

Support. Connect. Empower
by Military Families for Military Families

OPERATION APPRECIATION

Thank you for your interest in *Operation Appreciation*! This program would not be possible without members of the community like you who wish to express appreciation to military families and veterans. *Operation Appreciation* is a perfect service project for businesses, community organizations, youth groups, church groups, classrooms (K-12) and individual citizens who want to support our military members and their families but don't know how.

A recent Military Life Issues survey conducted by Blue Star Families found that 92% of the military families who responded felt "the general public does not truly understand or appreciate the sacrifices made by service members and their families." This highlights the huge disconnect that is felt by military families with America's larger community. Blue Star Families created *Operation Appreciation* as a way to help alleviate this disconnect.

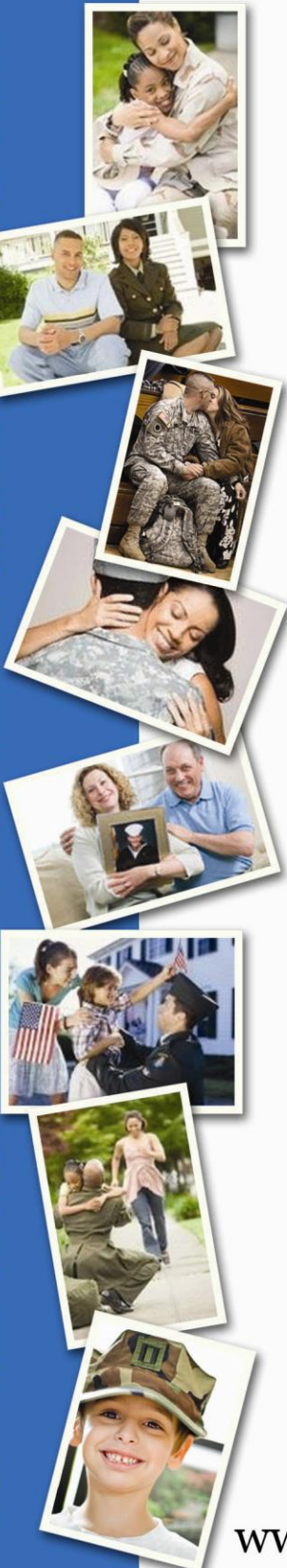
Through this inventive program members of the community who would like to support our military members and their families are given the opportunity to express heartfelt thanks, solidarity, or good old-fashioned encouragement. This is an easy, rewarding way to support the families of those who are serving in our armed forces. While there are many efforts aimed at sending items and well-wishes to our deployed troops, no other program is currently in operation to show such support to those serving both overseas and on the home front.

Who We Are

Blue Star Families is a non-partisan, non-profit organization, created by military families for military families. We are committed to supporting one another through the unique challenges of military service and asking the larger civilian population to help as well, connecting military families regardless of rank, branch of service or physical location, and empowering military family members to create the best personal and family life possible for themselves.

Blue Star Families is a bridge between military families, the shapers of policy affecting military life, and the nation. Our goal is to connect America's military families with one another and their communities, support them through programs that aim to make military life more sustainable, and empower them by giving them an opportunity to make their voices heard.

www.BlueStarFam.org



Our Vision...Is to Empower and Bring Support for our Community

MEMBERSHIP – Since its inception in December of 2008, BSF has expanded with members at more than 40 chapters and growing. Our decentralized, grassroots campaign approach, highlighting cooperative membership rather than top-down direction, has inspired such rapid growth.

MILITARY FAMILY LIFE STYLE SURVEY – In a recent BSF survey of nearly 3,624 military families, 92% of respondents agreed that, “The general public does not truly understand or appreciate the sacrifices made by service members and their families.” Blue Star Families is actively sharing the results of the survey with policy makers at all levels, helping them better understand the issues important to military families.

"I just saw the results of a recent survey done by Blue Star Families that shows that 92 percent of military families feel as if the country doesn't understand their challenges," Obama said. "That's a pretty powerful statement."

- Michelle Obama, 07 May 2009, American Forces Press Service

RAISING AWARENESS – Over the past two years, BSF representatives formally presented the concerns of military families, highlighted by the Military Family Lifestyle Survey, to such groups and figures as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the bipartisan Congressional Women's Caucus, the White House Council on Women and Girls, and Senator Mark Warner, successfully raising the profile of military families and gaining needed attention to our unique needs.

PARTNERSHIPS – BSF is proud to partner with service organizations nationwide in support of our military families. BSF adds new partners constantly, and our current partners include: Armed Services YMCA, Dollywood Foundation Imagination Library, First Book, Kids in Distressed Situations (KIDS), United Through Reading, Operation Paperback, Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), Be There Bedtime Stories, First Book, Operation Paperback, Service Nation, Our Military Kids, Military Spouse Magazine, Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN), United Concordia (UCCI), Lifetime Networks “Army Wives,” USO, American Red Cross, and the National Military Family Association.

This packet will provide you with all the information you need to participate in *Operation Appreciation*, as well as helpful tips to get you started. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact us at OpApp@bluestarfam.org.

Thank you again for your interest in this program and for supporting America’s military families!

The Blue Star Families Team

What you will need?

- _____ Pens and Pencils
- _____ Paper, Cards and Envelopes
- _____ Scissors

General Instructions

The process is simple!

1. Choose the type of individual to whom you would like to write your letter of appreciation. *Operation Appreciation* is currently seeking letters for the following individuals:
 - 1) Parent of a service member
 - 2) Spouse of a service member
 - 3) Child of a service member
 - 4) Veteran (someone who once served in the military)
 - 5) Active Duty Service Member (someone who is currently serving in the military)
2. Write a letter expressing your appreciation or support for the type of individual you have chosen. (See *Tips to Get You Started* on the next page.)
3. On the back of your letter's envelope, write the number of the category you have chosen above. This will help our volunteers sort your letter more efficiently and get it into the hands of the recipient as quickly as possible.
4. Mail your letter(s) to:

Blue Star Families PO Box 2810 Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473	or	Blue Star Families P.O. Box 1906 Chesapeake, VA 23327
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5. Blue Star Families will sort and deliver your letter!

Tips to Get You Started

The following are things to consider when writing your letter:

- Begin your letter with a simple salutation such as Dear Parent of a U.S. Service Member, Dear Military Spouse, Dear Military Child, Dear Veteran, or even Dear American Hero.
- Remember to keep your letter uplifting and supportive, and try to avoid phrases that suggest sympathy such as “during this difficult time”. It is important to remember that while being part of a military family is a challenge, it is also a source of great pride and honor.
- Keep in mind that not all service members are necessarily deployed or separated from their families at this time. While there are thousands of troops serving overseas, there are also many who are at their home base. Your letter may not necessarily go to a family or service member currently experiencing a deployment.
- If your letter includes a reference to a specific holiday such as Veteran’s Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc., be sure to mail your letter at least six weeks prior to the holiday to allow our volunteers plenty of time for sorting and delivery.
- There are many different branches of the U.S. military (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard). Gear your letter to a general service member or military family unless you would like for it to go a member of a specific service.
- Avoid references to war or political statements about the implications of war.
- Write from your heart! A simple letter to express appreciation for the family’s commitment to serving our nation and recognizing the challenges that service presents is all it will take to brighten someone’s day.

Ideas for Teachers

Operation Appreciation is perfect for classrooms. This project will not only give your students practice with their writing skills, but it will also provide them with an opportunity to learn about America's military and to gain an enduring understanding of the meaning of service and patriotism. A sample lesson plan follows on the next page. Consider the following when planning your lesson:

For younger students, you may wish to choose one type of individual (parent, spouse, child, veteran, or service member) for their letters rather than providing too many options. For older students, they may enjoy choosing on their own.

If your students will choose the type of individual to whom they will write their letters, please have them write the number corresponding to that category on the back of their letters:

- 1) Parent of a service member
- 2) Spouse of a service member
- 3) Child of a service member
- 4) Veteran (someone who once served in the military)
- 5) Active Duty Service Member (someone who is currently serving in the military)

It will help our volunteers sort more efficiently, if you will presort the letters from your class and paper clip them according to the category of the letters. If all of the letters from your class are from the same category, simply write that number on the outside envelope for your class.

If possible, please consider reading the letters before mailing to try to identify any content you may feel is inappropriate.

Your students may either make cards, write letters, or create pictures – choose what you feel is best for your class or curriculum, and have fun with it!

Other Ways to Help

In addition to writing a letter, there are many ways you can assist the efforts of *Operation Appreciation*:

We are always in need of the following supplies:

- Business envelopes
 - Large manila envelopes (Size: 9"x12")
 - Small manila envelopes (Size: 6"x9")
 - White sticky labels (Size: 1"x 2 5/8" – Avery 5160)
 - Stamps
-
- Make a monetary donation to purchase supplies, please make your check payable to Blue Star Families and mail it to the addresses below.
 - Spread the word about *Operation Appreciation* to individuals, schools, and community groups in your area.
 - If you live in southeastern Virginia or south-central Missouri where *Operation Appreciation* currently has collection sites and would like to volunteer with sorting and delivering, please send an e-mail to OpApp@bluestarfam.org.
 - If your command or military-affiliated organization would like to receive letters from *Operation Appreciation*, please e-mail us at OpApp@bluestarfam.org.

If you would like to make a monetary donation and/or donate supplies, please ship them to:

Blue Star Families
PO Box 2810
Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473

or

Blue Star Families
P.O. Box 1906
Chesapeake, VA 23327

Thank you for your interest, and we hope you will join the effort!

Sample Letters

Dear Military Family,

My name is Tammy Shaw and I'm a student in Houston, Texas! Currently, I live at home with my parents where I attend Lone Star College but I'm looking to transfer out of state to attend UCLA in the fall semester of 2011. Today, in the news I heard that 1% of our country's population is currently serving on behalf of our country which makes you part of the 1% and I want you to know you and your family are supported by thousands of us here at Lone Star College. Our school has given us this wonderful opportunity to write letter to military service members and their families to show our appreciation for all that you and your family for our freedom. You and your family are a true example of courage, strength and perseverance. So, I want to personally thank you for putting your life on the line for me, my family, and my future children. Your sacrifice on behalf of us and our country makes you and your family my personal heroes! In honor of your service I will donate my time to the local veteran center downtown to help serve dinner.

Thank you for all that you are doing over there and stay strong my friend!

Warmest Regards,

Tammy Shaw

Dear military child,
thank you for
your Mom/Dads/
family members serves
to the Country
from P.S. 2,6.1

Dear Military Spouse -
We appreciate all
the hard work and
sacrifice that goes into
being the spouse of a
member of our military.
You should be tremendously
Proud of your spouse -
and no doubt you are.
This family and everyone
is behind you

Dear Military Family,

Our family is thinking of you and your service member and wishing you all the best. We know it isn't just the service member who serves but the entire family. We'd like to reach across the miles that separate us to let you know our family appreciates what your family is doing.

Sincerely,

Dear Military Child,

Our family would like to tell you how much we appreciate what you do as a military child. Your whole family serves alongside your parent and you must be so proud of what your family is contributing by giving of yourselves. It must be hard at times, when your parent has to deploy, so we want you to know we appreciate it and are thinking of you.

Sincerely,

Dear Military Parent,

Thank you for raising a child who has grown up with the desire to volunteer in our armed forces. Our family appreciates your sacrifices and we want to say "thanks!" and that we are thinking of you and wishing you and your family all the best.

Sincerely,

Dear Military Spouse,

Our family is thinking of you and your service member and wishing you all the best. We know it isn't just the service member who serves but the entire family. We'd like to reach across the miles that separate us to let you know our family appreciates what you and your family is doing.

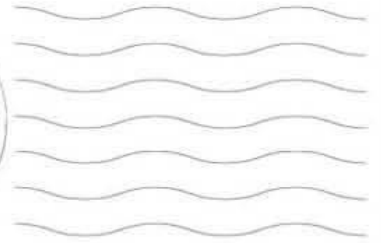
Sincerely,

Dear Veteran,

Thank you for your service to this country. Our country is a better place because of people who stand up and volunteer. Our family honors you and wishes you all the best.

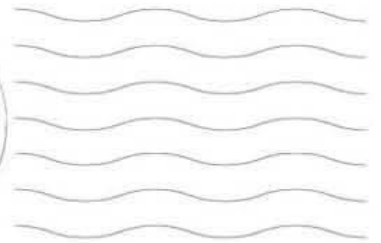
Sincerely,

*“Show your support
for a military family”*



www.bluestarfam.org

*“Show your support
for a military family”*



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