

USAWC AY 2018 Spouses' Project THE MIGHTY MILITARY SPOUSE



Reach
in
Your
Rucksack

Embrace
The Adventure
Pursue Your
Passion

Care
Through
Crisis

Bring Your
Battle Buddy

Brat Like
A Boss

Leave
A
Legacy

The Mighty Military Spouse Project

RESOURCE GUIDE

An Unofficial Guide and Tribute for all the Spouses Standing in the Gap for their Soldiers and Communities!

Disclaimer:

The information provided within this guide is for general educational purposes only. The views expressed in both the panels and the resource guide are those of the authors and military spouses who volunteered their time and resources for the purpose of creating this guide while stationed at Carlisle Barracks. They do not reflect the official policy, endorsement, or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the United States Government.

* All listed resources are recommended, not cited in this document.

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* All websites and print materials are suggested readings, not endorsements for any publication or website.

FOREWORD

The Military Family Program (MFP) at the U.S. Army War College provides graduate-level educational opportunities and experiences to senior leaders and their spouses and families to strengthen their resiliency and effectiveness. As part of this MFP mission, the Spouse Project was established in 2009. Each year, a group of volunteer U.S. Army War College student spouses adds a useful reference—promoting self-reliance and enhancing individual and family well-being—to the family readiness toolkit.

This year's project, titled "The Mighty Military Spouse," represents the amazing work and dedication of the Class of 2018 senior spouses. Drawing on their personal experiences and countless hours of detailed research, they developed a series of videos (available on the Army War College YouTube channel) and a complimentary resource guide military spouses can use to mentor, coach, and advise military spouses and families in their communities. Topics covered include self-care strategies, dealing with PCS moves and crises, guiding teenagers through multiple moves while applying for college, developing and maintaining friendships, and leaving a lasting legacy.

I want to thank the project members and the panelists for sharing their wisdom, lessons learned, and time. Their unique contributions and personal insights remind us of the importance of individual growth, personal sacrifice, loyalty, and leadership. It is an honor to support this invaluable project.



John S. Kem
Major General, U.S. Army
Commandant

Dear Mighty Military Spouses,

Welcome to the 2018 USAWC Spouse Project. The materials before you have come a long way from our initial brainstorming meeting back in August 2017. Putting 40 Mighty Military Spouses in one room created enough energy to warrant a hurricane naming from the National Weather Service ☺!

But what a storm it was and when the dust settled, we were left with many determined senior spouses hoping to make a difference. Our goal was to bring together all the experience, wisdom, and lessons from senior spouses who have carved out lives for themselves and their families over the years.

With so many resources available to our modern military community, we wanted to create something personal, accessible, and applicable to a wide range of Mighty Military Spouses. Simply put, we wanted to give our community a starting point for discussing ideas and finding ways to support each other. **Because we are all Mighty in our own way and our lifestyle is not for the faint of heart.**

WHO EXACTLY IS A MIGHTY MILITARY SPOUSE?

All of us! We come from all walks of life but we share one important thing; we love and are committed to a member of the US military. You could run a small country with the underused talent of military spouses. We are doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, health and fitness professionals, writers, journalists, business consultants, counselors, small business owners, social workers, as well as former soldiers and leaders.

So if you are reading this, we hope you can use what we produced to celebrate the unique spouses in your circle, as well as to share and grow within your own communities. The MMS project team would like to thank you for everything you do in support of our country and your communities. It was an honor to create this Project, just as it is an honor to share our ranks with so many other Mighty Military Spouses.

We would like to thank Christina Daily, the fabulous Military Family Program Director at the US Army War College, as well as Sam and Travis, our amazing Tech crew. To all the other committee members and participants, you are simply MIGHTY, and we are proud to be a part of this year with all of you!

Kathleen Palmer	Co-Chair MMSP
Aimee Randazzo	Co-Chair MMSP
Jennifer Babich	Producer, MMSP
Kerry Irvin	Project Chair, Leave a Legacy Program

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE!

This resource guide aids the topics and issues in each panel discussion and personal interview in the videos.

- ✓ The videos and an electronic version of the Resource Guide are available on the US Army War College Military Family Programs site. You can view them at: <https://www.armywarcollege.edu/orgs/mfp/SpouseProjects.cfm>
- ✓ If you would like a copy of the DVD or the guide, please contact Christina Daily, MFP Director at the AWC at (717) 245-4787.
- ✓ Each topic is a stand-alone opportunity to gain knowledge and insight from some seasoned spouses and what they have experienced.
- ✓ This Resource Guide offers information gleaned from each panel segment followed by **Rucksack Ready Resources** for each topic. The resources include online, print, and local resources.
- ✓ You can simply watch the panels and interviews, read and use the information in the guide, OR they can be used to springboard into training with your unit or community group or just a precursor to a good group discussion. **You can even take it a step further and share the knowledge or even create your own panel in your community.** There is a list of questions after each section called Panel Prompts so you can form your own panels and interviews.
- ✓ We found that bringing everyone together for a “Roundtable” style discussion was not just informational, but became a heart session that really allowed people to open up and simply say, “You too?” It can be an empowering way to find out what your folks need.
- ✓ Our resources both online sites and print materials were provided based on the responses from the panel interviews and the contributors of this project. They are not intended to be endorsements, just resources for exploring the topics further.

Meet the Mighty Military Spouses of AWC SPOUSE PROJECT 2018

Jennifer Babich: *Producer and Panel Moderator.* Jennifer has spent the past 18 years juggling her role as an Army spouse and mom with her career as a journalist in the television news industry. An Emmy-nominated news producer, Jennifer has produced news specials on a range of topics, including everything from voting, to immigration, to military and veteran's issues. Jennifer most recently worked as the Executive Producer of Special Projects and Original Programming for Spectrum News in North Carolina. Prior to that, she worked as the Washington Bureau Chief for Time Warner Cable News, covering the U.S. Congress, the Supreme Court, and the White House, among other federal institutions. A self-professed news junkie, Jennifer believes in the power of telling compelling stories and we are so grateful she could help us tell so many.

Aimee Randazzo: *Project Co-Chair, Care Through Crisis Moderator and our AXO.* (That is Amazing Executive Organizer in our world) Aimee took the reigns like only she can and made sure every piece of paper was signed and filed, every email went out, every meeting had an agenda, and kept everyone happy and informed! The tasks that Aimee took on are often the tasks that form the glue of any special project. Without Aimee's tireless efforts and organizational skills, this project may not have happened. It is also that type of energy and effort that led to her being named AFI Carlisle Barracks Military Spouse of the Year 2018. Congrats Aimee!

Kathleen Palmer: *Project Co-Chair, Moderator, and Project Writer/Editor.* KP couldn't be prouder to be a part of this MIGHTY SPOUSE life. Not sure if it is a gift or a curse, but she has trouble shutting off her brain which results in thousands of ideas that travel in many different directions. A teacher, coach and amateur writer by trade, she is grateful to **EVERY person** in this book for helping to clarify her ideas and vision.

Kerry Irvin: *Project Chair, Leave a Legacy Program.* A dynamo of many talents (and some that can only be whispered about in hushed, reverent tones), Kerry not only was instrumental in the development of the early project concept, she was able to also come up with another one (Because Mighty Military Spouses roll like that) called the *Leave a Legacy Program*. This program filled a need here at the Army War College and Kerry and her team have successfully launched a way to keep a legacy of help and hope passed on from class to class. **Read about her LAL program on page 61.**

Mandi Love: *Committee Member, Brat Like a Boss Producer.* If an answer is needed, this is our gal! No one researches quite like our Mandi and she doesn't stop until she finds the information we need. Her Facebook page **College Bound Brats** has over 2000 members and offers a wealth of information about how to get our Brats to college. Naturally, Mandi was the perfect fit for the **Brat Like a Boss** Segment. While the rest of us were on vacation, she took the time to interview college students at home for break. Thanks for keeping an eye out for our MIGHTY BRATS MANDI!

Julie Desaulniers: *Committee Member, Panelist, and Wonder Woman!* Julie came to the panel armed with extensive years as an Army Brat and a spouse as well as a gift for helping all the "seasoned" spouses hone their computer skills. Armed with a quick wit, strong sense of purpose, and a team attitude, Julie was instrumental in getting both the Panel Project and the *Leave a Legacy Project* off the ground. She also participates in several panels.

Shellie Kioutas: *Committee Member/Care Through Crisis.* Shellie helped the committee through her unique perspective and concern for others. Without Shellie, Care Through Crisis would not have been a topic that we could produce. Her insight and research helped all of understand the far reaching scope of crisis in our community and enabled us to put together a list of resources and a panel of caring spouses who shared their stories to help others.

Tara Mower: *Committee Member.* A mighty spouse of 23 years who calls Tampa home, Tara was a huge part of the initial stages of the project. She sent emails and made sure the word got out to those who were interested. She secured locations for meetings, gave invaluable feedback, and provided notes and resources for the guide. She is our quiet beacon of support.

Kerri Barefield: *Committee Member.* Kerri brings experience coupled with humor to each and every meeting and event. She assisted in the early stages of brainstorming, served on two panels, and helped execute The MIGHTY Roundtable session. Kerri is one of those people who is always there ready to take on any task, no matter how big or how small. This project would not have been as fun without her. Thanks for always keeping it real Kerri!

Jennifer F. James: *Committee Member.* Jennifer's thoughtful feedback and early assistance helped to give this project focus and purpose. Her presence at the grassroots beginning of the project was as essential as her feedback and insight at the Delaney Fieldhouse Roundtable session.

Kerry Erisman: *Committee Member,* Kerry's perspective as a male military spouse brought the project to a whole new level. Kerry is an Army veteran of 28 years who joined the ranks with humor and the forward thinking necessary to keep our spouse cadre mighty. Not only did he serve as a panelist bringing a balanced perspective, he is an attorney by trade. Kerry serves as an example of a spouse who has found a way to pursue his passion with a portable career and creative volunteer projects. We are proud to stand along beside him!

Cristina M. Alfeiri: *Committee Member.* Cristina is the epitome of a true volunteer. At every duty station she looks for ways to enrich her community and Carlisle Barracks was no exception. From her valuable input at meetings to assisting with the *Leave a Legacy Project*, Cristina found time to make a difference!

Janel Zinn: *Committee Member.* Janel was instrumental in the origins of the project from committee input to organization through technology platforms. Janel also appears in our Roundtable discussion sharing her views on the uniqueness of military life.

Kim Colombero: *Committee Member.* This mighty military spouse works full time and takes care of extended family on the West Coast and still found time to help us get the project off the ground. Her input in early stages and editing the guide was essential to the project.

Christina Daily: *MFP Director.* Not only does Christina coordinate all the programs and classes for the Mighty Spouses of the AWC Class of 2018, she serves as mentor and friend to all of us. She also keeps us legal and legit, and if you know even a few of us, that is no easy task.

Sam Deprospro: *Technical Director.* It is no wonder he has been married for 23 years as Sam put up with a whole lot of women over the past six months. Shielded by his salty Pittsburgh armor, he was able to keep us straight and put together what we had envisioned from the beginning. Not enough thanks in the world Sam!

Travis Bolv: *Assistant Technical Director.* Also a warrior to make sure 20 spouses stay grounded and on task, Travis's professionalism helped round out the project in the studio.

Mrs. Martha Kem: *Advisor.* Every operation needs a heart, and Mrs. Kem was that for us during this whole project. From sitting in on almost every meeting to being there while we taped the panels, Mrs. Kem offered encouragement and support from her volunteer hours with *Leave a Legacy* to giving us hugs and high fives. That kind of genuine spirit is a trait every MIGHTY spouse can aspire to...Thanks Martha!

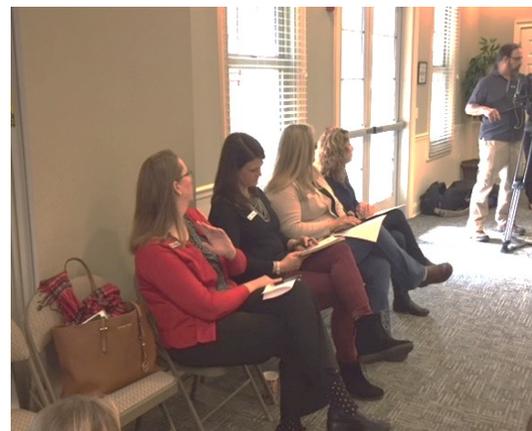


Meet the Mighty Military Spouse Panel Members



- Jennifer Ffrench:** Army, Married 19 years, from Midland TX. Favorite duty station is Tampa, FL.
- Amy Frasier:** Army, Married 18.5 years, from Calhoun GA. Favorite duty station is Huntsville AL.
- Traci Conner:** Army, Married 16 years, from Kenesaw GA. Favorite duty station is Fort Lewis, WA.
- Shawn Matthews:** Army, Married 22 years, from Charlotte, NC. Favorite duty station is Hanau, GE.
- Kerry Erisman:** Army Veteran and Spouse of 25 years, from PA. Favorite station is Heidelberg GE
- Dawn Toti:** Army Spouse of 30 years, from Houston, TX. Favorite duty station is Illesheim, GE.
- Aimee Henderson:** Army, Married 18.5 years, from Round Summit, NC. Favorite duty station is GE.
- Kristi Forbes:** Army, Married 19.5 years, from Venita OK. Favorite duty station is ALL of GE.
- Tara Habhab:** Army , Married 20 years, from Kansas. Favorite duty station is Manhattan, Kansas.
- Tanya Smith-Evans:** Army, Married 13 years, from Norfolk VA. Favorite duty station is the DC Area.
- Heather Ward:** Army, Married 19 years, from South Jersey. Favorite duty station is Alaska.
- Tracey Whitfield:** Army, Married 20 years, from NC. Favorite duty station is Stuttgart Germany.
- Julie Desaulniers:** Army, Married 14 years, and an Army Brat. Favorite station is Camp H., Korea.
- Meredith Hummel:** Army, Married 20 years, from VA (Navy Brat). Favorite station is Germany.

- Nicole Curry:** Army, Married 20 years, and is an Army Brat. Favorite station is Illesheim GE
- Becky Welch:** Army, Married 22 years, and considers David (her husband) her home!
- Mandi Love:** Army, Married 21 years, from PA. Favorite duty station is Heidelberg, Germany.
- Kerri Barefield:** Army, Married 22 years from AL, Favorite duty station is Fort Carson, CO.
- Karen Victor:** Army, Married 21 years from Upstate New York, Favorite duty station is Germany.
- Aimee Randazzo:** Army, Married 21 years, from Ohio. Favorite duty station is Carlisle Barracks, PA.
- Kathy Palmer:** Army, Married 20 years, from Texas. Favorite duty Station is Darmstadt, GE.
- Cristina M. Alfeiri** Army, Married 21 years, From Tegucigalpa Honduras, Favorite station is CO.
- Janel Zinn:** Air Force, Married 15 years, Favorite duty station is Carlisle Barracks, PA.



CHAPTER ONE/ Embrace the Adventure

There is so much adventure to be experienced as citizens of the world! This section deals with PCS moves, unique roles and opportunities that are available to us due to our military lifestyle. Things such as living in new places to include foreign countries and all the culture, people, and adventures that come with it. Sit back and watch as our Mighty Military Spouses discuss what makes our lifestyle so different and rewarding. Topics discussed on the panel range from how to break out of our comfort zones to the positive aspects of moving and experiencing other cultures.

Advice from the Panel

- Finding your tribe is the best part of each move. Look for people who make you better.
- Military Spouses are awesome. We have to get to know people fast.
- Our lifestyle enables us to make new traditions such as amazing “FriendsGivings” everywhere we live!
- I grew up as brat and swore I would never marry a military man, but I did and I love it and I love this life...wouldn't trade it for anything.
- I have grown to enjoy moving, and I even get antsy when we stay longer than 2 years. Love the changes!
- The most challenging aspects is leaving my friends, but I overcome by putting myself out there.
- You don't have to like everyone. Just find your group and hold on tight.
- We get to experience travel and culture and history. Our kids experience not by reading in a book. We can see and go absorb other cultures and gain a broader perspective.
- Learn not to sweat the small stuff.
- The people really make the difference. Not the place, but the people.
- All of this will come to an end one day. Make the memories and enjoy all the places that this adventurous life takes you!

Rucksack Ready Resources to Help Us Embrace the Adventure

Sites that Celebrate Our Unique Lifestyle

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz/blog/2011/07/figuring-out-how-to-fit-in.html> - How to make a good first impression and be true to yourself.

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz/blog/2015/04/10-things-military-kids-can-teach-civilians.html> - A fun list of ways this adventurous life can be amazing experiences for our kiddos!

<http://militaryoneclick.com/i-just-got-orders-to-a-foreign-country-and-i-dont-know-the-language/> - Different opportunities for places and sites to learn the culture and language of whatever country you PCS to.

<https://www.npr.org/2011/07/03/137536111/by-the-numbers-todays-military> - Interesting site with graphs and charts about the makeup of America's military.

<http://www.wearethemighty.com/lists/80-famous-military-brats> - Do you know what Jessica Alba, Shaquille O'Neal, Mia Hamm, Mark Hamill and Steve McQueen all have in common??? They're all military brats!

<https://www.dodea.edu> - Department of Defense Schools Official Website.

PCS Sites

<http://www.pica.army.mil/garrison/directorates/acs/Files/PCSMovingChecklist.pdf> - Resource for those who need lists and task boxes to check off!

<https://www.military.com/money/pcs-dity-move/pcs-checklists.html> - For those who needs lists AND a budget!

<https://www.pcsgrades.com> -Resolves tough relocation problems (must login).

<http://www.gomillie.com> -A new clearinghouse for your PCS journey.

<https://themilitarywifeandmom.com/military-family-resources/> - A compilation of a variety of moving tips and sites.

<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/PCS/Do-It-Yourself-Move-Success-Stories/ba-p/160437> - DIY success stories!

<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/PCS/10-PCS-Lessons-Learned/ba-p/133379> -PCS Lessons learned.

<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/PCS/My-Duty-Station-Location-Hotlist/ba-p/128646> -A hot list of places- Is your favorite place mentioned?

<http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/f?p=MI:ENTRY:0> -Official DOD source for installation resources.

Living Overseas



<https://themilitarywifeandmom.com/moving-overseas-checklist/> - Method to start planning 6 months out.

<https://de.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/military-families/> - Official website for federal travel.

<http://militaryoneclick.com/what-you-need-to-know-to-prepare-for-an-overseas-pcs/> - Resource for when you get orders across the pond.

<https://blog.militarybyowner.com/12-lessons-i-learned-from-living-overseas> - Prose about what we learn from living in another culture.

<http://www.groundedtraveler.com/2012/07/23/life-of-a-military-expat/> - Another blog about living life outside the US.

www.rosettastone.com – A popular starting point for learning a new language.

<http://www.europe.satovacations.com/home.aspx> - Travel agency specializing in European tours that service military bases.

<https://global.armymwr.com/europe/leisure-travel> - European MWR site.

Germany and Belgium



<http://www.armywifenet.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Moving-to-Germany.pdf> -Germany experience as told by those who lived it.

<https://www.economicalexcursionists.com/stationed-in-germany-pcs/> - A list of easy and inexpensive tours.

<https://www.edelweisslodgeandresort.com> - MWR's premier European Resort for Armed Forces.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/armywifetravelers/> - FB page for traveling and living in Germany.

<https://matadornetwork.com/abroad/10-things-americans-learn-when-they-move-to-germany/> - Pop culture piece as seen from view of American EXPATS.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/military-relocation/pcs-moves/27-things-you-must-know-before-pcsing-to-germany.html> - Guide with some advice from a “been there, done that” spouse.

<https://www.facebook.com/Life-Lessons-of-a-Military-Wife-113796448681344/> - More tips on a FB page.



Italy

<http://www.italy.army.mil/> -Official website for US Army Garrisons in Italy.

<http://armywife101.com/2011/12/5-things-a-spouse-should-know-when-pcsing-to-italy.html> - Lifestyle blog about life.

<http://vicenzamilitaryfamily.com/start/guide-vicenza-move/> -A guide to your Vicenza move.

<https://www.thebalance.com/u-s-army-garrison-usag-vicenza-caserma-ederle-italy-3344641> -Overview of Vicenza Army Base.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQXwDMIwLK8> -Welcome to Italy video.

<https://www.facebook.com/VMCItaly/> -Facebook page for Vicenza.

https://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnreurafswa/installations/nsa_naples.html -Naval Support Center.

https://issuu.com/nsanaplespao/docs/benv2017_cop - Newcomers Guide to Naples.

<https://www.facebook.com/NSANaples> - Page for Naples bound folks.

Korea



<https://www.afscyongsan.org/seoul-survivor.html> -Resources, information and inspiration.

[http://www.usfk.mil/Portals/105/Documents/The_Seoul_Survivor_2014-2015\(1\).pdf](http://www.usfk.mil/Portals/105/Documents/The_Seoul_Survivor_2014-2015(1).pdf) -Guru on living life in South Korea.

<http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/index.kto> -Resources, information and inspiration.

<http://www.armywifenet.com/post-with-the-most-camp-humphreys-korea/> -Article with main focus on Camp Humphries.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/tipsforasiatravel/?fref=gc&dti=1396597680568067&hc_location=ufi -FB Group/support and suggestions.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1681771688738766/?fref=gc&dti=1396597680568067&hc_location=ufi - FB Group/support and suggestions.

<https://www.facebook.com/globaldaegu/> -FB Group/support and suggestions.

<https://www.facebook.com/CampMarket> -FB Group/support and suggestions.

<https://www.facebook.com/myusfk> -FB Group/support and suggestions.

Japan

<http://www.usfj.mil> -Official site for US Forces, Japan.

<https://blog.militarybyowner.com/military-spouse-offers-advice-for-a-pcs-to-japan> - Tips from a Spouse who has been there.

https://www.facebook.com/OkinawaHai/?fref=gc&dti=210368198996975&hc_location=ufi - A FB community for this duty station.

<https://blog.gaijinpot.com/what-to-know-before-coming-to-japan-on-military-orders/> -Blog about lifestyles in Japan.

<http://usmclife.com/bases/okinawa-japan/military-housing/> - A Marine's take on living in Japan

<http://littleislandtakara.com/pros-and-cons-of-living-in-okinawa-military/> -Military focus on life in Okinawa.

<https://time2pcs.wordpress.com> -Blog on attraction and vacation spots in Japan.

http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/f?p=132:CONTENT:0::NO::P4_INST_ID%2cP4_INST_TYPE:2635%2cINSTALLATION User guide from Military One Source.

PRINT RESOURCES

1. Stories Around the Table: Laughter, Wisdom, and Strength in Military Life by Terri Barnes
2. Army Wife: A Story of Love and Family in the Heart of the Army by Vicki Cody
3. 1001 Things to Love about Military Life by Kathie Hightower, Tara Crooks, and Starlett Henderson
4. Sacred Spaces by Corie Weathers.
5. The Green Plate by Jill Connett
6. Household Baggage: The Moving Life of a Soldier's Wife by Marna Krajeski
7. Dinner at The Smileys by Sarah Smiley

PANEL PROMPTS/ ETA

1. What do you love about being a military spouse?
2. What are the most challenging aspects of being a military spouse?
3. What do you want other people (outside of the military) to know about our lifestyle?
4. What are the biggest misconceptions about military spouses?
5. Many military families request to be stationed overseas, why do you think these postings are so popular?
6. What piece of advice would you offer a young spouse about to PCS to a foreign post?
7. Besides the shopping, what was your biggest take away from having lived overseas?
8. How have overseas assignments affected your view of other cultures?
9. When living overseas, did you feel as if the surrounding community embraced soldiers and their families?
10. If you had the opportunity to move overseas again, would you take it?
11. What is your #1 PCS tip?
12. What do you do in preparation for a PCS move to make it a smoother process?
13. Do you have any tricks to help anxiety-ridden children (Exceptional Family Member, OCD, not amiable to change) on board with moving yet again?
14. When you think of your most successful PCS, what are some things you did specifically to make the transition a smooth one?

15. How do you make wherever the military sends you feel like home? How do you maintain family and cultural traditions when you are living far away from your own hometown and extended family?
16. Do you feel like your favorite duty station was because of the location or the people you met at the location?
17. What do you do to try to embrace each new duty station?



CHAPTER TWO: Reach in Your Rucksack

The military lifestyle demands preparedness and to keep up with that demand, the Mighty Military Spouse has to carry a rucksack full of tools and tricks in order to handle this challenging lifestyle in various locations around the world. The video that accompanies this chapter takes an intense look at what tools we need to reach and grab from our Rucksacks. This segment began with a two-hour roundtable discussion and from there we were able to frame this panel. We wanted to tap into the strategies that military spouses use to survive and thrive in our unique lifestyle.

Listed below are some of the “Tools” used by our panel members in their own MMS Rucksack:



- ✓ Finding the silver lining and remaining positive when things get tough.
- ✓ Letting go of the things we cannot control and embracing the unexpected.
- ✓ Rebuilding ourselves when something goes wrong.
- ✓ Dealing with deployments and finding stress busters that help.
- ✓ Focusing on the concept of *“It’s ok to not be perfect”*.
- ✓ Finding the positive things that come out of deployment/PCS challenges.
- ✓ Being “Semper Gumby” and practicing being flexible.
- ✓ Keeping our faith and finding a community to support us.
- ✓ Having a sense of humor.
- ✓ Getting involved. Being the example we want others to follow.
- ✓ Researching like “Alexa”. We have information waiting at our fingertips.
- ✓ Using base resources like ACS and JAG when we need answers
- ✓ Managing expectations will keep you balanced.

- ✓ Breaking Stereotypes is key to understanding others.
- ✓ Getting out of our comfort zones.
- ✓ Developing new and different skill sets.
- ✓ Supporting each other!
- ✓ Refraining from rumors/gossip.

Rucksack Ready Online Resources

General Information, Opinions, and Insights

<http://www.armywifenet.com> -Podcasts and reflections on current Army issues.

<https://militaryspouse.com> -Information on issues ranging from PCS, deployment, careers and education.

<http://www.militaryfamily.org/spouses-scholarships/> -National organization contains everything from legislative issues to education, scholarships and lifestyle.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/spouse-resources> -Helps find resources near you!

<http://www.myarmyonesource.com/default.aspx> -Army-specific resource page

<http://nextgenmilspouse.com> -Online magazine and bi-weekly newsletter. Supports a wide range of global readers.

<https://spouselink.aafmaa.com> -Connects Spouses with each other all over the world.

<https://themilitarywifeandmom.com/military-family-resources/> -List of ready resources compiled by a MOM

<https://www.military.com> -Website for today's military news and issues.

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz> -A blog sponsored by military.com.

<http://militaryoneclick.com/6-awesome-online-communities-for-military-spouses/> -A collection of places you can find support. Convenient for those who are new to an area or the military in general.

<https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Community-Resources/militaryspousesupport/> -DOD Military Spouse support.

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/14088.Military_Spouse_Literature -Books about the military for spouses.

Resources Mentioned in Panel Segments

<https://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/mind-over-mood-six-ways-to-think-positively.html> - Find the silver lining in our challenging lifestyle.

<http://militaryoneclick.com/13-photos-life-male-military-spouses/> - Life as the male Military Spouse.

<https://militaryspouse.com/milspouse/4-positive-military-inspired-habits-you-should-form/> -A list of things that help us navigate any lifestyle.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/during-deployment> -Time-tested site for deployment resources.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/special-needs> -For those who need EFMP information.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/military-life/newbies-and-brides/best-military-spouse-advice-received.html> - Some advice from the Marines!

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/07/09/cb.5.gossip.guidelines/index.html> -How to avoid the snare of gossip in your communities.

<https://www.military.com/deployment/stress-and-support-systems-for-military-spouses.html> -When you need just a little more support and some stress busters.

<http://www.operationwearehere.com/GetConnected.html> -Ways to connect with other spouses!

<https://militaryspouse.com/suzie-says/be-kind/> -Things to keep in mind before posting online!

<https://www.today.com/health/military-wives-21-best-tips-dealing-spouses-deployment-1284120> -Tips from Spouses dealing with multiple deployments.

<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/Deployment-Blog/6-Skills-You-Might-Have-Mastered-by-Being-a-Military-Spouse/ba-p/120248> -Six Skills You may have mastered!

Local Rucksack Resources at every duty station!

- JAG office
- ACS
- MWR
- EFMP
- MFLEC
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Local Chapel Services
- Local Spouse Clubs
- Installation Volunteer Coordinator

Print Resources

1. [The 5 Love Languages Military Edition: The Secret to Love That Lasts](#) by Gary D. Chapman
2. [Surviving Deployment: A Guide for Military Families](#) by Karen M. Pavlicin
3. [Chicken Soup for the Military Wife's Soul](#) by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Charles Preston
4. [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Life as a Military Spouse](#) by Lisa McGrath
5. [Drowning in Lemonade](#) by Linda McFarland- A faith-based book from a seasoned Military Spouse.
6. [Army Wife Handbook: A complete Social Guide](#) by Ann Crossley and Carol A. Keller

PANEL PROMPTS (Questions to help form your own panel)

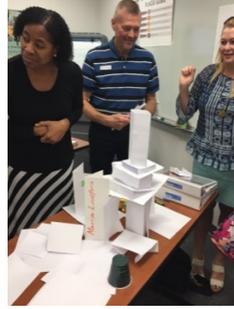
1. What is the one thing you think every military spouse should have in their "rucksack" to help manage this lifestyle?

2. What coping skills or tools do you personally rely upon most to successfully navigate the military lifestyle?
3. What is something that has helped you get through a difficult or stressful period in your journey as a military spouse?
4. Tell us about a time when you feel like you really rocked it as a military spouse? What helped you make it a success?
5. What is your best advice for younger or less experienced spouses?
6. What do you know now that you wish you'd known years ago?
7. How do you maintain a positive outlook about a change you don't feel particularly positive about?
8. What resources do you consider invaluable for military spouses?
9. What top three characteristics do you think best describe a military spouse?
10. What do you feel are some things you have gained because of this lifestyle?
11. What can military spouses do to make the time leading up to a deployment an enjoyable one?
12. What positive things can come out of deployments? PCS moves?
13. How can we, as military spouses, help bridge the civilian/military divide?

FLAGS Participants packing new tools into their rucksacks!



Chapter Three: Pursue Your Passion



What makes us tick? For some it is working. For others it is volunteering. But for all of us, it is essential to find something we are passionate about. It is so easy to get caught up in our spouse's career and our kids' needs and schedules that we don't leave enough room for ourselves. That is why it is important to find and pursue a passion of our own. From reinventing ourselves as we move, to staying true to our goals, we are learning to not just survive, but THRIVE! The panelists in this segment focus on working, volunteering, and embracing new opportunities to keep their identities in our ever-changing world.

Thoughts from the Panel

- Passions are different in our seasons of life: they ebb and flow as we move and change.
- Children grow up and things change so it is important to find yourself along the way.
- Find yourself in different ways each and every PCS.
- A career change made me feel like me again and the life I had prior to the military.
- Sometimes you have to let go of who you were and become who you ARE!
- Trying to be the perfect military spouse is a good way to lose yourself. There is no such thing as a perfect spouse.
- Never had a calling until I embraced the military spouse role.
- My path is helping military families.
- Don't feel bad if volunteering is all you want to do.
- It helps community, serves as a role model... It shows you are invested!
- Sometimes we get so fixed on our identity- we can float from role to role knowing having a flexible sense of self is important.

- Learn how to work in the military system. You do this through prayer and with your village.
- Even though you have a passion, sometimes you have to come to realization that the passion comes second. **Learn how to pursue your passions in second place.**
- If you even start dating someone in the military- start planning your career around that.
- Use deployments to try new skills; piano, cooking, art, or whatever you want to learn!

“PASSIONATE” RUCKSACK RESOURCES

Personal Growth



<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/Money-Matters/A-Spousal-Education/ba-p/1701> - Programs to help with Spouse Education.

<http://www.militaryfamily.org/spouses-scholarships/> -Scholarships for spouses in a variety of fields.

<http://www.myersbriggs.org/home.htm?bhcp=1> – Personality inventory that can help identify preferences and be used as a tool to pursue personal growth and balance.

<https://soldierforlife.army.mil> -Official Army site for help with transition from the Army. Site includes tips and resources on seeking employment, resumes, and benefits.

<https://www.msccn.org> – A non-profit organization that focuses on employment readiness programs.

<https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa/default.aspx> - My Career Advancement Account Scholarship Program.

https://spirit-filled.org/documents/Spouse_GIBill_Benefits.pdf - Ways to use the benefit as spouses.

<https://www.careerstep.com/military-spouse-career-infographic> -Site assists with establishing career goals.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dailymuse/2017/02/13/finally-a-simple-formula-for-finding-your-passion/#bdeb506d4ae2> -A simple guide to finding your passion.

Employment and Job Skills



<https://bluestarfam.org/2016/05/blue-star-families-study-reveals-impact-military-spouse-employment-challenges/> -The results of A Blue Star Families study on the impact of Military Spouse Employment Challenges.

<http://ingearcareer.org> -Created for Modern Military Spouses. Partnered with *Hiring Our Heroes*.

<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/PCS/5-Tips-to-Help-You-Through-a-Move-if-You-Work-from-Home/ba-p/163706> -Continuing to work from home while you move.

<https://communities.usaa.com/t5/PCS/Military-Spouses-in-Nursing/ba-p/112276> -A discussion among Nursing professionals who move with the military.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/-/building-job-skills-and-funding-your-portable-career> - A resource to gather information about a career that moves, funding to make it happen.

<https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil/Portal/> -Spouse Education and Career Opportunities. Place to assess your skills and get a virtual coach.

<https://taskandpurpose.com/5-companies-offer-flexible-remote-jobs-military-spouses/> -Lists 5 companies that have flexible, part time jobs for spouses.

<http://armywife101.com/2013/09/top8placesformilitaryspousestofindworkathomejobs.html> -Another site that offers guidance on *Work from Home* jobs.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/career-advancement/military-spouse-jobs/teaching-viable-career-or-complicated-mess.html> -For all the teachers out there, food for thought concerning transferring from state to state.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/career-advancement/military-spouse-jobs/10-unusal-jobs-with-big-pay.html> - -Out of the box jobs that may appeal to both spouses and transitioning soldiers.

<https://www.military.com/paycheck-chronicles/2015/07/06/the-good-and-bad-of-multi-level-marketing> - Some information for those interested in starting a home-based business.

<https://militaryspouse.com/career/madskills-make-military-spouses-the-original-digital-nomads/> - If you are Tech savvy, this is a way to find an outlet for those skills.

<https://militaryspouse.com/career/how-to-be-the-voice-in-politics-as-a-military-spouse/> -If Politics is your thing or you want to be a voice for others, check out some ideas to pursue.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/career-advancement/do-i-tell-the-interviewer-i-am-a-military-spouse.html> - Interview tips and things to consider when applying for a job.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/career-advancement/5-outrageous-mistakes-milspouses-make-on-resumes.html> -Resume tips and career advice.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/90-military-wives-jobless-underemployed-acceptable/story?id=22720559> - ABC dives into the statistics of the underemployment of military spouses.

Volunteering



<https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=ji> - Study on impact of military volunteering. Gets into the need and the why.

<https://blog.militaryfamily.org/2016/04/11/is-volunteerism-dying-in-our-military-community/> - A spouses' perspective on the decrease in number of volunteers over the years.

https://www.aarp.org/giving-back/volunteering/info-2004/11_ways_to_help_the_troops.html -Clearinghouse of organizations that help with veterans and troops.

<https://www.hopeforthewarriors.org> -Provides comprehensive support programs for service members veterans, and military family members.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/using-your-talents-to-hel_b_5302929.html -Sharing our talents and skills!

<https://www.realwarriors.net/family/care/militaryspouseemployment> -Pursue your passion.

<http://pattillmanfoundation.org/meet-our-scholars/> -Founded in 2008, this scholarship program supports both AD and spouses with academic scholarships and professional development opportunities. Visit site to apply. An opportunity for a career change.

<https://militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org> -A resource for connecting to your community.

<http://salutetospouses.com/articles/careers/benefits-flexible-employment-military-spouse> - Ways military Spouses can find unique opportunities.

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz/2017/12/28/yes-military-spouse-your-time-valuable.html> -A reminder that what we do is valuable!

<https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/org790316.jsp> - This is a general organization that supports communities around military bases...must put in specific location.

<https://www.msjd.net/committees-volunteer-opportunities/> -Education and Service Foundation of the Military Spouse JD Network.

PRINT RESOURCES

1. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change by Stephen R. Covey
2. American Wife: A Memoir of Love, War, Faith, and Renewal by Taya Kyle
3. How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie
4. The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts by Gary Chapman
5. The 5 Love Languages Military Edition: The Secret to Love That Lasts by Gary Chapman and Jocelyn Green
6. What Color is Your Parachute? 2017: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changer by Richard N. Bolles
7. Rising Strong by Brene Brown
8. Grit by Angela Duckworth
9. Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck
10. The Military Spouse's Employment Guide by Janet I. Farley

PANEL PROMPTS/PYP

1. What is your passion that you pursue to maintain your own individual identity, beyond being a military spouse? (working, volunteering, creating/crafting, hobby, etc.?)
2. How have you been able to maintain/nurture your passion through moves/transitions?
3. How do you share your passion with others? Or find others who share your passion?
4. How does your passion help keep you grounded as a military spouse?
5. Military spouses face unique challenges when it comes to work, with frequent moves, unstable support systems and the stresses of military life. What advice do you have for other military spouses who want to maintain and even advance their career while living this lifestyle?
6. As a military spouse, how do you convince potential employers to take a chance on you, knowing you will likely only be there for a few years at most?

7. What marketable skills do military spouses possess to make them more attractive to employers?
8. What are some tips and ideas for those who may be looking to make their career more portable?
9. Does anyone have a personal story to share about turning your passion into a lifestyle.

Having FUN while pursuing your passion is very important!



CHAPTER FOUR: CARE THROUGH CRISIS

The focus of the Spouse's Project has been on the Mighty Military Spouse. But the truth is, even the mightiest military spouse is bound to face a crisis and (let's face it) they never happen at a convenient time. They often occur during a deployment, in the middle of a move, or when we least expect it. Whether we personally find ourselves in a crisis or we feel drawn to help others; we can each prepare to take better care of them and ourselves. The panel members in this segment have been chosen due to their personal experiences, and for the support and assistance they have provided to others. Our own MMS, Aimee Randazzo used her training as a social worker to frame and moderate the panel. Where do we go in a crisis? There are many local, national and international agencies that can assist and help us through whatever type of crisis we may face.

Advice from Panel Members

- ✓ Friends and neighbors are essential. There is a role for everyone.
- ✓ There is no perfect saying or phrase to make someone feel better.
- ✓ Reach out.
- ✓ Let people help.
- ✓ Don't just ask, "What do you need?"- offer a task instead...sometimes the simple, silly things are most important.
- ✓ Sometimes we need to just stay with them, no tasks.... just be.
- ✓ Bring meals.
- ✓ Be there to just listen...
- ✓ A Change of a pronoun can really be helpful. not just me, but "we".
- ✓ Don't forget about us! You may be afraid to talk to us after a tragedy or crisis, but we need you to remember we are still who we were before the crisis.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

Army Emergency Relief provides interest-free loans, grants, & scholarships for soldiers, retired soldiers, & families. <https://www.aerhq.org/>

Ronald McDonald House Charities provides a network of local Chapters have been helping millions of families with sick children find comfort and support when they need it most. The programs, tailored to meet the urgent needs of each community, can now be found in more than 64 countries and regions across the globe. <https://www.rmhc.org/home>

The Compassionate Friends Mission Statement: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

GriefShare provides seminars and support groups are led by people who understand what you are going through and want to help. You'll gain access to GriefShare resources to help you recover from your loss and look forward to rebuilding your life. <https://www.griefshare.org/>

Open to Hope provides an online forum to support people who have experienced loss: to help them cope with their pain, heal their grief through inspirational stories of loss and love. Open to Hope encourages visitors to read, listen and share their stories of hope and compassion. <http://www.opentohope.com/>

The American Cancer Society provides programs and services to help people with cancer and their loved ones understand cancer, manage their lives through treatment and recovery, and find the emotional support they need. The help is free. The American Cancer Society can also help connect you to other free or low-cost resources available in your area. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/support-programs-and-services.html>

Living with is a free app designed to help manage life with cancer connect with loved ones, ask for the help when it's needed, improve communication with doctors and stay organized, all in one place. Feel free to download it in the Apple App store or on Google Play.

Office for Victims of Crime is a part of an integrated campaign to increase awareness about victims' rights, educate the public about the impact of crime, and promote crime victim resources. <https://www.crimevictims.gov/crime.html>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death. AFSP is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health. <https://afsp.org/>

MILITARY AND FAMILY LIFE COUNSELING – supports service members, their families and survivors with non-medical counseling worldwide. <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-and-family-life-counseling>

Fisher House Foundation - builds comfort homes where military & veterans families can stay free of charge, while a loved one is in the hospital. Fisher House Foundation also operates the Hero Miles program, using donated frequent flyer miles to bring family members to the bedside of injured service members as well as the Hotels for Heroes program using donated hotel points to allow family members to stay at hotels near medical centers without charge. <https://www.fisherhouse.org>

Additional Online Resources

<https://www.taps.org> - Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors.

<http://www.redcross.org> - Main website to find assistance and training.

http://media.focusonthefamily.com/topicinfo/military_issues.pdf - Comprehensive resource list from Focus on the Family.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos/confidential-help> -Confidential links for those needing help.

<http://www.armywifenetwork.com/whats-a-care-team/> -Defines the Care Team and its purpose.

https://www.army.mil/article/25561/care_team_supports_all_military_families -More details of Care Team Program.

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/emotional-crisis.aspx> -APA is an authority for helping those in emotional crisis.

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers> -Focus is on children and trauma.

<http://www.militaryfamily.org/kids-operation-purple/deployment.html> -Geared for kids of deployed service members.

<https://www.anythingpawsable.com/help-for-military-spouses-dealing-with-ptsd/> -Help for military spouses dealing with PTSD.

PRINT RESOURCES

1. Midlife Orphan by Jane Brooks
2. Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief by Martha Whitmore Hickman
3. Motherless Daughters by Hope Edelman
4. The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends by Helen Fitzgerald
5. A Different Dream for My Child: Meditations for Parents of Critically or Chronically Ill Children by Jolene Philo
6. How to Help Your Friend with Cancer by Colleen Fullbright

Panel Prompts/CTC

1. As you were experiencing your hardship/crisis what is the one thing someone did for you or said to you that helped the most?
2. What was it that you needed the most and did not get?
3. How could someone have given you what you needed?
4. What would have been most helpful to you 6 months/1 year after?
5. What has someone done for your family during one of these times that made a difference and left a lasting impression?
6. During the aftermath of a traumatic situation, some people are scared to say or do the wrong thing. What would you tell someone who is worried about causing more harm by reaching out to a person going through a traumatic event? Is it better to offer words of sympathy or to stay away?
7. After or during a crisis how did you face, endure and complete a PCS move?
8. Where have you found help when you were new to an area or isolated from the military community?
9. What type of community or military organizations did you turn to?

10. What organization was missing from the community or military that you needed or think would benefit others in similar situations?
11. Many of us are familiar with CARE teams and how to offer support to spouses when a soldier is injured or killed, but when dealing with military families facing other types of crisis, where can we direct them for help when a traditional care team may not be an option?
12. Do you feel most people are aware that a CARE team, which is launched by the unit commander, can be utilized in a variety of other situations when support is needed by a military family?
13. Most military families worry about their service member being in harm's way. How is it different when another family member – such as a parent or child - is harmed?
14. What do you do to help when someone in your community has a death, injury, or illness in their family?
15. Military families are usually unable to rely on extended family to help with both crisis and everyday situations. How do you cope without the “safety net” of family to fall back on? How can your military family step in and offer immediate help and relief? What are some military specific resources available to help a grieving family?
16. Overall, how can we better support fellow military spouses in need, who may be far from traditional support systems?

CARE THROUGH CRISIS PANEL



Reflections on “Lessons Learned” An interview with Shellie Kioutas by Jennifer Babich

Was there something that someone did for you that was helpful when you were coping with your crisis?

“I have a friend who understood what I was going through...so she would text me or Snapchat me every day. She would say, ‘I don’t want you to respond...I just want you to know I’m here...’ That was the most amazing thing, because I knew she was there and that gave me so much comfort.”

There are a lot of good systems and programs in place in the military to support service members and military families in crisis, but for non-traditional billets or branches, families in crisis can fall through the cracks. After experiencing this, what is your suggestion to fix the problem?

“My suggestion is if you’re in a non-traditional unit, you’re in a non-traditional area...then look for the gaps...know that the gaps exist, and be aware, because we make our own geographical families...and so we need those ‘families’ when crisis comes. But I don’t think people are aware, because there are so many good programs in place for most things, but for the non-traditional units those programs are just not there.”

What would have been helpful to you six months or a year later?

“I need people to ask me, ‘Tell me about your grandson or tell me about your daughter,’ because that gives me joy, that lets me know they are not forgotten. But people don’t want to talk about it, or they don’t talk to you at all. It’s really hard, because you want for them to be remembered, but also your life doesn’t always revolve around their passing, so you can talk about other things. Honestly, there was only one time that somebody said something to me that was gut-wrenching... But other than that, you really can’t go wrong.”

Where have you found help within the military community?

“We have been lucky that we’ve been in places that offer behavioral health (counseling)...that has been my lifeline. I got really lucky, I found somebody who I really hit it off with and just adored who has held my hand and walked me through...She would call me every morning and talk me through what was ahead, but also what my tools were to deal with that...That has been the one thing that the military has provided us, is outstanding mental healthcare...for my husband, for my son, for myself, my daughter.”

Are there any other community organizations that you’ve turned to for help?

“There’s Compassionate Friends, which is for the loss of a child and it is a National organization. Then there’s Grief Share, which takes place at churches across the country. Grief Share provides a 6-week course, where you learn how to cope with the loss of a family member or friend. It’s

nationwide, they walk you through all the things to expect, and you get to meet other people who are also grieving.”

Is there something that you feel is missing from the community or the military that would be helpful?

“I think there needs to be a specific care team training for specific types of crisis. While most traditional care teams place emphasis on (God forbid) losing the spouse, communities would benefit from an organization or specified care team set up for military families with children that become sick and need long term care or for the loss of a child, or the non-military spouse that becomes ill with something such as cancer. It would be nice to have a specific organization set up within the military to help with those specific problems. This especially important in areas that have non-traditional units (and maybe not strong FRG structures) so that families in crisis do not fall through the cracks.

Since military families are usually unable to rely on typical support systems, what are your best recommendations for coping through a crisis?

“I recommend asking for help...I would definitely recommend not being quiet and suffering in silence. As hard as it is, if you need help, ask for help. Know that there are community organizations outside of the military that can help.”

How would you personally help someone going through crisis?

“I think that I would just walk in and wash a dish, scrub a toilet, send that text every day that says ‘I’m thinking of you. I’m here...you don’t have to respond, but I’m here.’ Because I know what that meant to me.”

**** The MMSP Team would like to thank Shellie for sharing her time, experience, and courage with us.**

Chapter Five: Brat Like a Boss



One of the hardest areas to navigate in our rapidly changing lifestyle is how to help our children “Brat like a Boss”. According to MCEC (Military Child and Education Coalition), most military children attend six to nine different schools from kindergarten to 12th grade, and (on average) a military student transfers more than twice during high school. This can put tremendous pressure on parents to try and make the transition as smooth as possible. There isn’t a “one size fits all guidance” for moving kids and changing schools. Each family has to come up with a plan that works for their unique needs.

Keeping that in mind, this section focuses more on the older Military Brat. Most of the resources focus on how to help make decisions and find information for high school aged students. However, there is a section at the end of the chapter with some general resources that can be applied to younger children and their transition challenges.

The video associated with this chapter features a panel of spouses who have helped (or are in the process of helping) their teenagers manage multiple moves while trying to apply for college. There are also a few interviews conducted by Mandi Love featuring college Brats who have “been there, done that” and were willing to pass their knowledge to other Mighty Brats! Feel free to use the following resources to help plan your journey with your own children and make sure they **Brat like a Boss!**

Advice from Panel Members

- ✓ Be Flexible- change sports and activities based on the availability of different schools.
- ✓ Growing up as a kid, my mom always made sure we were OK- before she focused on herself. That was a great lesson.
- ✓ Help them find the positives. It is also important for us (as parents) to model that. There is no right way or wrong way. Just listen and adjust.
- ✓ Encourage them to meet one new person a day.
- ✓ Interstate compact- check out your state's information. Research as much as you can before you go. Make sure to take videos of sports or music performances to help with tryouts or auditions.
- ✓ Secure letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches and employers before leaving an area.

RUCKSACK READY RESOURCES



General Resources for Military Kids (all ages)

<http://www.militarychild.org> -A resource in any information quest about military life and how it affects kids. Tons of resources, videos, book suggestions, webinars, and links to get you all the information you need to help your children and yourself.

<https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CHECKLIST-PCS-KIDS.pdf> -A checklist and timeline for moving with kids.

<http://www.bratsourjourneyhome.com> -A documentary about growing up as a Military Brat.

<http://www.militaryfamily.org/info-resources/efmp-special-needs.html> -A resource guide to EFMP issues and education concerns.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/military-relocation/pcs-moves/military-children-and-pcs.html> -A variety of sites and books to help with the PCS struggles.

https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Military_Families_Resource_Center/Home.aspx -Psychology based website for military families.

<http://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil/kids/military-life/resource-guide> -This website contains games and activities related to coping with military life.

<https://www.mic3.net> -Interstate compact website.

<http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Factsheets/Factsheet-Interstate-Compact.pdf> -Resource to have on your own computer. Convenient tool for moving.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/military-education/military-children-education/prepare-child-first-day-of-school.html> - Some first day traditions to implement into your family's first day routines.

<https://militaryspouse.com/relationships/parenting/uncheckable-back-to-school-check-list-for-military-kids/> - An "Unofficial list" of what is really important to kids and parents on the first day of school.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJTqLFLBRjQ> - A video report by CBS about kids & deployment.

http://www.militarychild.org/public/upload/images/A_Military_Parents_Guide_to_School_Policies_and_Transitions_Smaller.pdf - MCEC's guide to School policies in general and how to make sure your voice is heard,

<https://militaryspouse.com/military-life/pcs/6-survival-strategies-for-PCSing-mid-year-with-milkids/> -Mid year moves are not as common as they used to. A good collection of ideas and advice.

<https://military.tutor.com/home>. -Free tutoring for military dependents K-12.

<https://familiesonthehomefront.com/military-childrens-educational-bill-of-rights/> -Additional information about military children's rights under the Interstate Compact.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/11/military-kids-resilience-and-challenges> -Article about Military children and building their resiliency. Includes interviews with Dr. Jill Biden and discusses what schools can do to help transitioning military children.

<http://www.militarychild.org/back-to-school-for-military-kids> - List of programs and services to help military children transitioning to new schools.



High School Brats and Their Unique Challenges

<http://militaryoneclick.com/heres-what-to-do-if-you-have-to-move-during-your-high-schoolers-senior-year/> - Well researched article with topics ranging from knowing your rights to ways to help that Senior if duty calls them to change schools.

<https://www.mic3.net> -Interstate compact website. All the information explaining what you need to know about transferring in and out of multiple schools in multiple states.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/guidance_training/overview-of-the-interstate-compact.pdf -(VA SPECIFIC).

<http://militaryoneclick.com/25-programs-non-profits-for-military-kids/> -A variety of non profit organizations who is always looking out for our kiddos through programs, resources, and information. Feel free to check out all 25!

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz/blog/2014/08/moving-high-school-worst-advice-ever.html> -There is a little bit of humor in this article. Sometimes we need to give ourselves a break and let the new place sink in.

<https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/High%20School%20Senior%20Stabilization%20Program> -Provides information about the Army's High School Senior Stabilization Policy (HSSS).

<https://militaryspouse.com/relationships/parenting/were-moving-again-but-its-my-senior-year/> -A collection of alternate options for the senior year.

<http://www.armywifenet.com/pcs-orders-during-high-school-should-your-teen-go-or-stay/> -Some considerations for making a big decision.

<https://branchta.org/military-children-accommodations-college-entrance-exams/> -Resource to let you know how to get your child's accommodations for the next level of testing. Explains what local school needs to do as well.

<https://www.military.com/spouse/military-education/military-children-education/helping-child-through-college-application.html> -Tips to make the college application process a bit easier for our Brats.



Resources For College Bound Brats

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1563914470314755/> -A FB page geared toward only college aged and college bound Brats. There are many threads on GI Bill, Yellow Ribbon Program, Application tips, and a support community for those parents who are facing this stage in life.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/-/two-college-scholarships-for-military-children-and-how-to-apply> - Scholarship opportunities from Fisher House and Heroes Legacy.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/2012/07/18/where-to-find-college-scholarships-for-military-children> -Information regarding Scholarship programs for children of service members (all branches).

<https://www.usveteransmagazine.com/list-of-military-scholarships-for-service-members-spouses-and-dependents/> -A-Z listing of scholarships available to Spouses and Dependents.

https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911_transfer.asp -Official DOD site explaining Transferability and use of GI Benefits.

https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/yellow_ribbon.asp -Official DOD site explaining The Yellow Ribbon Program available to help cover additional educational costs from private colleges.

<https://studybreaks.com/college/the-advantages-of-being-a-military-brat-in-college/> -An article written by a college student about pros and cons of being a military brat. This site also offers writing and editing intern opportunities for college students.

<http://www.militaryscholar.org> -A clearinghouse of scholarships and search engine.

<http://www.moaa.org/loans/> -Loans and scholarships for members of MOAA (check out site to see if you are eligible).

<http://www.bestcolleges.com/financial-aid/scholarships-for-military-dependents/> -Article outlining different types of programs available to military dependents and an explanation of how to apply to many others.

<http://www.collegescholarships.org/scholarships/children.htm> -Selection of state supported scholarships for the children of military service-members (not all states are listed).

<https://www.military.com/education/money-for-school/state-veteran-benefits.html> -Article with links to specific state-based higher education support programs for military members and their families.

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/dea.asp> -Information about the VA's Dependents Education Assistance Program for family members of those killed in action, held POW or permanently disabled.

<https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/pages/college-fee-waiver.aspx> -Information about California's college tuition waiver program for family members of California residents killed in action, held POW or permanently disabled.

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/military-and-veterans-affairs/tuition-assistance-military-dependents-statutes.aspx> -State by State guide to specific educational benefits provided by the state to military dependents.

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/best-moving-books/> -Seven books about moving with kids that are listed by age.

PRINT RESOURCES

1. Lilly Hates Goodbye by Jerilyn Marler
2. The Military Brat, the Experiences of Pooh: New Faces by James Washington Jr
3. Father of the Falcons: Coach P's Military Brats & 'The Game of Life by Rob Dollar
4. Sometimes We Were Brave by Pat Brisson
5. The Italian Lesson: The Irreverent Adventures of a Military Brat and a Sailor by Kimball Medders
6. Base Jumping: The Vagabond Life of a Military Brat by William Willis
7. Military Kids Speak: Celebrating the Way You Think about Being a Military Kid by Julie Rahm
8. Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life....And Maybe the World by Admiral William McRaven

PANEL PROMPTS/ BLAB

1. How do you think the military lifestyle prepared you for college?
2. What about this lifestyle helped most in the transition from home to college? What was the most challenging?
3. What about this lifestyle helped most in the transition from home/college to workforce? What was the most challenging?
4. During moves, what things did your parents do that helped you the most with each move?
5. People assume that military children are adept at making new friends and accepting change because they have moved frequently. Do you feel that this is true in your own experience?
6. What was your thought process going into your high school years while anticipating yet another move? What was your plan of attack to make it work in a positive way?
7. How should more "introverted" military brats try to navigate through their high school years?
8. How can parents help our kids embrace their "military brat" identity?

BRAT LIKE A BOSS PANEL MEMBERS



SOME OF OUR AMAZING, RESILIENT MILITARY BRATS



Chapter Six: Bring Your Battle Buddies

Grab a tissue before watching some of the stories told in video segment Six “Bring Your Battle Buddies”. The panel members who appears in this video also have generously shared their stories on the pages that follow. This section may inspire you to reflect on the people in your life and write your own tribute. The article that precedes the stories was written by one of the panel members and if you would like to have your story included in a future collection of Battle Buddy Stories, please contact her at Kp.dowd@yahoo.com .



Who's Your Buddy?

By KP Palmer

We rarely come into Army (or military) life knowing what to do and how to act.

Our first duty station profoundly shapes us whether it is by the location, mission, or the people that serve with us. As we think back to that first unit function, the first FRG meeting, or the first deployment; we might remember the deep gulf of “unknowns” we were faced with as we started this journey.

We may also remember that first spouse with whom we felt that “instant connection”, or felt that jolt of energy when we meet someone else who simply “gets us”. This phenomenon of instant attraction occurs because, in the Military, we measure our time differently our civilian counterparts do.

Meeting a new person in the world of the military is not a slow, crockpot simmer of our thoughts and interests. It is more like the intense heat of an Instant Pot.... **fast, hot, and ready to be tested quickly.**

In our special world, friendship is measured similar to dog years: one month is equal to about seven, and by the time December comes around, that new friendship we made in June is now 42 months old.

That's how we roll.

So when the time comes to form those really important relationships known as “Battle Buddies”, its no wonder that we rarely hesitate to fill those spots.

The first truth about finding a Battle Buddy is that no matter how emotionally intelligent we think we are; we often fail to realize how much we mean to someone else. Even the most accidental meeting can result in a lifelong friendship that survives time, PCS moves, and various forms of stress.

The next truth we need to face is that there isn't just one type of Battle Buddy. Some of us have relied on the same one over the years, while others have experienced a revolving door of different types of these amazing people. What helps us survive this challenging life is the simple reality that there is ALWAYS a battle buddy lined up and ready to serve. So when it is time to deploy them to duty, we know exactly who to call!

1. **The Drill SGT:** This Battle Buddy is the one who makes us face the truth and sometimes, the truth isn't pretty! They are always ready to give us the kick we need to start that diet, get to the gym, volunteer, or apply for the job. They keep us from doing too much, motivate us when we try and hide, and they make sure we don't go to the commissary in our sweats. This Battle Buddy can be found in a variety of places, but someone this disciplined is often found in their native habitat of the fitness center.
2. **The Alexa BB:** - This BB can answer almost any question and keeps us squared away with reminders of when permission slips, taxes, or any other important things are due. This BB is all over current events and places we need to be. They are up to date on everything from local events to the latest TRICARE policies. They know obscure things from how long we can leave a child unsupervised to the best place to order gifts. The Alexa can be found anywhere and everywhere as they tend to be super involved and need very little sleep!
3. **The Spiritual GURU BB:** – Battle Buddies also keep tabs on each other's behavior. There are times when loneliness and stress get the better of us and when we are feeling overwhelmed, we can always fill up our cups with the help of our GURU BB. Whether armed with some inspirational scripture or a cup of green tea and some essential oils, this BB recognizes your need for a little self care. Self care is not the same for everyone and your GURU BB knows what you need. This BB feeds the soul!
4. **The “Will you be My Lorelei Gilmore” BB:** – This Buddy is ready at any moment to grab a cup of coffee and offer witty repertoire to take our minds of the problem. The talk can be serious or lighthearted, but there is always constant chatter and the latest coffee infusion. And by infusion, we mean strong coffee with NO side of judgment. And just like a good Gilmore Girl, “If you lead, she will follow”.
5. **The Mary Poppins BB:** - That person that takes our kids when we are ready to sell them on EBAY. That angel of a friend, who still loves to hold babies or loves to plan outings for surly teenagers. They show up when we are craving solitude or just need time to run an errand. They never complain or expect a favor in return. Yes, it may not be fair that our kids love them more than us right now, but we will win them back after the deployment.
6. **The Ted Talker BB:-** Like most Ted Talks, the time spent with these BB's may not be long but the powerful thought provoking time is just enough! These are the inquisitive buddies we go to when need an “out of the box” approach to some of the same old problems. This is the BB we need when we are

stuck for fundraising ideas or a theme for a unit event. They are excited about new ideas and projects and their message is always REAL. They may not have all the answers, but these charismatic BBs can help us find our grit.

7. **The “Real Housewife BB”** – When we need to focus on something a little less serious than everyday life. Who else but a “Real Housewife BB” can get us out of the house and focus on shopping! Whether it’s a run to the local outlet mall or just hitting a flea market (or thrift store) to hunt for a bargains, this buddy doesn’t disappoint (or discourage). This is the buddy (if stationed in Germany) that convinces us that a 6-hour drive across the border to Poland (to get yet another piece of pottery) is the best idea ever, and they will be at our door (passport in hand) by 4 AM the next day.
8. **The “Fat Amy” BB**– Our Rebel Wilson worthy friend who knows that sometimes we need more than a little shopping to decompress and they are more than happy to plan it! They organize the party, make sure we let our hair down, and provides at least 25 ways to laugh. Whether the event is a movie, dinner, night of dancing, or a weekend away, this BB is there to make sure we let off some steam.
9. **Netflix and Chill BB**- Shows up on our doorstep with milk duds and a bottle of our favorite beverage and lets us pick the binge fest. There is no judgment on how many episodes or the genre. They are down with whatever we need to escape.

And FINALLY there is.....

10. **The Break Glass BB**- The ultimate in Battle Buddies. This BB is 1-9 rolled into one. The “*Break Glass BB*” is the fire extinguisher behind the glass. We all will eventually need to “break the glass. Whether it is an ER visit, kid pick up, or just an unforeseen emergency, this “ride or die” buddy is there. No questions asked, just immediate response in any and every situation. No problem is too big (or too small), and no distance too great. They may not be involved in much of our day to day, but when we need them, they never flinch when we say things like “My water just broke, can you be in the room with me?” or “I can’t find my car”. They are simply indispensable.

Over the years, we have built our own force of people who support us. We may have just one or many Battle Buddies in our own Army, but we must remember to hold them close to our hearts. Military Life is much better when we bring our Battle Buddies along for the ride!

Shawn Matthews and Battle Buddy, Sophia Ortiz

Shawn Matthews has been a dedicated Army wife for two decades. Over the years, she has had a few Battle Buddies from the Drill SGT to the GURU. But her journey with her “BREAK GLASS” Battle Buddy started with her being kind to someone she barely knew! Shawn usually begins friendships at each new duty station with careful trepidation. She looks for people who are not “high maintenance” and more easygoing like real herself. Shawn is big on real! So when her husband asked her to help a soldier in a time of need, Shawn never even hesitated to jump in, and in the process, she found the ultimate BB in Sophia.

“I met Sophia when we were stationed in El Paso (Fort Bliss) in 1997. She was actually one of my husband’s soldiers and they were going to the field and her family care plan fell through (she was married to another soldier). My husband asked me to help out and from that moment on I became “Mama Shawn” to her kids.”

We never know how much we mean to someone else and even the simplest gesture can reap rewards beyond measure. By selflessly providing Sophia with care for her children during the beginning of the 16-year war, Shawn planted the seeds for a lifelong bond that military spouses have come to hold essential to their lives.

“Our fate as Battles for life was sealed when Sophia was involved in an accident downrange and had to come back. She lived with me for three months and that pretty much sealed it for both of us.”

Shawn’s dedication to Sophia is not one sided. Sophia has cared for Shawn and provided Shawn with the guidance and support only a Battle Buddy can bring.

“She tells me the truth. She will let me have my say and then gives me the truth. We also share the same faith and she is the only friend I have that knows everything about me and it is ALWAYS REAL!”

Although they haven’t been stationed together in a while, they visit each other no matter how great the distance is or how many time zones they cross. Of course social media has made it easier for them, but they pick up right where they left off. When asked if she could tell or ask her BB Sophia one thing, Shawn replied without hesitation.

“On my deathbed, I want her with me. She is that kind of friend.”



Julie Desaulnier and her BB's, Jennifer Reyburn & Dailah Cole

Anyone who has been stationed in Korea knows the challenges that particular duty station brings. The language is tough to figure out and there is not a lot of personal space. Lots of strange smells and new food at every turn and then there are things that only a Battle Buddy can help you with 12 hours after you land in a country like a SOFA STAMP and ration cards. This is how Julie D met one of her all time best Battle Buddies.

Jenny came to the hotel as Julie was barely adjusting to the time zone.

*“As Jenny came to pick me, I just felt hugged from all sides. She took me to get my SOFA Stamp, explained the ration card **system**, and helped me plan the change of command reception. We had never met and all of a sudden, she is indispensable.”*

Julie's world in Korea was a bit of an anomaly as she developed close relationships with not just Jenny, but another spouse stationed with the same BDE. Like Jenny and Julie, Dailah was also a BN Commander's spouse and although that can be a competitive situation, the three of them came together to support one another.

“The three of us would set meetings to plan and coordinate events within BDE, but we often got sidetracked with life and ended up laughing and sharing things with each other. We only wanted the best for each other's groups.”

Julie recognizes that her BB's complement her in different ways. Julie saw Jenny as the “passionate go getter” where Julie considers herself much more laid back. Dailah finds a way to put a personal touch on everything and that combination worked effortlessly for them.

“We fed off each other- Jenny got me going and I brought her down when needed. There was no competition. We were all about making the mission better and helping each other. It wasn't about doing it better. Whether we were having a glass of wine or just sitting and talking. There was no judgment, even when they disagreed with me.”

Julie is no stranger to making friends quickly. Growing up in the Army life, many of her influences on the importance of Battle Buddies came from her Mom, a career spouse of 33 years.

“I remember my Mom's battle buddies and how close they were to each other. When I was in 6th grade, I had the example of how BBs could help and support during Desert Storm. The established circle of having someone else to vent to or share burdens with, especially as FRGs didn't exist at that time. Watching my mom build and utilize these close relationships had a profound influence on me.”

Not only is Julie influenced by her Mom's experience, she also sees the value in the role of civilians as Battle Buddies.

“I had great friends while we were living and working in Washington DC. We are still close. It is good to have two sets of friends. It provides perspective. If you get too caught up in the military life, you become so self-involved and lose sight of what is happening in the big world. Civilian friends provide me an avenue to tell a story to someone who can't possibly imagine what I am going through, as opposed to a military spouse who

might say, “Yep, me too”. Civilian friends can let you own your story because they have never been through it and they relish the strangeness of it. They also don’t all move away and are there to welcome me back, which is nice too.”

And while the balanced perspective is great, there is one area that Julie feels military friends really understand better than anyone.

“Military BB’s understand small milestones. Things such as once a week dates or eating pizza from China plates before they get packed away again. Earlier on, I had a BB named Susan Rollie. She made sure we met every Thursday for Margaritas & Queso at Chilis. Just something so simple and small meant a lot to each other. That little item on a calendar. Battle Buddies get that we need those small anniversaries in our life.”

Keeping in touch with her BB’s has been pretty easy in today’s media age. Julie makes extra efforts to keep her relationships strong.

“It doesn’t have to be constant contact but quality contact. We do group dates on FaceTime. They make it easy to pick right up where we left off. Awesome to still know they are there!”

Looking back on all her time as a Brat and as a spouse, Julie cherishes many memories. However, her time at Camp Humphries, Korea with Jenny and Dailah remains her favorite time thus far in her Army life. It would be hard to replicate that time in Korea with those special people.

“It was one of those great years when everything is magical.”



Aimee Henderson and Battle Buddy, Sarah Costello

A nurse by trade and a seasoned Army spouse of 19 years, Aimee Henderson has a realistic, no nonsense way of looking at life. She approaches each duty station armed with extensive research regarding places to live and schools and programs for her kids, and she approaches new friendships with the same, careful process.

“I have become a bit lerier as the years go by. As we keep moving, I keep getting pickier. When I have a solid person going into a duty station, I am less inclined to look, but when I don’t know someone at a duty station I look for honest, genuine people.”

And when it came to finding her Battle Buddy, Sarah, Aimee needed help from an unlikely source.... her husband! Their husbands worked in the same shop in Hanau, Germany. Aimee was hesitant at allowing her husband to fix her up for “friend dating”, but it turns out, he picked the right one for Aimee!

“My first reaction when my husband told me he found a friend for me was Oh no- this never works. But he was spot on with Sarah, I have to give him credit!”

Over the years, Sarah has developed into many things for Aimee. She is her drill sergeant when needed and can sit and listen without judgment, yet still gives her the dose of reality Aimee needs from time to time. One year, She drove six hours in one day just to celebrate a birthday. But her ability to step in and do the things that Aimee needs without even asking is what makes Sarah the “Break Glass” Battle Buddy we all need in our lives.

“She came for a week when I was having surgery. I didn’t ask her to do anything. She just took over. She prepped meals for the week (and after), made sure my kids were taken care of and their needs met. She just knows how to help!”

Like many Battle Buddies, it is not just the acts of kindness that make them stand out, it is the balance they provide for us. Sarah and Aimee were lucky enough to be stationed together twice since they met, and that has allowed them to continue to strengthen their bond.

“She is very different from me. She is liberal, a teacher and sometimes it just blows my mind how insanely smart she is. When I am struggling with things, she helps me make sense of things. I am creative and she is the realist but the balance between us brings a reality check”

As a professional, Aimee has also been exposed to many civilian co workers and friends (especially at Fort Bragg) over the years. She finds that civilians can provide respite from being inundated in a world of all things Army!

“It is a different type of friendship, but one where you don’t have to talk about the Army or your spouse all the time. It is more about our relationships and us. I guess it seems like an escape from the army life. I also really enjoyed my MOPS (mothers of preschoolers) group.”

Over the past 12 duty stations, Aimee has connected with about 10 people who she considers to be important and keeps close, but Sarah (who currently lives outside Chicago) remains her “Break Glass Buddy”. Aimee and Sarah keep in touch by talking at least once a month and they connect with social media more frequently.

When we asked Aimee to come up with one thing she would like to say to Sarah after all these years, Aimee struggled a bit with finding just one thing.

“I would tell her how important she is to me. I get caught up in rat race and don’t share that enough but our relationship means so much to me.”



Becky Welch and Jen Carroll, From Blondes to Battle Buddies

When it comes time to a PCS, many questions need to be answered. While some questions such as “which is the best school for my kids?” or “What neighborhood should we live in?”, others questions such as “Where should I get my hair done?” not only require a bit more investigation, but can be a great way to meet someone. In Becky Welsh’s life story, that simple question led to a life changing and a lifelong friendship.

“I met Jen in the after school pickup line at Skipcha Elementary in Fort Hood 2007. She asked where I got my hair done, and we were fast friends since that moment. There is nothing like two blondes bonding over where to get awesome highlights.”

They were friendly immediately, but weren’t super close until Becky came back to Fort Hood in 2010. They had mutual friends who reunited them and the connection was rekindled.

“Thank goodness someone got us back together as we both were looking for a battle buddy.”

From highlights to helping each other survive deployments, raising each other kids, and just being there for each other. Becky and Jen’s friendship became as important as oxygen. They grew together as they were struggling with finding the right people to invite into their circle. Additionally, both their husbands were about to deploy so the timing couldn’t have been more perfect.

“We watched each others kids, went to grocery for each other, and enabled each other to have appointments and self care. We encouraged each other to take breaks and let each other be adults, be human. We were very real and honest with each other. When we were frustrated with kids, we talked each other down”

When asked what made Jen so important to her, Becky struggled to come up with just one answer. Her love and appreciation of Jen can be best summarized below.

“She isn’t afraid to go to that place of realness with me. Some topics that might send other women running in the opposite direction and lock themselves in the closet, Jen could handle and she handled it with humor and reality. We had funny one liners that enabled us to laugh at our situations. Jen was on the front lines with me. Hence, her being my Battle Buddy.”

After many moves, Becky looks for honesty and “real” when searching for a connection. Finding people who keep their promises and honor their plans is very important to Becky. She like the old adage “Iron sharpens Iron” and she is glad she found someone like Jen who makes her a better person and finds it easy to maintain their relationship over time and distance.

“We go for times where we talk every day. As soon as we got kids off to school, we had a phone call and coffee. We also keep in touch through social media and every year we have a girl’s trip together. We try to go to a different location that is between both of us. Now she is Korea and we have “cocktails and coffee” as nne of us is drinking one of those depending on time of the call.”

Becky and Jen make an effort to stay important to each other. They even have matching bracelets and key chains with the inscription “YOU ARE MY PERSON”. Both of their husbands like to say,

“Anyone trying to get between them has simply lost their minds”



Aimee Randazzo Celebrates Her Battle Buddies

Aimee is the epitome of a communicator. A veteran spouse of 20 years, she has used her social worker background to navigate through the complex world of military relationships and to find strength in others.

“What I realized while reading the article “Who is Your Buddy?”, is that all of my Battle Buddies complete me. My battle buddies have strengths that I feel are lacking in me, and I tend to gravitate toward towards those people.”

Aimee is possessed with the self-awareness that helps her identify the types of Battle Buddies she needs. She is a self-proclaimed “care giver” and tends to stay away from the “drill SGT” types while seeking out daring, optimistic people who keep her energized.

“I tend to look for people who are loyal and honest and I also look to fill a need in their lives. Most of my buddies are spontaneous and confident.”

Nomi Stanton was Aimee’s first BB. Newly married and stationed in Germany, Aimee met Nomi through their jobs working at ACS. Nomi was a combination of “Netflix and Chill and Lorelei Gilmore”. The type of Buddy who will pour a cup of coffee and make every situation better!

“Nomi is funny and warm, and we are still in touch. She could take anything and make it fun. I am glad my first experience with an Army unit was a positive one. She really set the tone.”

Aimee is tuned in to what others need and in turn she has found that she also can find what she needs.

“I look for a BB who is well rounded and they balance me out. Someone who offers encouragement, a safe haven, and perspective.”

It was important that she developed this intuitive skill as her greatest challenge was to come while stationed at Fort Hood in 2004. It was here that she met a battle buddy that Aimee would really come to lean on as their unit went through some dark times during deployment. It was during this time, that Aimee would need to “break the glass” and Gina Denomy was on the other side ready to be there for Aimee. Aimee and Gina met during Family Readiness training. Both of them had just given birth to their first child. They found themselves navigating first time motherhood together and getting reading for their soldier’s 1st Iraq deployment. They had a lot in common.

“We supported each other with information and reassurance. We took care of many others and were busy during the day, but made time to tuck each other in with a quick phone call and a “Buddy check” each night. During aftermath of the losses to our BN, we leaned heavily on each other and have stayed close through the subsequent stations and distances.”

Gina and Aimee’s friendship was made even stronger by the close relationship their husbands forged while deployed. They shared things on both ends of the world to include grief and loss. During the tough times the unit endured, Aimee was able to tap into her strength as a caregiver to both her FRG members and to Gina. They leaned on each other and took comfort from each other. They became Battle Buddies for life!

From a base as iconic as Fort Hood to the suburbs of Maryland, sometimes the military brings us to the Civilian world for a while. While some spouses struggle with this environment, and although there were some things her Army pals understood better, Aimee appreciated the positive things her “non military” neighbors offered.

“I do believe they (civilians) can fill some roles, but the overarching concepts they struggle to understand. We sometimes forget how our leaving impacts their lives. Our civilian neighborhood was the only place we had a goodbye party because “goodbyes” are not as common as they are in our world. That was also the first time I used the phrase “I am from Maryland” instead of our home state of Ohio. We loved our community there. They tend to hug a little tighter and embrace us a little more than on a military post because it is not normal in their world.”

In 2015, Aimee met an amazing Battle Buddy at her most senior time as a spouse. During PCC (preparing for her husband’s pending command time) she befriended Kelly Wagner, another spouse embarking on the same journey. Stationed in Italy, Aimee and Kelly spent much time together, touring, shopping and being there for each other. They simply became essential to one another.

“She is the things that I am not, Spontaneous and daring. She provides me clarity and springboards ideas, but is also a good mirror. I could be my true self and vice versa. Kelly offered “tough love” and told me what I needed to hear.”

Finally, the last place Aimee expected to find a new Battle Buddy was a 10-month stint at a schoolhouse assignment in Carlisle. Aimee had many friends and even a BB from years past, but through her volunteering, she met Jana Tikerpuu, One of the IF’s here at WC from Estonia. Part of the same Presentation group, Jana and Aimee bonded quickly and found to be a great support to each other.

“She is my GURU. She has clarity and insight to read people and lead people down a path to realize their own potential.”

Aimee’s path is filled with many types of Battle Buddies. Some for a season and some for life, she credits them all with helping her enjoy and succeed in this unique lifestyle.

“I just want to say Thanks to all the BB’s in my life for offering the support to me that I needed and for being able to give me strength and develop me in areas I didn’t have.”



Kristi Forbes and Brooke Mellott, Battle Buddies Forever!

As if the bond of their friendship wasn't already evident in the smile on Kristi's face during her interview, but having her BB SKYPE in from Hoenfels, Germany took her excitement to the next level. Brooke's time of day was a bit later than our coffee hour interview, and she was a good sport to be there for the interview and Kristi was excited to be talking about Brooke.

"She is my Break Glass Battle Buddy. I can't imagine this life without her."

The dynamic duo actually met during command time in Germany. Their first interaction was early on in a military ceremony receiving line. They hit it off immediately. Both being seasoned Army wives; they knew right away that they had found the right person to balance each other. Since Brooke was involved in the interview, she didn't even hesitate when asked about what drew her to Kristi.

"Kristi is so outgoing and makes me do the crap I would normally avoid. She walks the walk and she just goes out and does what needs to be done. She drove me out of my comfort zone (with the help of a few beers) ... I need her in my life."

Kristi, in turn, recognizes what Brooke brings to the relationship as well. Brooke keeps her balanced as their different strengths compliment each other. Kristi often needs time to decompress after all the activities and programs she is involved in, and Brooke provides that respite for her.

"Brooke listens, but she also calls me on out when she feels I need it. It is important to have person. When you need someone do be able to do that for, it is essential that you trust them and we trust each other all the way. She gets me through and holds me accountable. Brooke is so real and who she is is really "who she is". She is a listener and there no airs about her."

Brooke also embraces her role that helps her support and keep Kristi reigned in.

"Kristi wants to take on so much, I just try to keep her grounded and balanced."

Both BB's agree that the unique perspective each one brings to the relationship is something only a military spouse can understand. Brooke has been an Army wife for 28 years and Kristi for 20. They have known this lifestyle most of their adulthood. They also knew the value of being a united command team. Most of the time this type of relationship is beneficial to the unit, but this time it was beneficial on a personal level and that is an awesome way to go through a time of heavy responsibility.

"Brooke was a perfect command team partner because she was so compassionate and caring. She truly loves the soldiers and their families. She was also willing to help me with all my crazy ideas."

The key to this lasting friendship is most certainly their commitment to communication. Kristi and Brooke always find time to talk, text, and Face Time. Kristi even found a way to make Brooke a part of this interview. Their genuine respect and love for each other was evident during the whole interview. Even their husbands are on board with the whole Battle Buddies love between them as Brooke's husband, Brett Mellott chimed in the interview with the following:

“The only thing missing is the mention of the strong bond between the husbands that really helped facilitate Brooke and Kristi’s BB relationship.”

Whether or not K and B choose to acknowledge their husbands’ role or not, one thing is certain and that is the thankfulness they each feel for each other. To close each interview, the question ‘If you could tell your BB one thing, what would it be?’ is asked. Both Kristi and Brooke spoke at the same time to thank each other.

Kristi: “I firmly believe God will put people in our lives to teach us lessons. Brooke, you are one of those lessons. Thanks for always having my back.”

Brooke: “Thanks for always being there for me”.

As Brooke prepares for her husband’s retirement, it’s a comfort for her to know that she will take something permanent away from the Army; her Battle Buddy!



Jennifer Ffrench and “Jackpot” Battle Buddy, Ashley Williams

One of the most amazing aspects of the Military life is the opportunity to choose a family. Military members get to form their own tribe of people who are there for them, support them, and share the grief and joys. Jennifer Ffrench is no exception. However, she is exceptionally lucky to not only have found an Army family, but a battle buddy as well. Jennifer and Ashley first met in 2001 near Destin Florida and thanks to social media, they were able to reconnect 12 years later when Ashley returned to Destin a second time.

“We moved back in 2013 and all our friends were gone. I was looking for friend and although she was just a casual acquaintance in 2001, I reached out because (thanks to Facebook), I knew she was still there. I felt like an island with small children and one with a disability. When I found out that she had been through some of the things I was struggling with, it was like BAM. She gets me.”

Jennifer realized that Ashley not only understood her, but she filled so many other B.B. roles.

“She is honest and tells it like it is. Her sense of humor is unique. She can find a meme that will make me laugh (the kind you can’t put on FB) and she always makes an effort to talk and meet. She also loves to shop and it is just so easy to spend a day with her.”

But over all, Ashley has achieved “Break Glass Status” along with the rest of her family. Both of their families’ love spending time together and the Battle Buddies have branched out into “Battle Families”.

“We love hanging out together with our families as well. We all get along and we vacation together and everyone gets along.”

It takes some time and efforts to hit the BB jackpot as Jennifer did. In the past Jennifer would reach out to people through joining FB groups, and spouses club. She also has her fair share of civilian friends that she went to college and law school with; but she finds that as much as those relationships balance her out, no one understood her quite like her like-minded Battle Buddy, Ashley.

“She is just REAL and she lets me be me. She would come if I needed her, no matter the distance. I can’t thank her enough for just being there, for just being present.”



Meredith Hummel & Elizabeth Garcia, From Babies to Battle Buddies!

In spite of her upbringing as a Navy Brat, Meredith Hummel can hardly be described as a typical Military Spouse. Armed with a refreshing candor, she has lived all over the world and brings with her an adventurous spirit and a positive view on life. Meredith doesn't seem too afraid of anything or anyone! In spite of her independent streak, she also shares the same need as her fellow spouses to find a "tribe" in each and every duty station. She often tries the "usual routes" military spouses take to finding friends.

"I often try the usual haunts when looking for friends when we get to a new duty station. I hit the spouses club, FRG, the gym, and of course PWOC where I went for the free babysitting, but actually stayed for the adult conversation".

While those places are often a good starting place for most people, Meredith eventually found an even more interesting way to meet her future "Break Glass" Battle Buddy, Elizabeth Garcia, while attending a unit function.

"The night Elizabeth and I met, we were at a BBQ and we both needed to leave to find somewhere to nurse our babies, believe it or not we ended up bonding over nursing! ☺ We found out over some time that we had other things in common...kids the same age and in the same unit at Fort Rucker."

As in most military stories, that was just chapter one for Meredith and Elizabeth. They found themselves stationed together again while their husbands were both in command at Fort Bliss, Texas.

"We got stationed together for BN command in Texas, 2013. Command was a stressful time and we leaned on each other, bounced ideas off each other, and shared many events. I have so much fun with her and we both have energetic personalities, so sometimes we have to reign each other in."

Fort Bliss was a place that offered a lot of responsibility and obligations for them both, but for Meredith it also offered one of the most challenging times of her life.

"I was diagnosed with breast cancer during my time at Fort Bliss. It was a shock and came at a time of enormous responsibility, but Elizabeth was there for me 100%. She communicated with friends near and far. She organized meal trains and found ways to freeze the leftover meals and provided a way for others to help me. She even ran a website for me. Most importantly, she held my hand and kept it real while she kept people out of way. She just knew what I needed."

That kind of bond cemented them for a lifelong friendship. What makes their friendship unique is that they find themselves genuinely happy for one another. They celebrate each other's successes and travel to see each other. They try and talk every Wednesday morning during Elizabeth's long commute. They make the effort and the time to stay connected.

Reflecting on everything she has been through with Elizabeth, Meredith closed with the following tribute to the Battle Buddy she is grateful for each and every day.

“Elizabeth...you always are able to make me laugh, so thank you for finding a humor in every situation. You also just have great timing and know when I need a good word. So, thanks for that as well.”



Nicole Curry Celebrates Her Tribe of Battle Buddies

Nicole Curry is the ultimate Military Brat and, as such, has met many other Brats who served as her battle buddies over the years. But Nicole is not limited to just other military spouses when it comes to support and friendship, throughout the years she has found that she needs a mix of buddies to make this life awesome!

‘Depending on the duty station, I had the luxury of knowing 2-3 people everywhere I go. Especially from my dad’s 32 -year career. There seems to be someone from my childhood everywhere I go. This has been a blessing to me in finding support.’

Familiar support seems to a good word to describe Nicole’s first Battle Buddy, Amy Thompson. Nicole found comfort in Amy’s experience as an Army brat and she relied on Amy during a difficult time in her life.

“Both of us are brats and we really got to know her during deployment 2011. We were both senior spouses and not new to deployment, but bonded over looking out for others. Leadership deployment battle buddies are different. That one that feels like five people We were at Fort Campbell and the kids were all old enough to know what was going on. It was our worst deployment and I was grateful to have her and the lessons she helped me learn I was able to use in future leadership roles. We balanced each other out.”

Perhaps one of the biggest surprises to this professional brat and spouse was the huge role civilian spouses have played in her life.

“I watched my family do this for past 30 years. Many reasons to get into military. But it is not 9-5, it is a lifestyle, so military spouses get it, they know. But civilians can also support by being prayer warriors, supporting families, sponsoring soldiers. They support in different ways.”

Civilian spouses Maureen Reick and Holly Pauly have been amazing additions to Nicole’s BB family.

I inherited them from my hubby. They were his college buddies from his Alma Mater, Notre Dame. They called me when I was a fiancé (way before we recognized finances in support roles) and John was deployed. We had never met, but they reached out and offered support. I finally met them when he got back, and I will always appreciate how much they cared for me and for John. They knew how he loved me and that will always be special to me especially as none of them were military. We still get together when we can.”

Although Nicole has had her own Army of support over the years, and she feels very strongly about the roles Military Spouses can have in one another’s lives.

“We move, we dig our foxholes, dig our trenches and get set up. People walk by and say hi, but that person who gets in the trench with you, they are your battle buddy.”

Like many other Spouse warriors, Nicole also has a BREAK GLASS buddy

*“My Break Glass, my person, is Jen – **She is everything rolled into one.** She makes me the best me. I want to be better when I am with her. We met in PWOC in Germany She was the Ying to my Zang. She is quiet and*

reserved and I am all out there. She is a linear thinker and asks many questions with genuine concern for wanting to learn about others. She asked me about 50 questions in rapid fire sequence.”

Nicole being a master multi-tasker, answered them all and a friendship was born.

“The first difficult situation we went through together was a medical emergency I had. She empathized and made me talk about the difficulty it brought to my life. She said it was “it is okay to have PJ days, but we have to pick ourselves up and go on.”

To maintain their friendship and support, Nicole and Jen talk once a week, text, unfortunately they have not seen each other in a few year and are looking forward the the Army correcting that issue and giving them the “re-stationing” they both think they deserve!

Jen says that the day she is done with the Army, she will to stop and remember the blessing the Army gave her in Nicole. Nicole would like to Amy to know the following:

*“Thank you is not adequate. Growing up I had my parents and my brother, and they love me, but they don’t always “get me”. I feel Jen is my sister and **I think CHOOSING her stands tall.** I would choose her again hands down and twice and Sunday!”*



Tracey Whitfield & Sonia Santiago Find Battle Buddy Destiny!



Some people are just DESTINED to be friends. This would accurately describe Tracey and Sonia's path to a "Break Glass" bond that existed long before they actually met each other. Tracey's excitement when recalling the story of how they met is palpable. Even as she is telling it again for the hundredth time, she still gets overwhelmed.

'We were Both military brats in the Air force and our paths crossed when we were 5 years old.. We met at Armstrong JR high in Fayetteville NC, NOT KNOWING WE HAD FAMILY HISTORY.'

It turned out Tracey and Sonia's brothers were in sports together and they both heard their brothers talk about their sisters prompting each of them to want to meet one another.

"After we finally met, we were inseparable. We cheered together, became best friends, dressed alike, told people we were sisters."

But what they found out after they had been friends for a while really blew their minds!

"We found out shortly after hanging out together, that our parents knew and hung out together when they were in high school and they actually went to Prom together many years prior."

Their friendship progressed into the next phase of graduation and college. Sonia joined the Army and got married but she and Tracey never let go. Like most seasoned Battle Buddies, they made efforts to stay in touch and keep their friendship strong.

"Even though we didn't talk every day, we kept in touch however we could. We never had an argument. When I graduated college, she went to Germany and married a soldier. She came back to Bragg, then Georgia, but I saw her often when she came back to visit parents and I always kept in touch with her whole family."

Tracey relies on Sonia for strength and encouragement.

"When I am in a low place, Sonia is the one the Lord uses to cheer me up. She told me in high school, "YOU BE YOU, Don't change for other people" and that advice has stayed with me forever."

Sonia is now in Las Vegas and Tracey is excited to visit her in her new location. She was reflective on how much Sonia means to her.

“I would thank her for being the great friend and protector she was even to her own peril. She always put me first and I have never had the opportunity to thank her for that.”

From the 7th grade cheer squad to present day, Tracey and Sonia’s commitment to each other is not only admirable, but serves as a good reminder that real friendship takes work.

PANEL PROMPTS/BYBB

1. How do you find/identify your Battle Buddies at each new duty station?
2. How do you think Battle Buddies among military spouses are different from BFFs in the civilian world?
3. What is it about your battle buddy that makes him/her so important to you?
4. How do you maintain a connection/friendship with your BB after you move?
5. Do you feel it is necessary for a battle buddy to be a fellow military spouse, or can someone else fully understand and support your situation?
6. What do fellow military spouses understand better than “civilian” friends?
7. What would you really like your BB to know about your relationship with them?



For our FINAL SECTION, we have put together some inspiring stories and enough resources to get you motivated and activated in your own communities. There are articles on the need to leave a legacy, how to attract and retain volunteers, and some amazing tributes to those spouses and community members who have left a lasting legacy on us all.

Need some inspiration? Keep on reading!

Feel free to watch the **Leave a Legacy video** and read the interview with **Kerry Irvin**, one of our own classmates who created an opportunity for us (and those who come after us) at Carlisle Barracks to leave our own legacies with The Salvation Army and other organizations in the area. –@KP

Spouses at Carlisle Barracks Help Their Community Leave a Legacy



Sometimes you are lucky enough to be stationed with that one person. That one person who looks at a problem and boldly asks, “What if” or “Why can’t we do this”. The spouses stationed at Carlisle Barracks this year were lucky enough to have such a person in their ranks!

Kerry Irvin is that spouse. Through her vision and hard work, she created a new entity to the Military Family Program (MFP) by implanting a special community service piece in to the existing annual Spouses’ Project. Kerry explains how it all started:

“The Leave a Legacy program began as a companion service component to the U.S. Army War College’s annual spouses’ project. During the discussions leading up to the selection of the annual project, it became evident to me that I was amongst people with a myriad of knowledge and talent. As the ideas for a project flowed, I heard spouses speak with expertise gained from a multitude of life experiences –legal, medical, social services, human resources, education, etc. And, of course, all of us are primarily military spouses which means we are masters at adapting, organizing, job seeking, and all of the other multitude of skills needed to keep a family together during multiple PCS moves and deployments.”

Sometimes it can be overwhelming to be in a room full of spouses with massive amounts of talent, but Kerry immediately had the seeds of something amazing forming in her mind.

“Some of the spouses were talking about the frustration of putting their talents on hold for the duration of the year and that seemed like such a waste to me. I wanted to explore the possibility of creating a project that would combine the obvious talents and abundant resources in an effort to reach beyond just a “one and done” type of project. That was the genesis of Leave a Legacy.”

The LAL program works in conjunction with other volunteer programs in the community. Kerry and her team of volunteers have kept quite busy during the past year. Starting with The Salvation Army’s Angel Tree project, the LAL team organized Carlisle Barracks residents to assist with sorting donations and to ensure that local community children in need received a very special Christmas.

“As a new service program, we could not be more delighted with the response from both the military and civilian communities. Both of whom have worked hand-in-hand already in a number of civic projects, beginning with our Angel Tree operation. War college families worked side-by-side sorting and packaging gifts for local children in need. It was truly a holiday blessing to see so many neighbors and classmates come out to support our first cause.”



Soon after the inaugural event, the group undertook a mission to assist the homeless population during a very harsh winter. Leave a Legacy conducted a coat, blanket, and outerwear drive where Kerry, along with drive committee chairs, Kristi Forbes and Julie DeSaulniers **collected over 600** much-needed winter items for immediate distribution which resulted in many residents of the homeless community getting blankets, coats, and other cold-weather gear, This was then quickly followed by a third event where Kerry came up with a clever and easy way for community members to contribute.



“After the coat drive, we put our energy into providing the meal kitchens and local shelters with personal hygiene items. We came up with a plan that made it easy for everyone on Carlisle Barracks to participate by gathering travel-sized toiletries and simply place those in a grocery sack on their front door knob on a certain date. We then sent our “elves” out to pick them all up. This quick and easy drive led to the collection of well over a thousand items needed to help the area homeless maintain healthy hygiene.”

To say Kerry and her crew had the support of this community is an understatement. Volunteers and donations came from everyone in the community. Not only did LAL have Garrison Command support, both the Commandant of the War college, General Kem and his wife Martha have supported the program at many events.



The next step for the LAL Program will be to match talents and interests to the needs of the community, and that won't be too difficult seeing how much talent is in the spouse cadre, coupled with how many organizations are now reaching out to Kerry and her team.

“The Leave a Legacy project operates much like a clearinghouse of talent and resources. Now that we have become a known entity in our adopted community, we have begun to receive requests for assistance from various aid agencies. We are currently working to develop a questionnaire for next year's war college spouses. With this tool, we will be able to best match talents and interests of our spouses with the needs of the community. We have spouses able to devote regular hours to helping, and we have others who have an hour here and there, regardless, we hold fast to the adage that “Time spent serving is time well spent” and our work this year proves this to be true.”

The program started at Carlisle Barracks this year can easily be implemented into other military communities, and Kerry offers some advice to those who are also interested in starting a similar program.

“The first thing you should do is contact the local volunteer coordinator to ensure you're not duplicating efforts. The coordinator will know what gaps may exist and then you can work with them to fill those gaps. Next, definitely seek approval from JAG and the command team. Keep in mind, it is not necessary to have a “captive audience” like we have here at the war college to make a service project work. Military families have a long-standing tradition of service. This project became known as Leave a Legacy because that is just what I hope that it will allow us to accomplish. The title may be a proper noun, but it is also a verb, a call to action. A challenge. The act of leaving a legacy sounds daunting, but when looked at in the scope of individuals reaching out to better their community, while also bridging this so-called military/civilian divide,

each act of kindness, each hour spent volunteering to help those in need, creates a lasting imprint. That is a legacy.”

Kerry’s vision for the future of the LAL program is to find a spouse in next year’s class to mentor so that the program will continue. Like the torch that represents the US Army War College, the Leave a Legacy Program will also be passed on the next spouse class that comes to learn here.

“In today’s world, we see so many communities in need. Our time here in Carlisle may be transitory, but that does not mean that our impact as war college families must be. We receive a new group of students and families every year which means a new opportunity to utilize talents and resources to leave our community better for each subsequent group. One of my favorite definitions for the word ‘Legacy’ is of something that is passed on to one person from their family. Isn’t that what we all are here – Family?”

Kerry will remain at Carlisle Barracks for the 2018-2019 school year as part of the Blue Star Seminar on the Barracks. Anyone interested in learning more about the program, may contact Kerry Irvin via email at awcleavealegacy@gmail.com or contact the Military Family Programs office at (717) 245-4787.



Others Who Left a Legacy in Military Communities

http://kdhnews.com/military/texas-first-lady-fort-hood-generals-attend-funeral-for-hug/article_8b776bec-b27e-11e5-bba0-0fea05fd46c0.html - First Lady of Hugs is remembered in Texas.

<https://www.today.com/kindness/hug-lady-83-who-gave-out-500-000-hugs-soldiers-t63901> - Because the Hug lady deserves another link. She was that awesome!

https://www.army.mil/article/97715/leaving_a_legacy_of_caring - A volunteer leaves a legacy in Italy.

<http://www.pointsoflight.org/blog/military-wife-helps-strengthen-family-foundation-veteran-community-after-husbands-traumatic> - An organization dedicated to connecting caregivers of U.S. veterans with essential support as families face transitioning from active duty to the civilian world

<http://militaryoneclick.com/you-should-know-these-4-male-military-spouses-who-are-making-a-difference/> - Read about four male spouses creating a new platform for a growing population.

<http://malemilspouse.com> - Help male military spouses navigate military life issues through the use of video, online networking and communication.

<https://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/military-transition/transitioning-home-what-will-be-your-legacy.html> - A thought provoking site that helps soldiers and families think about what they want in their next step in life.

<https://fromthegreennotebook.com/2018/03/15/how-to-leave-a-legacy/> - Fort Hood commander who made soldiers transition from “The Great Place” a better one.

How to Leave Your Legacy

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/joan-moran/5-ways-to-leave-a-great-l_b_7148112.html - Five ways to leave a legacy.

<http://www.signupgenius.com/nonprofit/community-service-project-ideas.cfm> - 60 ways from the people who help you organize your volunteers.

<http://www.icpj.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/7-Principles-of-Community-Organizing.pdf> - Seven principles of organizing a community for a purpose.

http://www.forthoodsentinel.com/editorial/volunteers-help-sustain-military-communities/article_a1daeab0-224f-11e8-9b90-939d198d061e.html - Article on the WHY of volunteering.

<https://www.uso.org/take-action/volunteer> - Explanation of USO mission and how to become part of it.

<https://www.operationgratitude.com> - Over 2 million care packages sent and looking for communities to help.

<http://military-missions.org/volunteer/> - Another organization looking for community outreach to help military members and their families.

<https://www.fisherhouse.org/get-involved/volunteer/> - Houses on that serve Military members and their families. Many opportunities to be part of this program.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-steinbrecher/50-quotes-that-will-inspi_b_6897644.html - In need of some inspiration? 50 quotes that will get you started.

<http://www.operationwearehere.com/Volunteer.html> - Community service opportunities.

<https://bluestarfam.org/volunteer/> - In need of neighborhood leaders to organize and execute.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org> - In every community and always in need of help- a way to leave your legacy.

How to Recruit and Retain Volunteers

http://www.pointsoflight.org/sites/default/files/sitecontent/files/effectively_leveraging_volunteers_to_serve_the_military_community.pdf - How to effectively leverage volunteers to work within military communities. Excellent guide for anyone in leadership.

<https://www.thebalance.com/recruit-volunteers-for-your-nonprofit-2502581> - Recruiting advice from non profits.

<https://topnonprofits.com/7-super-steps-to-recruit-volunteers/> - Creative ways to solve volunteer shortage.

https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/volunteer_handbook.pdf - Successful Strategies for recruiting, training, and utilizing volunteers.

http://www.pointsoflight.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/a_sample_of_effective_volunteer_recruitment_strategies_new_new.pdf - More recruitment ideas from POL.

<http://sill-www.army.mil/428thfa/frg/ideas/Recruiting%20Binder.pdf> - Recruiting volunteers from and FRG perspective.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/citizenship-deloitte-volunteer-impact-research.html> - Study on the effectiveness and the impact volunteers have on the community.

Ways to Create and Execute Donation Drives

https://donate.goodwill.org/wpcontent/uploads/2010/08/Steps_to_Start_a_Donation_Drive_in_your_Community.pdf - A step by step plan for starting any type of charitable drive in your community.

<http://createthegood.org/toolkit/how-hold-coat-drive> - Checklist for coat drives.

<https://www.theelementsofliving.com/collecting-for-a-cause-how-to-organize-a-community-charity-drive/> - From start to finish, the steps to take to organize any charity drive.

<https://doublethedonation.com/fundraising-ideas/> - Applicable for community and FRG/Military related events.

<http://www.volunteerfairfax.org/individuals/DonateNow%20%20The%20Donation%20Drive%20Planning%20Kit.pdf> - Fairfax County VA has a fantastic planning kit to download.

Other Ways to Make a Difference in Your Neighborhood

<https://www.inc.com/susan-steinbrecher/21-ways-to-make-a-difference-in-your-community-at-work.html> - Offers a variety of ways to give and encourages the will to give.

<https://www.volunteerenergy.com/7-ways-to-make-a-difference-in-your-own-community/> - A few other strategies, some are not mentioned above.

<https://empoweredteensandparents.com/100-ways-for-teens-to-make-a-difference-in-your-community/> - Ways to get your teens involved!

ADDITIONAL PRINT RESOURCES FOR THE MIGHTY SPOUSES!!

**Recommended Reading by the Executive Spouse Candidates AWC/MFP 2018*

1. Crucial Conversations by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler
2. Tribes, We Need You To Lead Us by Seth Godin
3. Start With Why by Simon Sinek
4. Leaders Eat Last by Simon Sinek
5. Moon Walking With Einstein by Joshua Foer
6. Taming Your Outer Child by Susan Anderson
7. Nice Girls Don't Get The Corner Office: Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers by Lois P. Frankel
8. Thinking In Pictures by Temple Grandin
9. Anatomy Of The Spirit by Caroline Myss
10. Loving What Is by Byron Katie
11. Not Everyone Gets A Trophy: How to Manage the Millennials by Bruce Tulgan
12. Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation by Neil Howe
13. Reach for The Summit by Pat Summit
14. Lean In & Option B by Sheryle Sandbers
15. The General by C.S. Forester
16. People Skills: How To Assert Yourself, Listen To Others & Resolve Conflicts by Robert Bolton
17. Developing the Leader Within by John Maxwell
18. The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John Maxwell
19. The 5 Levels of Leadership by John Maxwell
20. Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck
21. Grit: Why Passion and Resilience are The Secrets to Success by Angela Duckworth