

2015 BLUE STAR FAMILIES ANNUAL REPORT



BRIDGING THE GAP FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



BLUE STAR FAMILIES



A LETTER FROM THE CEO



Dear Friends,

In February 2015 Blue Star Families marked our 5th anniversary, celebrating alongside key stakeholders including Members of Congress and the Administration, Department of Defense senior leaders, corporate leaders, and military families. Emceed by Mr. Bob Woodruff, with tributes from First Lady Michelle Obama, Olympic Gold Medalist Gabby Douglas, and “TV Presidents” Tony Goldwyn, Alfre Woodard, and Keith Carradine, guests enjoyed five-star dining from local celebrity chefs, who paired with military chefs to demonstrate a real military/civilian partnership. It couldn’t have been a more memorable evening, and sparked the beginning of what will now be an annual event on the Washington D.C. calendar.

From our organization’s outset five years ago, the annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey has provided us with the data to ensure the initiatives we develop and programs we provide truly make an impact in the lives of military families. Outside of our own organization, the survey continues to garner increased demand nationally, as one of the most important resources for understanding the current state of the military family community.

Throughout 2015, BSF’s volunteer leaders hosted 200 events – more than one event every two days. These events serve as a key strategy for growing and engaging our local membership and represent the broadest-reaching footprint amongst military service organizations serving military families. Events ranged from the popular **Books on Bases** program for military kids, to **Networks Live!** for spouses seeking networking and employment support and **Caregiver Workshops** for those faced with the burden of caring for a returned warrior.

This year BSF developed a robust collective impact model and made significant progress in implementing BSF’s pilot community: San Diego. Over the next three to five years, BSF will scale this model to key military communities globally, beginning in Ft Carson CO, Joint Base Lewis-McChord WA, San Antonio TX, Jacksonville FL and Ft Bragg NC.

All of this has been developed, within five short years, because a group of military spouses recognized unmet needs in our community and did something to change that. Since that decision, BSF has made great strides in moving the needle on military family community support. We will continue to use our data and experience on the ground to determine how to be effective for military families, identify and address barriers to success, and create new partnerships to help with outreach and implementation.

If you are one of thousands of Blue Star Neighbors who have joined us on our journey, thank you. If you have not yet had an opportunity to join us, please know there is a place for everyone in our Blue Star Family.

Best regards,

Kathy Roth-Douquet
CEO

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01

MISSION & IMPACT

BLUE STAR FAMILIES CONNECTS COMMUNITIES AND FOSTERS LEADERSHIP, STRENGTHENING MILITARY FAMILIES AND OUR NATION.

OUR MISSION

We Are Military Families Supporting One Other

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. That's where Blue Star Families steps in to connect America to the military and support military families.

Created in 2009 by military spouses determined to empower military families everywhere to speak as well as engage our civilian community with their local military families, Blue Star Families (BSF) is now the largest and fastest growing chapter-based military family engagement organization in the country. We are a demand-driven organization, forging extraordinary partnerships and serving 1.5 million military family members annually through innovative programs and resources with 47 chapters at home and overseas.

BSF welcomes spouses and families from all branches of service, past and present, including National Guard and Reserve, as well as civilians who strongly support their military communities.

OUR IMPACT

1.5m MILITARY FAMILIES REACHED

32k NUMBER OF BOOKS DISTRIBUTED TO MILITARY CHILDREN

895k MILITARY FAMILY MEMBERS VISITED A BLUE STAR MUSEUM

\$7m BENEFITS DISTRIBUTED TO OUR MEMBERS

200 EXCLUSIVE MEMBER EVENTS PER YEAR

35 UNIQUE CHAPTERS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION



02

PROGRAMS

BLUE STAR ARTS

CAREGIVERS EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS

BLUE STAR CAREERS



BLUE STAR ARTS

Blue Star Arts – which includes Blue Star Museums and Theatres to Books on Bases – had another successful year connecting military families to each other as well as to their civilian neighbors.

BLUE STAR MUSEUMS

The Blue Star Museums (BSM) campaign is a collaboration of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) the Department of Defense, and museums across the nation. According to the NEA, 836,800 active duty military personnel and their families in all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, visited more than 1,900 museums through Blue Star Museums in 2015. In addition to museum attendance, BSF partnered with a number of our participating museums to host other unique opportunities including general social networking events, career-oriented events and our popular Operation Appreciation program. Our ongoing work with our nation’s museum network is beneficial to both BSF and these partner institutions, and we plan to expand our unique collaboration in 2016.”

BLUE STAR THEATRES

Blue Star Theatres, our collaboration with Theatre Communications Group, has grown to include participation from 151 theaters, providing discounted or complimentary admission to military personnel, their families and veterans. A number of theatres also host special military-oriented events and theatre workshops, bringing our military family community together.

BOOKS ON BASES

Our Disney Books on Bases (BOB) events continued with large-scale events in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Blue Star Families welcomed Disney leadership and over 30 Disney VoluntEARS to our Los Angeles event, providing them with an opportunity to experience BOB firsthand and reinforcing the program’s extraordinary impact on military families. Our San Francisco event was equally successful and was our first BOB for Coast Guard families. We’re proud this event garnered our highest turnout to date, demonstrating the importance of reaching Coast Guard families with our programs and resources. In June, we kicked off with an incredible Books on Bases event for 500 military family members stationed at Vicenza, Italy. With the support of The Walt Disney Company and First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden’s Joining Forces Initiative, we created a magical day of reading and creative crafting for 354 military children and their parents.

Transforming a massive gymnasium into a colorful reading room and distributing hundreds of new books and tote bags filled with Disney plush toys created an epic, high energy event – our largest Books on Bases hosted for military families stationed overseas. The afternoon was made all the more special when the First Lady and her daughters Sasha and Malia stopped by for in-person story time. Even our long-time BSF friend and supporter Mickey Mouse joined the fun!

In September, Blue Star Families helped children go back to the classroom with 10 Back-to-School Books on Bases events at military-impacted elementary schools across the country. This campaign provides students with an engaging lesson about welcoming new classmates to their school and how to help them feel more comfortable making friends and meeting new teachers.

In addition, in partnership with The Walt Disney Company, this year we gave military children over 20,000 books through Books on Bases. In 2016 our goal is to convert Blue Star Arts participants to BSF members. By becoming members, these families will be part of the BSF network. In 2016 our goal is to continue utilizing these popular programs to grow our member networks and provide a platform to communicate a broader selection of resources and opportunities to military families.



CAREGIVERS EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS

Through our Caregivers Empowering Caregivers program, BSF facilitated three in-person caregiver workshops in major military-impacted regions in 2015. We also embarked on an exciting new partnership with the Rosslyn Carter Institute and rolled out “Operation Family Caregiver” in Washington DC and San Antonio, recruiting and training coaches who will provide one-on-one support to military caregivers.

To supplement our one-on-one support opportunities, and in recognition of the time/travel challenges experienced by caregivers, BSF continues to provide caregiver resources via digital mediums which prove to be very well received. For example in November we posted specialized video resources via our Facebook page, which by year’s end had been viewed more than 13,000 times.

“For years I struggled with managing my husband’s medical appointments, medicine, and mood swings. I was overwhelmed and unsure of how best to help him, let alone help myself. I attended a BSF Caregivers Empowering Caregivers event and received information on how to help myself and my spouse. Win!”

BLUE STAR CAREERS

Blue Star Families hosted two Networks Live! events – one in April at Dog Tag Bakery in Georgetown, VA and the other in early June at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Networks Live! continues to capture attention as an innovative networking opportunity. Each interactive event hosts a guest speaker and a panel of experienced military spouses, followed by a lively speed mentoring session with attendees. By providing military spouses with the proper tools, resources, and in-person opportunities to expand their local professional network, we help increase confidence with pursuing new career goals and ultimately landing a job in their desired field.

Thanks in part to a significant grant from the Walmart Foundation, Blue Star Families is set to be the first military family organization engaging spouses in a train-to-hire program for technology-based careers. By leveraging existing resources and a well-established technology infrastructure, our new SpouseForce program will use a forward-leaning approach to train dedicated military spouses as highly qualified professionals in technology fields. Our vast membership, connected to our programs and initiatives through the cloud and on the ground, allows us to have great reach and influence with members eager to find a meaningful career path – a path that fulfills their professional growth as well as provides greater financial stability for their family.

By the end of the year, BSF invested numerous resources in the planning phase of the Careers Program which includes SpouseForce, Network Live!, as well as building on the Blue Star Tech concept which will connect military spouses to additional technology related opportunities. The investment has paid off in that companies and spouses are eager to participate in our five Network Live! events scheduled in 2016 and the launch of SpouseForce in February.

“BSF has helped me personally by allowing me to continue to serve military families (I’m an Air Force veteran) and has helped me professionally through amazing networking opportunities. I am currently a stay-at-home mom, but feel very confident in my return to the workforce.”

FELLOWSHIP

Blue Star Families Fellows are benefiting from a new professional development opportunity with our new Fellowship Speaker Series. Diverse thought-leaders and field experts join our Fellows every month for a Google Hangout to mentor and exchange best practices. Whether focused on updating their resumes with the knowledge and experience gained as a BSF Fellow, or learning how to better communicate their unique workplace skills, Fellows receive valuable encouragement from “the best of the best” through these online conversations and exchanges.

03

RESEARCH & POLICY

ANNUAL MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY

WHITE OAK

POLICY LEADERSHIP

ANNUAL MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY

The 2015 annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey focused on three primary areas:

- 1) Financial Readiness
- 2) Transition
- 3) Veteran and Spouse Employment

BSF joined a Veteran Reintegration Facilitated Session, hosted by U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Office of Policy and Planning. In addition, we participated in multiple discussions including a VSO/MSO roundtable with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and a convening hosted by the Army National Guard. In August, R&P attended the 2015 National American Psychological Association Convention for a panel discussion regarding the difficulties in conducting research with military families.

This year's survey obtained a slightly higher response rate than the 2014 survey with 6,291 responses. Survey results identified top military issues including military pay/benefits, military spouse employment, and

isolation from the larger civilian community. Our two launch events were well attended. USAA sponsored our release reception at Rayburn House Office Building with over 100 guests in attendance. Speakers included the co-chairs of the Congressional Military Family Caucus, Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Representative Sanford Bishop.

Also, Brookings Institution partnered with BSF to host a results panel discussion with over 120 people in attendance. The panel participants included Brad Carson, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Michael O'Hanlon and Elaine Kamarck, both senior fellows at The Brookings Institution; Nicholas Armstrong from Institute of Veterans and Military Families (IVFM); and Cristin Orr Shiffer from BSF.

In 2015, the survey was referenced in over 30 media stories and the Survey page on the BSF website has received over 13,500 views.



6,291
RESPONDENTS

INCLUDING
MILITARY SPOUSES
SERVICE MEMBERS
& VETERANS

MILITARY FAMILIES ARE ASSETS TO NATIONAL DEFENSE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES. THEY ARE CENTRAL TO THE HEALTH AND CAPABILITY OF THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE AND ARE GOOD NEIGHBORS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN MAKING THEIR CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES GREAT PLACES TO LIVE.

BLUE STAR FAMILIES ANNUAL MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO SERVE AS A MILITARY FAMILY AND IS A BLUEPRINT FOR STRENGTHENING AMERICA BY SUPPORTING MILITARY FAMILIES.



IN COLLABORATION WITH:
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS
AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Funding for the Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey provided through the generosity of our presenting sponsor USAA and from the Lockheed Martin Corporation, United Healthcare Military & Veterans, Rent-A-Center, Health Net Federal Services, Facebook, and the USO.

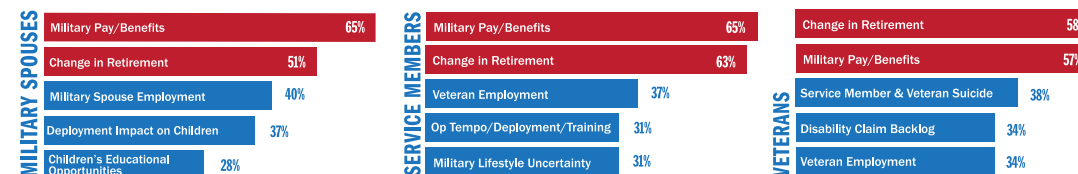


2015 MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY

TOP 5 ISSUES

RANKED AS MOST CONCERNING

- > MILITARY PAY AND RETIREMENT BENEFIT CHANGES ARE THE TOP TWO CONCERNS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS
- > SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT, MILITARY SUICIDE & VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ROUND OUT THE TOP 5 ISSUES OVERALL FROM ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS



SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

TOP CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYMENT
52% Poor Job Market Alignment
36% Service Member's Job/Work Obligations

45% have a full- or part-time job

58% are not working would like to be employed outside the home

75% reported being a military spouse had a negative impact on their ability to pursue a career

FINANCIAL READINESS

TOP 3 OBSTACLES TO FINANCIAL SECURITY
42% Uncertainty in Military Life
40% Spouse Employment
39% Benefits Uncertainty/Changes

14% of active duty do not regularly contribute to a retirement account

60% of post-9/11 Service members feel financially secure

78% are paying more than BAH for housing; 22% of those are paying \$400 or more

TRANSITION

28% described their overall transition from active duty to veteran as "difficult" or "very difficult"

43% of veterans had some form of TAP & 57% agreed that it prepared them to successfully transition from active duty to civilian life

87% feel the military has prepared me to be a leader in the civilian workplace and community

97% feel pride from accomplishments during military service

WHITE OAK IV

Military-supportive thought leaders and influencers from nonprofits, government, and philanthropies convene annually for the America Joins Forces with Military Families (White Oak) Retreat. This fourth convening saw the fruition of deeper relationships, trust and engagement as returning and first-time participants worked confidently alongside each other to find consensus and opportunity.

From the opening plenary to the closing review, participants engaged in the dialogue and session management of the retreat. Members are asked to speak candidly but constructively, facilitate breakout conversations, contribute to panels and, most importantly, offer their best ideas and lessons learned in a collaborative environment. Results garnered in this way are a testament to the concept of ideas bigger than one person, one organization. White Oak identifies myriad ideas that attendees can use to improve their own impact, as well as watching for large, scalable solutions that seek to move forward the military support space as a whole.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Utilize the Philanthropy-Joining Forces Impact Pledge event in May 2015 to craft a playbook of best practices for funders and communities. It should incorporate grass-roots lessons learned, an opportunity for customer inclusion in the feedback loop and a method of evaluating participating groups. Share this with all White Oak entities and others willing to implement identified action items in their organizations to promote scalable programs that advance the field.
- Invite White Oak member organizations to a “deep dive” event in the next three months that will create a continued opportunity to learn about our capabilities and find areas of consensus goals in order to align messaging. Develop a wiki-like compendium of organizational missions, asset

mapping and core competencies to share with other White Oak participants. Identify the top 3-5 consensus messages that support the good of the whole and complement the good of individual organizations.

- Leverage participation of White Oak members at relevant convenings such as Purdue University’s upcoming Family Risk and Resilience Symposium to formalize the accounting of the experiences, hardships and successes of an “at war” military population. Harness technology, partnership and research capabilities to catalog this information and make the case for gaps in services and create a best practices road map for future conflicts.
- Support initiatives to train and empower veterans and families in the political arena as both advocates and candidates. Prepare a white paper designed to educate candidates about the current and emerging needs of those in the military space. Invite candidates to sign a pledge of support for military/veteran affairs and appoint a military/veteran affairs policy advisor position within their campaign structure.
- Engage with new Joining Forces Executive Director to energize a fourth-quarter wrap up of PSD-9 and Joining Forces. Find the path to making this body of work relevant for future administrations. Extract the data and lessons learned to lay the groundwork for strategic leadership opportunities across the spectrum within the confines of a similar program or initiative.
- Compile existing research data from White Oak participants to create a collective analysis. Metrics like this should generate talking points for the consortium to integrate into individual and shared messaging channels. This level of analysis will quantify the gap, measure the delta and open the door for big data mining pictures to emerge.

“Blue Star Families makes the situation of the military family visible. By identifying the challenges military families face and brokering solutions with the larger community, we are able to answer the needs of military families while building communities and relationships, which results in stronger military families and a stronger America.”



04

COMMUNITY BUILDING

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

FACEBOOK: 60,437 PAGE "LIKES" IN 2015

TWITTER: 21,416 NEW FOLLOWERS IN 2015



CORE COMMUNITIES

In 2015, Blue Star Families' volunteer leaders hosted 200 events - more than one event every two days. These events, hosted across our 35 Chapters, serve as a key strategy for growing and engaging our local membership. This focus on membership growth and engagement has proven to be extremely valuable in laying the foundation for the successful deployment of Blue Star Communities.

Blue Star Families has also developed a robust collective impact model and made significant progress in implementing BSF's pilot community: San Diego. By focusing initial resources in San Diego, this pilot helps identify gaps and allows BSF to build a solid playbook that will ensure the future success of all Blue Star Communities moving forward.

BSF identified asset-mapping tools, including a readiness assessment, to pinpoint the needs of military

families in the San Diego community and identify what collective public, private, and military resources are already available. Once identified, Blue Star Families will be poised to mobilize these capacities, serving as the glue between military families and the community in which they serve.

Over the next three to five years, BSF will scale this model to key military communities globally, starting in 2016 with the following communities:

- Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA
- Fort Carson, CO
- San Antonio, TX
- Jacksonville, FL
- Fort Bragg, NC

05

KEY INFLUENCERS

EXECUTIVE TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TOP DONORS

EXECUTIVE TEAM



KATHY ROTH-DOUQUET
Chief Executive Officer



NOELEEN TILLMAN
Chief Operating Officer

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Hunt Companies

SCOTT ALLEN
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NADA STIRRATT
Chief Executive Officer, Verve Mobile

CHARLES EGGLESTON
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SHERRIE GOODMAN
Senior VP, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Executive Director, CNA Military Advisory Board

DOUG WILSON
Co-Founder, Vets' Community Connections &
Member, US Advisory Comm. on Public Diplomacy

KATHY ROTH-DOUQUET
CEO of Blue Star Families

05 KEY INFLUENCERS

2015 DONORS

AMERICAN RED CROSS
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AXCIOM
BAE SYSTEMS
BE THE CHANGE
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BOOZ ALLEN HAMILTON
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CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICA SECURITY
CLINTON FOUNDATION
CRAIGSLIST CHARITABLE FUND
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FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION
GEORGE LINK JR FOUNDATION
GOT YOUR SIX/MACYS
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HEWLETT PACKARD
HILTON WORLDWIDE
HUNT COMPANIES
LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION
MCCORMICK FOUNDATION
MCDONALDS CORPORATION
METLIFE FOUNDATION
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART



MOAA
NBC UNIVERSAL
NORTHROP GRUMMAN
PFIZER
RENT-A-CENTER
ROSALYNN CARTER INSTITUTE
RUSH & KATHRYN LIMBAUGH
SCHULTZ FAMILY FOUNDATION
SLEEP NUMBER
STARBUCKS CORPORATION
TAPS
TEE IT UP FOR THE TROOPS
TRAMIEL CHARITABLE TRUST
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION
UBER
UNITED HEALTH FOUNDATION
UNITEDHEALTHCARE
USAA
USAA FOUNDATION
USO
VETERANS UNITED FOUNDATION
WALMART
WALMART FOUNDATION
WALT DISNEY COMPANY FOUNDATION
WEBMD FOUNDATION

06

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

Current assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,197,464
Accounts receivable	\$35,000
Prepaid expenses	\$20,922
Total current assets	\$1,253,386

Property and equipment, net	\$66,012
Security deposit	\$65
Total assets	\$1,319,463

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$46,244
Total liabilities (all current)	\$46,244

Net assets

Unrestricted (deficit)	\$215,845
Temporarily restricted	\$1,057,374
Total net assets	\$1,273,219
Total liabilities and net assets	\$1,319,463