



**National
Military Family
Association**

Together We're Stronger®

2023

ANNUAL REPORT





A Note From Our CEO

In 1969, five military spouses gathered around a kitchen table, determined to stand up for their widowed friends, who lacked the support they deserved in their hardest times. Our founders knew they needed to do something—so they went door-to-door in Congress and the Survivor Benefit Plan was born.

On February 1, 2023, we celebrated as the Survivor Benefit Plan payments were finally processed correctly and paid out to surviving families in full.

It has been a long road.

Standing up for America's military families isn't easy work. NMFA started 54 years ago as an advocacy organization—families standing up for themselves and each other—but legislation can take a long time, and once we've identified a problem, we can't expect military families to wait for the solution.

This year we are thrilled to mark our 20th summer of programming—our way of providing short-term support for military families all over the world. Through scholarships to strengthen their family's financial security and youth programs to invest in the next generation, NMFA continues to serve and support military families through whatever our nation asks of them.

We close the year at a time when war has once again taken over the headlines. The 20,000 service members deployed or extended in the Middle East remind us that even when our nation is at peace, our military families' service never stops.

I'm excited to share with you the work NMFA has done in 2023 to support our military families, and I look forward to the new ways we'll continue our work in 2024.

Together, we're stronger®.



Besa



2023

YEAR IN REVIEW



Advocacy Highlights



In 2022, the Widow's Tax was eliminated, and on February 1, 2023, we celebrated as surviving families received their first full Survivor Benefit Plan payment.



After a decade of advocacy, the Department of Defense announced a new Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account for service members, aiding military families in affording child care.



In an era of polarized politics, NMFA urged stability for military families, reminding Congress of its duty to keep our military families ready for the challenges ahead.

By the Numbers



1,100+

Campers attended Operation Purple Camp at locations across the country.



1,600+

Families participated in our virtual Operation Purple Summer Challenge, enjoying the fun of camp from home.



2,000+

Military Teen Experience Survey respondents shared their experience with moving, school, the importance of friendships, and propensity to serve.



500+

Military spouses received scholarships to invest in their future and support their families.



336,000,000

Media impressions highlighting the stories of military families.

Programming Highlights



Avery Turner, NMFA's director of Bloom Teen Programming and proud military teen, was honored at the White House for International Day of the Girl.

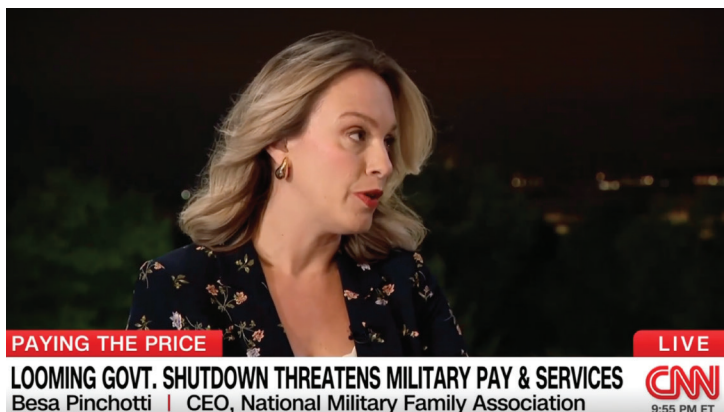


The Congressional Club partnered with us to create a new scholarship for military spouses pursuing public affairs and government work, empowering a new generation of advocates.

We celebrated the life and legacy of Joanne Holbrook Patton, NMFA board member, volunteer, and advocate, after whom our Military Spouse Scholarship program is named.

FIVE DECADES OF ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP





NMFA's highly respected advocates have been leading the charge for military families for over 50 years. We make sure military families are represented in the rooms where decisions are made, that their voices are heard, and that the legislation and policy that affect their lives also reflect their experiences.

When military families need help, NMFA leads the charge.

Advocacy is not quick work. Legislative solutions can often take years—or decades—to achieve. Military families live in the economies where they're stationed, absorbing whatever local and regional challenges exist. Add that to the ups and downs of military life and you're left with complex problems that can require decades of targeted policy work, leadership, and coalition building.

Military life often requires frequent relocations, non-traditional working hours, and unpredictable deployments and trainings that take a serving parent out of the home. Securing and maintaining child care to make that service possible is a critical challenge for military families, yet many military families continue to tell us they cannot secure high-quality, affordable care.

Service members need access to as many child care options as possible. For over a decade, NMFA has been advocating for the Department of Defense (DoD) to grant service members usage of Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (DCFSA's). When child care costs an average of \$24,000 a year, DCFSA's allow families to designate up to \$5,000 annually out of their paycheck pre-tax for child care or adult care expenses. Eligible dependent care services include preschool, summer day camp, before and after-school programs, and child or adult day care including babysitting and nanny services.



“

Many people assume that steady paychecks and other earned benefits mean service members and their families are immune to financial struggles. But military families know all too well that's not the case.

- Kelly Hruska
Government Relations Director
before the Senate Banking, Housing
& Urban Affairs Committee

”

After 10 years of advocating for Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts, we are proud to say the DoD will implement this new benefit in January 2024.

This policy victory will have an immediate impact on families who have struggled with a spouse's employment in the face of unmet child care needs, often forcing them to consider whether they're able to stay in the military.

NMFA has been calling for universal Pre-K for the last four years, leading conversations with partners and policy makers to ensure that our youngest military learners have access to the early childhood programming they deserve. In March, DoD announced that it will fund a Universal Pre-K program in all DoD Education Activity (DoDEA) schools. This critical expansion will support military kids' education and help relieve overburdened Child Development Centers.

But our work continues: Military spouses still face a chronic unemployment rate of over 20% and one in four military families struggles to put food on the table. One unforeseen expense can be enough to jeopardize a military family's financial security.

For some, that can be as simple as covering health care expenses. In 2024, NMFA continued to advocate for fixes to the TRICARE Young Adult plan that causes families with young adult children to pay over \$600 a month just for health insurance—while civilian young adults can stay on their parents' insurance until they're 26. To explain this and other TRICARE nuances to policy makers, NMFA hosted a Congressional Briefing on the basics of TRICARE to educate Congressional staffers on the TRICARE benefit and recommended improvements.

As the 118th Congress enters its second year, NMFA leads the way on issues that affect military families and the legislation that supports them, including:



TRICARE for Dependents Over Age 18

H.R. 1045, the Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act.

This legislation will eliminate TRICARE Young Adult and allow young adults to stay on TRICARE until age 26 premium free, just like their civilian peers.



Incentives for Hiring Military Spouses

H.R. 1277 and S. 596, the Military Spouse Hiring Act.

This legislation would create an incentive for employers to hire military spouses by establishing a new target group for military spouses under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. Under the bill, employers may claim a one-off tax credit of up to \$2,400 for every military spouse they hire.



Easier Access to Food Assistance

S.497, the Military Family Nutrition Access Act.

This legislation will eliminate the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) from the calculation for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility.

On issues that affect military families, NMFA leads the way.



CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS OF PROGRAMMING





Operation Purple® Camp

Over half of our campers this summer were dealing with a parental deployment, and more than a third of our children are growing up in a home with a wounded, ill, or injured service member. That makes their connection to other kids who understand and share their experiences a critical component of Operation Purple® Camp. In fact, 96% of camp parents cited connection with other military kids as an important reason they were sending their kids to Operation Purple® Camp.

This summer, we were thrilled to bring in new partners to make our time at camp even more incredible.

In Maryland, we welcomed Under Armour to run a field day for campers of all athletic abilities, and we mirrored this program at all locations nationwide. Freedom Day Powered by Under Armour got kids moving and inspired them to try new things, develop their skills, and build confidence that will help them stay physically and mentally strong long after the camp week is over.

In Texas, we partnered with Kids Rank to help campers understand and celebrate their experience as military kids through Masks of Hope, a hands-on project that got them thinking about the role resilience plays in their lives.

In California, we worked with our friends at Travis Manion Foundation to help our campers understand and practice the interpersonal skills that will help them make the most of military life.

This summer, Operation Purple® Camp celebrated 20 years of free programming with campers from Alaska all the way to Maryland. Over the course of 10 weeks and nine locations, 1,100 military-connected kids swam, sang, kayaked, rode horses, played gaga ball and enjoyed the best of what America's summer camps have to offer, all while taking a week away from the demands of military life.

“

My daughter had the best time at NorthBay! Thank you, Operation Purple® Camp, for providing her such an awesome opportunity! She will forever remember her experience there.

- Chrysteana Hartmann

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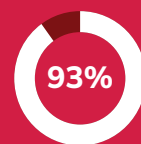




Operation Purple® Summer Challenge

After three years of Operation Purple® Camp At Home, this summer we launched our new digital offering: Operation Purple® Summer Challenge. This 8-week free virtual experience offered military kids and their families worldwide weekly themed challenges designed just for them. The kids completed adventures and cultivated skills both independently and with their families. They brought those experiences to our weekly Global Gatherings, where they built relationships with one another. Through partnerships with United Through Reading, K-9s for Warriors, Sesame Street, and others, more than a thousand Operation Purple® Summer Challenge families enjoyed all the fun of an Operation Purple® summer from wherever the military sent them.

With talent shows, art projects, reading challenges, and visits from four-legged celebrity guests, it's no wonder that



93% of Operation Purple® Summer Challenge families say they'll recommend the program to a friend.



96% of participants plan to join us for Operation Purple® Summer Challenge again next year.

“

**My daughters enjoyed the weekly global gatherings and challenges!
Thank you for helping add to our summer fun!**

– Rebecca Sprague

”

Joanne Holbrook Patton Military Spouse Scholarship

In 2023, a record number of military spouses applied for NMFA's signature scholarship program, with over 7,000 applicants seeking funding assistance.

These spouses plan to complete their bachelor's degrees, professional and graduate programs, start businesses, and pay for professional licensures and certifications. NMFA awarded \$558,000 in funding to 535 exceptional applicants, honoring the life and legacy of Joanne Holbrook Patton, a dedicated NMFA board member, volunteer, and advocate, after whom our Military Spouse Scholarship program is named.



This year's entrepreneur winners include:

Lakeda S.,

an Army spouse, who established a mobile diaper bank to aid families in need.

Kristin S.,

a Navy spouse, who created a teen leadership program addressing the unique challenges of military teens, especially those moving during the school year.

Christina E.,

a military spouse stationed overseas, who founded an organization celebrating military life and supporting military family education and volunteerism.

When NMFA invests in a military spouse's career, we're investing in the financial security of their entire family.

“

NMFA gives everyone ample opportunity to add to the community that we are blessed to be a part of and takes that financial burden off of military families.

– Brooklyn Mendez

”

Bloom: Empowering the Military Teen

NMFA's teen program, Bloom: Empowering the Military Teen, amplifies the voices of military teens, aiding them in overcoming isolation and connecting with one another through digital platforms. Together, we explore innovative ways to better support and understand military teens through programming, research, insights, and policy solutions.

This year, Bloom opened new leadership opportunities for teens interested in public speaking, writing, journalism, art, drawing, content creation, experience sharing, and digital engagement. Serving as the public face of military teens, Bloomers have shared their stories with reporters, advocates, and experts at events worldwide.

Their achievements and accolades reflect their commitment to understand and serve their community. In October, Avery Turner, NMFA's director of Bloom Teen Programming and a proud military kid, was honored at the White House during the International Day of the Girl for her contributions to supporting military teens.



“

My child has always been incredibly resilient when facing the challenges of military life. Even in the face of frequent deployments, Laila has been able to stay positive, remain focused on her goals, and stay connected with her peers.

—Martin Anderson

”

LEADERS IN UNDERSTANDING THE MILITARY EXPERIENCE





To inform our advocacy and programs, NMFA leans on mixed-methods research to better understand the current military experience, the challenges families face, and the solutions that can help. With over 14,000 families responding to our surveys in 2023, NMFA looked closely at the emotional, physical, and financial well-being of modern-day military families.

State of the Military Family

Our April 2023 State of the Military Family Summit laid out military families' ongoing struggle with food insecurity, the impact of military spouse unemployment on the stress of our nation's serving families, and the particular impact this has on military teens. We also highlighted the importance of advocacy in our communities and honored some of the military spouses leading the way.

Understanding the Military Teen Experience

Our 2023 Military Teen Experience survey, now in its third year, focused on understanding military teens' well-being. Over 2,000 respondents told us about their experiences in school, making friends, the importance of sports and extra-curricular in their lives, their mental health, what it's like growing up with a wounded, ill, or injured service member, and their propensity to serve — a rate that has steadily dropped over the last three surveys. Using their feedback, we are able to shape the programs and policies that impact their lives and set them up for future success in service to our nation — in uniform, or out.



“

As a veteran, Senator Duckworth fully understands the challenges of military life and the many sacrifices demanded of service members and military families. For her consistent leadership and tireless advocacy, we are honored to present her with the Support of Military Families Award.

- Besa Pinchotti
CEO

National Military Family Association
at NMFA's Congressional Reception

”

Congressional Reception

At our Congressional Reception, we honored three champions who have gone above and beyond in shaping the lives of military families with our Support of Military Families Award. Senator Tammy Duckworth was celebrated for her work on military family food insecurity; fellow veteran David Nokes, a public affairs specialist for DoD, was recognized for his commitment to ensure military family perspectives are heard within the Pentagon; and longtime NMFA volunteer and military family advocate, Edith Smith, was honored for her unparalleled commitment to our community as a tireless advocate, mentor, and friend.



Together, We're Stronger

As an authoritative leader in understanding the military family experience and making that information actionable for policy and programmatic solutions, NMFA answered calls to speak at events across the country so that national, regional, and local leaders can better support military families. We shared tailored data reflective of our State of the Military Family in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Texas; we spoke about the unique experiences inside our military community at the Hidden Helpers Conference, ADC's Installation Innovation Conference, USUHS Partnership for Military Child Health Symposium, and at the annual gatherings of MIC3 and MISA, among many others.

Leadership in the Community

We cannot do this critical work without support from the broader community.

As a founding member of The Military Coalition (TMC), NMFA continues its legacy of coalition building, doubling down on our tagline, "Together, We're Stronger®" NMFA leaders serve as President and chair committees. We are active members of the Hidden Helper Coalition, TRICARE for Kids Coalition, Military Vote Coalition, Vet the Vote Coalition, and the White Oak Collaborative, among others. NMFA is also proud to be an Ex-Officio Member of the Military Interstate Compact Commission for Children.

As the leading voice for military families on the Hill, NMFA was the first organization to testify before a Senate subcommittee about health care for military families; a year later Congress established the Dependent Dental Plan. NMFA provides regular testimony to numerous Committees and Subcommittees before state and federal legislative bodies, including the Quality of Life Panel of the House Armed Services Committee, and served as a member of the Drafting Commission for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. NMFA was one of the first nonprofits named to the DoD Military Family Readiness Council and has been recognized by the Congressional Club as a First Lady's Luncheon beneficiary.



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**Together We're
Stronger®**



**National
Military Family
Association**

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