –Guidestar Review



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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 fellow 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 strong organizations and is appreciative of the generous contributions from the following companies, foundations, organizations and individuals.

\$25,000 and Above

- BAE Systems
- Be the Change, Inc.
- CJM Foundation
- Coca-Cola
- Facebook
- George Link Foundation
- The Howard Gilman Foundation
- Hunt Companies
- JPMorgan Chase
- The Met Life Foundation
- Rent-A-Center
- Sierra Club Foundation
- United HealthCare and Veterans Services, Inc.
- US Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- USAA
- Veterans United Foundation
- The Walt Disney Company

Statement of
Financial Position

Assets

Current Assets

Cash & cash equivalent	\$612,661
Accounts receivable	\$100
Undistributed books	\$86,022
Prepaid expenses	\$75,664
	\$774,447
Property and equipment, net	\$56,963
Total Assets	\$831,410

Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$3,252
Accrued compensation and payroll taxes	\$59,643
Total Liabilities (all current)	\$62,895

Net assets

Unrestricted (deficit)	(\$465,620)
Temporarily restricted	\$1,234,135
Total net assets	\$768,515