

National Military Family Association presents

STATE OF THE MILITARY FAMILY

2023 SUMMIT



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Military Family**
Association

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WELCOME

Vice Adm. Raquel “Rocky” Cruz Bono
NMFA Chairman of the Board

REMARKS

Besa Pinchotti
NMFA Chief Executive Officer

MILITARY SPOUSES PANEL: SEE A PROBLEM, SOLVE A PROBLEM

Moderator: Senator Dawn Gile, military spouse and representative of the 33rd Legislative District

Austin Carrigg

Ellen Gustafon

Moni Jefferson

REMARKS

Leah Dunn
Congressional Club Vice President

A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRST LADY

First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden

BRUNCH

REMARKS

Besa Pinchotti
NMFA Chief Executive Officer

MILITARY TEENS: THE FUTURE OF SERVICE

Moderator: Sharene Brown, Spouse of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force

Jemma B.

Kait H.

Catherine M.

Nathan M.

REMARKS

Jaymes Poling
Modern Warrior Live

CONCLUSION

Besa Pinchotti
NMFA Chief Executive Officer



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PROFILES



Vice Adm. Raquel Cruz Bono, MD, MBA, FACS

Bono recently retired from the military after serving as the director of the Defense Health Agency. There, she led the transformation of the Military Health System to ensure the health of nine million service members, retirees, and their families. In March 2020, Washington Governor Jay Inslee appointed Bono to head the state's COVID-19 response.

A 36-year Navy veteran, Bono was the first woman surgeon in the military to hold the rank of vice admiral. She served as leader at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, and the Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida.

Commissioned in 1979, Bono received her baccalaureate from the The University of Texas at Austin and completed medical school at Texas Tech University. She holds an Executive MBA from the WSU Carson College of Business.

In addition to being a diplomat of the American Board of Surgery, Bono is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Her personal decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, three Defense Superior Service Medals, four Legion of Merit Medals, two Meritorious Service Medals and two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation medals.

PROFILES



Senator Dawn Gile

Senator Dawn Gile was recently elected to represent the 33rd Legislative District (Anne Arundel County) in the Maryland Senate. She presently serves on the Senate Finance Committee. In addition to her service in the Senate, Senator Gile is an attorney and advocate for veterans and military families. She is the former president of Military Spouse JD Network, an organization that works to expand employment opportunities for military spouses by advocating for licensing accommodations. In that role, she also oversaw MSJDN's Justice for Military Families program, a pro bono initiative that provides free legal assistance to Gold Star families and veteran caregivers through a partnership with Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and the American Red Cross. In addition, Senator Gile served as secretary of Vigilant Torch Association and Foundation, an organization dedicated to providing emergency relief assistance and scholarships to members of the military special operations community and their families.

As an attorney, Senator Gile is in private practice, representing businesses in litigation in Maryland and the District of Columbia for the past 16 years. She earned her J.D. from Loyola University Chicago School of Law and her B.A., Phi Beta Kappa with high honors, from Rockford University, where she currently serves on the Board of Trustees.

Senator Gile's husband, SGM D.J. Gile (Ret.) recently retired after serving active duty in the U.S. Army for over 24 years. They reside in Severna Park, Maryland, along with their three daughters.

PROFILES



Sharene Brown

Sharene Brown is married to General CQ Brown, Jr., the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force.

She is an avid supporter of military families through her advisory and ambassador roles with military spouse clubs and service organizations. Sharene is a staunch advocate for Airmen, spouses, and their families. Inspired by the special needs of her own son, she is passionate about advocating for improved military child education opportunities and special needs programs, including the Exceptional Family Member Program, supporting school liaisons and local military educational organizations and their assistive services.

Additionally, she strongly supports military spouse employment opportunities and career development. Sharene actively encourages, and promotes mentoring and networking engagements with Hiring our Heroes, leadership education with Military Spouse Advocacy Network and policy initiatives with Military Spouse Employment Partnership as well as military base resources and services through the Military and Family Readiness Centers.

In her commitment to the military community, Sharene launched the Five & Thrive effort which highlights the top five quality of life challenges affecting military members and families. These top five challenges include housing, education, childcare, spouse employment, and access to healthcare. These challenges are directly tied to military family readiness, resilience, and retention of the force, which in turns directly impacts mission readiness. She aims to tackle these challenges by amplifying preventative measures, sharing best practices, and fostering community partnerships.

See the landing page for Five & Thrive at www.fiveandthrive.org

She received her Bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Virginia and a Master's in Management from Webster University. She has worked in advertising, with trade associations, and in education. A particularly memorable experience was her post with the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program partnering with Japanese English teachers to teach English to middle school students outside of Tokyo, Japan.

PROFILES



Leah Dunn

Leah Dunn is the mother, sister, wife, daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of soldiers. She's a military family advocate, Vice President of the bi-partisan Congressional Club, and Chair of the 2022 Congressional Club First Lady's Luncheon. She has been a member of the National Military Family Association family since her mother, Joyce Helmick Ott, was an early NMFA volunteer alongside her friend Joanne Patton.

Leah and Neal have both been involved in numerous community groups, including Bay Cares, the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Prostate Cancer Foundation, Bay Health Foundation, Relay for Life, Movember Foundation, AMVETS, Bay Education Foundation, Florida State University Panama City, Gulf Coast State College, the Science and Discovery Center, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts of America, numerous School PTAs, athletic and academic teams.

They have three sons, Alex, Patrick, and David, and three grandsons.

PROFILES



Jaymes Poling

Jaymes Poling grew up in Warren, Ohio, and enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 17. He was an infantryman assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. During his eight years with the division, he spent three years fighting in Afghanistan as a Machine Gunner and Squad Leader. He earned a finance degree at John Carroll University in May 2018.

Through education, writing, and public speaking, and now with the added layer of music, Jaymes came to recognize the universality of his journey which has evolved into a mission to bring to other veterans. He has engaged and interacted with military communities more than 120 times with [Modern Warrior Live](#) performances in schools, performing art centers, universities, Rikers Island, and in a one-hour cinematic version. Jaymes brings to Modern Warrior LIVE the fully immersed experience of a three-tour warrior with the 82nd Airborne in Afghanistan. Dealing with the memories of war, the loss of friends, and the isolation a combat veteran finds when leaving the military, Jaymes began to find through narrative arts and public speaking that the potential for growth can indeed follow adversity. He's also spoken about mental health challenges at home and at the front with thousands of active-duty soldiers in Afghanistan, through visits there with the Troops First Foundation.

He says he wants – needs – to share his journey from isolation to healing, whether one-on-one, in a cohort of five veterans, or in a concert hall seating 4,000.

His focus now: sharing his journey with members of the military community and partnering with organizations to help veterans find their own peace after war.

PROFILES



Austin Carrigg, Army
Founder, Exceptional Families of the Military

Austin is the parent of three children all of whom are registered in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Her advocacy work includes military issues surrounding Tricare and EFMP as well as civilian issues such as Medicaid and SNAP. She founded Exceptional Families of the Military in 2020, and today serves on the board of Little Lobbyists and Ketotic Hypoglycemia International.



Ellen Gustafson, Navy
Co-Founder + Co-Executive Director, We the Veterans
Co-Founder, Military Family Building Coalition

Ellen is the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of We the Veterans, a non-partisan, non-profit that empowers veteran and military family communities to strengthen democracy. She is also the Co-Founder of the Military Family Building Coalition, the first non-profit supporting active duty military in building their families. She is a published author, TEDxTalks alumni, and mother to three preschoolers.



Moni Jefferson, Air Force
Founder, Association of Military Spouse
Entrepreneurs Agency

Moni is the founder of the Association of Military Spouse Entrepreneurs Agency, a digital membership space for military spouse entrepreneurs to develop, grow, and scale their businesses. She launched the My Ultimate PCS app in 2008, followed by MilCam, MilEmoji apps in 2014, and runs Dog Tags & Heels—a social media and public relations company that builds brand evangelism and social impact.

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For more information on NMFA's leadership and staff, please visit:

www.militaryfamily.org



The National Military Family Association is the leading nonprofit dedicated to serving all military families. Since 1969, NMFA has worked to strengthen and protect millions of families through its advocacy and programs. They provide spouse scholarships, camps for military kids, and retreats for families reconnecting after deployment and for the families of the wounded, ill, or injured. NMFA serves the families of the currently serving, veteran, retired, wounded or fallen members of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and Commissioned Corps of the USPHS and NOAA.

Learn more about NMFA or make a donation at
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