MAKING AN IMPACT WITH OPERATION OUTDOORS

Military children bear a great amount of stress associated with military life. Multiple relocations during their formative ages, deployment of a parent, and lower income are just a few of the prevalent realities. Military families work through the same daily challenges as non-military families, but their stress is compounded by the uniqueness associated with military life. The constant reintegration and continual state of readiness takes a toll on families.

Single service members, are just that, single. For many, military service represents the first time away from their core family. Young troops are learning how to live on their own, separated from their loved ones as well as adjusting to military life. With no immediate family support network, many single service members become absorbed into their assignment and don’t have the financial means to participate in outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking or golfing.

Operation Outdoors offers resident and day camps, field trips to educational, recreational or special events, golf outings, fishing trips and other outdoor excursions for single service members, military children and families, and wounded warriors. Activities vary according to location and each ASYMCA branch customizes its opportunities to maximize the surrounding environment.

Operation Outdoors not only supports the Y’s focus on youth development and healthy living, but also aligns with the DoD’s Operation Live Well campaign, and First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move initiative to motivate the adoption of healthy lifestyles, including staying active. We keep our military kids moving with outdoor experiences like swimming, archery, hiking, canoeing and friendly sports competitions like the Kid’s Olympics. Part of our focus on healthy living and youth development includes nurturing the spirit and mind, as well as the body. OurOperation Outdoors summer camps provide an atmosphere designed to help military children and families cope with the unique challenges of military life. There are team building activities and group sessions to help encourage constructive and healthy behavior, providing tools to manage stress, anger and anxiety, and build confidence.

“My daughter was fortunate to experience [Operation Outdoors], and the benefits from one day, let alone a week, are huge in her world right now,” shared one military spouse, and mother to an Operation Outdoors participant. “With all the challenges our kids face, this helped her tremendously with her coping skills and self-esteem issues she’s currently having. She was provided with many tools and resources she can use now and in the future.”

Every summer, the program welcomes hundreds of service members, military kids and dependent families excited about experiencing the great outdoors, connecting with their friends and making new ones. More than 2,500 people attended an Operation Outdoors camp or activity in 2014.
Over the years, Operation Outdoors has seen a steady increase in demand and is one of our most requested programs. Program costs rose from $195,000 in 2011, to $270,000 in 2012 and we were still unable to meet demand. Currently, to fully fund Operation Outdoors and fulfill demand at each ASYMCA branch location the program requires approximately $500,000 in funding each year. With full funding, approximately 3,000 – 4,000 military service members, single and married, children/teens and/or families will be impacted. Understanding that full funding may not be possible, and to keep our programs low or no-cost for participants, the ASYMCA produces outdoor programs at all funding levels, with the goal of including as many people as possible.

Providing this opportunity for our troops and families away from the military environment makes an impact on many levels. We’re strengthening families, encouraging healthy living and creating lasting bonds. Please consider supporting this program.

**JC Penney cares**

**Helps Shape Young Heroes with a Grant to fund ASYMCA’s Operation Hero Program**

Military children and families at four Armed Services YMCA branch locations will continue to enjoy the benefits of the Operation Hero program, thanks to a $200K grant from JC Penney Cares.

The non-profit, philanthropic arm of retailer JC Penney, known as JCP Cares, aims to enrich the lives of children outside of the classroom by supporting local and national nonprofits that help children succeed by providing resources they really need. That means giving children an opportunity to play a musical instrument, encouraging career exploration, or providing a safe, nurturing environment for studying or mentoring afterschool.

The ASYMCA’s Operation Hero program does just that. Targeted for military children between the ages of 6 – 12, Operation Hero is an afterschool tutoring and mentoring program designed to help improve academic performance, while providing tools to help them cope with the challenges that come with the military lifestyle. Military children experience the same stress as civilian children compounded by difficulties caused by frequent moves and family disruption due to deployments, increased parental stress, and direct and indirect experiences of trauma associated with the wounds of war.

“Operation Hero helped Hunter, and my family, in more ways than I could ever say. When we moved here, he was closed off. He didn’t want to go to school, he didn’t like school. He didn’t have very many friends, he wasn’t confident in himself,” shared Cassie Rhodes, Navy wife and mom to Operation Hero kid, Hunter. “Within a week of him starting, he was a different kid! He wanted to go to school. He loved Operation Hero! Every day was, ‘Can I go? Can I go?’ ‘Is today the day? Can we go today?’ It changed everything about our family dynamic, because it was a struggle to get him to go to school, and then [he just] he blossomed.”

The program is structured so that children receive tutoring help to get or keep them on track at school, and also receive counseling during group mentoring sessions where they learn healthy ways of coping with stress and anger, how to effectively communicate with their families and peers, and how to build self-confidence. They are able to connect with other military children who are experiencing some of the same hardships, allowing them to make new friends with kids who can relate to the stress they experience because of their unique lifestyle.
The JCP Cares' grant will fund program supplies and the salaries for educators at the Hampton Roads, Ft. Bragg, Ft. Campbell and Camp Pendleton ASYMCA branches, in addition to the launch of an Operation Hero first, integrating the use of iPads for sessions at the Hampton Roads branch.

The 2014/2015 session graduated more than 2,200 children. For more information please go to www.asymca.org/programs.

MAKING PROGRESS IN KILLEEN!

Construction continues at the new Killeen ASYMCA facility in Harker Heights! Plans to open the building are scheduled for the Spring of 2016. The new building is estimated to serve more than 15,000 people throughout the community and will offer post-outpatient soldier rehabilitation programs, military family counseling, family meet-ups, holistic wellness programs, and nutrition and cooking classes.

For updated construction photos and news visit, the ASYMCA Killeen Facebook page or website at www.asymca.net

NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY MONTH

Military Family Month was established by the ASYMCA in 1993 to show support for the families who support our service members. Military families all over the world are honored for their contributions towards serving our country with special observances, activities and events supported by local governments, businesses, communities and organizations like the ASYMCA.

“Recognizing the daily sacrifices military families make in support of our service members demonstrates our gratitude for their role in serving our country,” said VADM William French, ASYMCA CEO and President. “Military families serve too, just in a different capacity. Readiness is linked to well-being, and that includes the well-being of our loved ones at home. We want to make sure they’re taken care of.”

National Military Family Month is recognized each year by a presidential proclamation, encouraging Americans to show support.
“Our nation owes each day of security and freedom that we enjoy to the members of our Armed Forces and their families,” said President Barack Obama. “Behind our brave service men and women, there are family members and loved ones who share in their sacrifice and provide unending support.”

The ASYMCA supports military families through programming designed to help them cope with the unique challenges of military life, while enhancing and nurturing their mind, bodies and spirits. Some of our support designed especially for military families includes holiday and emergency assistance, counseling services, child care services, recreational activities like Father Daughter dances and Mother Son Adventures, Parent and Me classes, and access to resources to help strengthen relationships and communication, and encourage healthy lifestyles.

Each November in coordination with National Military Family Month, the ASYMCA launches their National Art & Essay Contest for military children. The contest is meant to allow children to creatively express their love, appreciation and admiration for their military heroes. Their essays and artwork also serve to remind us of the sacrifices our men and women in uniform, and their families, make each day for our country.

Contest information is available online at: www.asymca.org/programs/military-family-month.

National Military Family Month is meant to put a spotlight on the sacrifices military families make, but the ASYMCA urges Americans to make the effort to celebrate, support and reflect on the contributions military families make in support of our country all year long.

For more information or ideas on how to support military families in your community visit www.asymca.org/programs/military-family-month or contact the ASYMCA at info@asymca.org.

We are continuing to see an increased need in both demand and support for holiday support. We strive to help as many needy families in the junior enlisted community as possible, but there many more we could aid who need some extra help creating their own holiday joy.

Operation Holiday Joy was initially established in collaboration with Woman’s Day Magazine and their readers to raise awareness and funds for military service members and their families during the holidays. Since 2004, Woman’s Day readers have contributed more than $1.5 million towards the program. This generosity and unwavering support has allowed the ASYMCA to purchase and distribute more than 320,000 toys, as well as deliver over 25,000 baskets of food at Thanksgiving and Christmas to thousands of junior enlisted families in need.

While the success is gratifying, we realize there are many military families who still need our support to ensure a memorable holiday season. In many cases, Thanksgiving feasts or toys under the Christmas tree would not be possible if it weren’t for the generosity of our donors. Less than 1 percent of the U.S. population is voluntarily serving, in this the 12th Anniversary of Operation Holiday Joy, consider demonstrating your appreciation for the sacrifices made by our military personnel and their families by making a donation to the Armed Services YMCA.

Please visit our Facebook page or go to www.asymca.org, click on the “Donate” button and specify ‘Operation Holiday Joy’ for your donation.
This holiday season marks five years that Jack Daniels’ and ASYMCA’s Operation Ride Home program has helped service members and their family members get home for the holidays. More than 3,500 troops and families have hitched a ride thanks to Operation Ride Home since the program started.

“We’re thrilled to celebrate five years of this great program with a partner like Jack Daniels that is so genuinely invested in supporting our troops and families,” said VADM William French, ASYMCA President and CEO. “Not everyone gets to enjoy the holidays with their families, so providing this opportunity to those who sacrifice so much is a big part of our focus on social responsibility, and showing gratitude to those who serve.”

Through vouchers for plane tickets and pre-paid debit cards to assist those who choose to drive, Operation Ride Home funds travel for junior-enlisted service members and families in need of financial aid to travel home for the holidays.

Over the life of the program, we’ve received news of many touching stories as a result of the support provided from Operation Ride Home. We’ve looked at photos and watched videos shared from weddings and engagements, surprise visits to Mom, Dad, Grandma or Grandpa and other family members, grandparents meeting their grandchildren for the first time, and witnessed the impact of a homecoming for service members who have spent years away.

“We feel like we’re missing so much of their life when they’re not with you on a daily basis,” shared one Army Mom whose son is stationed at Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas and had not been home in five years. “It makes those visits all the more significant and important, especially the holidays.”

In 2014 Operation Ride Home assisted service members from every branch of service at eleven of our branch locations. As the program continues to gain donations and visibility, it will be expanded to year round travel support.

Operation Ride Home relies completely on donations to fund travel, with 100 percent of all donations received put back into the program. Donations can be made online monetarily or by giving airline miles.

If you are interested in supporting this program or for additional information, please visit http://www.jdoperationridehome.com or contact the ASYMCA at 1-800-597-1260.
“I can’t do it!”

“I did it!”

This was a typical conversation at the climbing tower at Camp Oakes. Camp was filled with campers encouraging each other to reach a little farther, try a little harder and be a little better of a friend. The encouragement you could hear at the activities that were a bit more challenging such as the rock wall or maybe a little scary like the ropes course resounded from the onlookers who were the participant’s cabin mates. You could also hear plenty of encouragements to be nice and work as a team. All 56 campers that came to camp were amazing.

“Just give it one more shot”

Not only were the campers amazing but the 10 chaperones, 1 corpsman, 1 break chaperone and 1 EMT/break chaperone combo were too. Their leadership of the campers was such a sweet sight. They were funny, encouraging, compassionate, kind and sacrificed so much to be such good leaders. We could not have asked for more from them.

The activities this year were enjoyed by all. You could hear squeals of delight and maybe a little fear as campers came down the zip line. You could see huge smiles of campers shooting out of the end of the big mine chute slide. Whooshes came from arrows as campers flew them from their bow. Bangs were heard as 22’s were shot. Splatters were all over the targets at the slingshot pit.

Laughter and cheers could be heard as cabins walked from one activity to the other.

Every evening there was a special activity planned for the whole camp that ranged from learning the camp chants and playing minute to win it games, a camp rodeo with sled barrel racing and egg tosses, camp store trips, late night observatory, challenge course with water balloons, skit nights where the campers never wanted to stop performing and the week ended with a 80’s dance party bash complete with big hair and bright colors and lots of sweet moves.

ASYMCA of Alaska: Father Daughter Ball

The Armed Services YMCA of Alaska hosted Father Daughter Galas in both Anchorage and Fairbanks during the month of September. These special gala events allow fathers and daughters to share an evening of bonding on the dance floor, and celebrate the special connection between fathers and daughters. This event is eagerly anticipated each year, and routinely cater to a sold out crowd from all branches of military service.

With themes such as “Winter Wonderland” in Fairbanks and “All that Glitters” in Anchorage, and participants of all ages welcome, the Father Daughter Gala reminds our military families that no matter their age, daughters will always be daddy’s little princess—and these princesses will always have a hero in their fathers.
ALTUS ASYMCA

ASYMCA Hosts Brain Training at Altus Air Force Base

Over two dozen active duty military members enjoyed a two day seminar of the newest leading edge approach to build resilience against brain decline, reverse losses in brain capacity, and retrain the brain to maximize performance. Although the training was provided free through the ASYMCA at no cost, normally this instruction would cost up to $2,000 per participant. This special ASYMCA Brain Training at the Airman’s Resilience Center on AAFB was sponsored by the generous donation of LaQuinta Inns and Suites. It was presented by The Brain Performance Institute, which is the clinical arm of the Center for Brain Health at the University of Texas at Dallas, a scientific research facility. Their high performance brain training program, known as SMART, Strategic Memory Advanced Reasoning Training, is based on more than 25 years of innovative scientific study by cognitive neuroscientists, physicians and research clinicians.

Scientists have long known that as humans we use only a tiny fraction of our brain, by some estimates as low as 10%. Making that sobering bit of information even more telling is the sad fact that most of us don’t even use that 10% at peak efficiency. Through this program, airmen learned how to train their brains to be more productive and less stressed. They learned strategies to revive everyday routines and boost their brainpower. Interactive sessions included exercises that encourage discussion, creative thinking, and practical application. Participants were excited and reported that they experienced everyday life improvements of reduced stress, increased productivity, strategic thinking, improved organizational skills, and cognitive enhancement of better attention, reasoning, decision making, problem solving and innovation and creativity.

This training was sponsored by the generous donations of LaQuinta Inns and Suites to afford AAFB this opportunity.

ASYMCA of Missouri

“Help Me Learn” Families Visit Local Pumpkin Patch

Help Me Learn” is an educational program for military parents and their children ages 3–5. This parent participation program is designed to encourage the early learner to engage in problem solving, exploring, sharing, and discovering in a language rich, educational setting. Each September, the families spend the day at a local pumpkin patch. Hayrides, pumpkin picking, games and activities involve the entire family in a fun day enjoying the cool, autumn weather and spending time together.

“Help Me Learn” is taught by a certified teacher and based on the guidelines set by DESE, The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and more specifically, the Department of Education’s Early Learning Standards. The program targets age appropriate social/emotional, cognitive, physical, and language/literacy developmental stages of the early learner. Children participate in Circle and Group Activities, Centers, and lessons on colors, shapes, letters, and numbers. “Help Me
The Armed Services YMCA branch at Camp Pendleton has had an exciting summer season in 2015. Our Father Daughter Dance was held on Friday, April 24, 2015 at Pacific View Events Center. The theme for the 9th Annual Father Daughter dance was “A Journey to the Ice Palace” with over 450 fathers and daughters. The event was open to Active Duty, Retirees, Veterans and their families.

The 16th Annual Operation Appreciation was held on Armed Forces Day, May 16, at the Oceanside Pier in partnership with the City of Oceanside and Chamber of Commerce.

Congratulations to Alaina Hoffbuhr who won the ASYMCA Annual Essay contest entitled “My Military Hero” at the National Level.

Preschool, Mommy and Me was a tremendous success. The students enjoyed visits from the Easter Bunny, Captain Book and they graduated at the end of May. Camp Hero program was expanded this summer to provide services for military children during the summer and to generate additional revenue. Camp Hero was during July with the following weekly highlights Art with the Artist, Around the World and Mad Scientist. The first week concluded with an art show for parents at the Stuart Mesa Community Center, during the Around the World week the children studied the cultures of other countries and the Mad Scientist week exposed our young boys and girls to the wonders of the world around them through science.

Our Summer Camps were very popular as we partnered with Magdalena Ecke YMCA. We offered camps ranging from a five day camp with different field trips each day to two week-long resident camps; Camp Fox Caravans on Catalina Island, one week for Junior High and one week for High School students. We concluded the summer with a Paintball Camp in partnership with the Paintball Park on Camp Pendleton in August for 7-15 yr olds.

Along with these camps, we have continued our summer version of Preschool – “Summer Fun” and field trips for Camp FLASHHH in support of the EFMP families on Camp Pendleton. We served over 645 military kids before summer’s end which is double our participation from last year.

The Base Mud Run was held 6, 7 June and 13, 14 June at Lake O’Neill. Our contract with MCCS allowed us to receive $5 per adult runner. With the over fifteen thousand runners we received $76,525 from the event.

The Annual Golf Classic was held 11 August at Marine Memorial Golf Course on board Camp Pendleton. There were 88 golfers participating this year with a net of $150,000. Many thanks to George Young and Steve Browne for Co-Chairing the event. Volunteering were Trish Spencer, Liz Rhea, and Bob Downs who were instrumental in taking care of a myriad of minor details.

Operation Kid Comfort: Designed to address the emotional stress of the children of military personnel who are in a deployed status. During this period we supported military families with 78 Quilts.

During this period we held ten “Concrete Beach” cookouts for the Marine students at the School of Infantry just before they graduate. Our staff along with the help of many committed volunteers supported more than 2200 Marines with a warm meal.
As of this writing we are in the middle of our annual “Ball Gown Giveaway.” We have collected over 2,500 dresses this year along with over 2,000 pairs of evening shoes, handbags, scarfs, jewelry and make-up. We will serve 600 active duty and dependent spouses with 2 dresses each and accessories. A big Thank you goes out to our long-time supporters, Working Wardrobes, who have donated half the gowns and to local community churches and women’s groups for the remainder. The residuals will be sent to our sister branches in 29 Palms and San Diego.

Coming up in the winter months we look forward to our Mother and Son dance on 23 October at the Pacific View Events Center, Home Hospitality for the School of Infantry Students on Thanksgiving Day and the ever so popular Secret Santa and Santa’s workshop.

The El Paso branch held its annual Back to School Bash August 21, 2015. This year the Back to School celebration was held at two locations simultaneously. While our Child Development Center held a Hawaiian theme celebration, our Junior Enlisted Family Center celebrated with Bingo, prizes and other games. Dancing, games, great food and school supplies provided excitement for children preparing to go back school. A total of 185 donated backpacks were given away and 263 bags filled with donated school supplies were handed out, saving parents approximately $2,775 in backpacks and another $2,630 in school supplies. Amidst tears, laughter, dancing and song El Paso celebrated the retirement of Ms Queenba Braide. Ms Queen (center) as lovingly known to the staff and pre-school class dressed in native Nigerian clothing. The CDC director Ana Coleman and other friends and family dressed in native clothing to honor this wonderful teacher and friend.
HAMPTON ROADS ASYMCA

For the fifteenth consecutive year, the Armed Services YMCA of Hampton Roads has hosted their mud run on the beautiful beaches of Little Creek Amphibious base, now Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek – Fort Story in Virginia Beach. With the base’s gator as the mascot, this 8K race has become a local favorite for its grueling all terrain trek through sand and mud. This year’s race on August 8th did not disappoint and runners claimed it was the best mud pit ever! The pouring rain on Saturday morning did not keep them away; it only added to the fun and made the course even muddier.

Participation was great with 940 adult runners and 196 kids who turned out for the One Mile Mini Mud. Individuals and teams of all ages competed for bragging rights and awards. Free food and drinks fueled the runners at the finish line.

The participants also had a chance to meet the sponsors at the race expo and packet pick up on Friday at the Westin Town Center. Sponsors are the backbone of the event and their support makes this major fundraising event possible each year. Geico, USAA, Whole Foods and the Adventure Park are just a few who support this endeavor and help make military life easier through the work done by the Armed Services YMCA. The proceeds stay here in Hampton Roads and provide no cost programming to junior enlisted military families.

HONOLULU ASYMCA

The first ever ASYMCA of Honolulu Robotics Camp brought together 40 day campers to challenge their knowledge of technology and engineering.

What began as a pilot project to test the market and the concept, has proven itself to be a huge success.

This summer the camp was offered at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam in partnership with Kalani Robotics Academy and Friends of Hawaii Robotics. The goal will now be to seek full funding for equipment and offer this STEM based camp at Marine Corps Base Hawaii and Wheeler Army Airfield in the next year. Students age 9-10 utilized Lego Robotics, while students age 11-13 utilized VEX IQ. Both groups designed, built, programmed and competed with their robots. Students had a fantastic time while learning basic engineering, math, programming and problem solving skills.
KILLEEN ASYMCA
G6 HOSPITALITY DONATIONS

The employees of G6 Hospitality are awesome. A few weeks ago they drove from their corporate office in Carrollton, TX and dropped off food to help us with our food program. Our food program allows us to feed underserved children in our child care program. Also with the donation of the food they brought gift cards. With the gift cards, they were able to have parents and their children get anything they needed to start the new school year. Recently, Tony and Paul drove to their corporate offices to pick up donated school supplies. These school supplies definitely helped the children in our programs to go to school on the first day with everything they need. To the employees of G6 Hospitality, we Thank You!

THE 1ST ANNUAL YMCA YOUTH TRIATHLON

The Armed Services YMCA Killeen has completed its first youth triathlon. Early Saturday morning over 30 children arrived in Harker Heights to participate in the Armed Services YMCA Killeen First Annual Youth Triathlon. This was open to all children ages 5-15. Each division was given distances proportionate to their ages. For the younger groups the adults were allowed to run alongside them, including training wheels if needed.

The Y is the starting point for many kids to learn about becoming and staying active and developing healthy habits they will carry with them throughout their lives. The benefits of participating in Y sports are far greater than just physical health. Whether it’s gaining the confidence that comes from improved swimming, or building the positive relationships that lead to good sportsmanship and teamwork, participating in the Armed Services YMCA Youth Triathlon series is about building the whole child, from the inside out.

SAN DIEGO ASYMCA
SAN DIEGO ANGLERS DEEP SEA FISHING

The San Diego Anglers have been partnering with the Armed Services YMCA for nine years in an effort to bring some desperately needed R&R to wounded, injured and ill service members receiving medical treatment at Naval Medical Center San Diego. This summer the San Diego Anglers hosted 3 fantastic deep sea fishing trips free of charge, which included all licenses, equipment, bait, lunch, and wonderful raffle prizes to top off the trip. Service members were able to bring along their friends, family and loved ones for an adventure out on the water, while building camaraderie with each other and caring community members.

If you are currently receiving treatment at the Naval Medical Center and would like to receive more information about upcoming outings such as deep sea fishing trips, please feel free to email: Jessica Pineda at jessica.pineda@med.navy.mil.

THE ASYMCA SUPPORTS THE UNITED WAY KICK-OFF LUNCHEON

With more than 350 people in attendance, United Way of the Greater Fort Hood Area kicked off its annual campaign on September 10th with a goal of raising at least $700,000. The YMCA provided food for the attendees. We were supported by volunteers from other United Way Agencies.
The center is a nearly $3 million renovation and new construction addition to the former George Keathley Army Reserve Center that was recently vacated when the Army Reserve unit moved on post.

The new 28,500 square feet facility houses a state-of-the-art child development center with expanded infant care and outdoor play areas, a new Soldiers Closet and Soldier’s Family Food Closet areas, a conference center, special events auditorium and kitchen.

“The new facility is allows us to serve more people, and more efficiently,” shared Bill Vaughn, Lawton ASYMCA Executive Director. “Now we can provide support all in one center. We’re also able to accept private donations for our Soldier’s Closet consignment shop from those who couldn’t make it onto post easily, and we’ve seen our donations double.”

The expanded meeting space is available to FRG and other groups looking for off-post locations for meetings.

The center is expected to support an estimated 18,000 troops and families each year.
FT. BRAGG ASYMCA
Susan Tillis Hosts Baby Shower to Benefit Baby Bundles Program

On June 18, Susan Tillis, wife of U.S. Senator Thom Tillis, hosted a Baby Bundle Shower at Cornelius Town Hall in Cornelius, NC to benefit the Ft. Bragg ASYMCA Baby Bundles Program. Baby Bundles is a joint effort between Womack Army Medical Hospital and the Armed Services YMCA of Fort Bragg, and delivers essential care items for newborns to new moms of active duty soldiers at Fort Bragg.

Mrs. Tillis was moved to support the Baby Bundles program after touring the Ft. Bragg ASYMCA with her husband in April.

“They told me that they sometimes feel forgotten or under appreciated,” shared Susan Tillis with the Lake Norman Citizen newspaper, commenting on the junior enlisted soldiers and their spouses she met.

“Baby Bundles is a project for our E4 soldiers and below with an average salary of $21,000,” says Tillis. “The spouses often give birth while their husbands are deployed and they often have no family support to help. With so much sadness in the world, this was a small way for me to give back, to raise awareness of our military serving and to have a community come together for one cause.”

Unfortunately, there have been times that the program was running so low on supplies and financial resources that distribution of bundles temporarily stopped.

Mrs. Tillis wanted to help raise awareness of the needs of military families, and support the program that is offered free of cost to junior enlisted families.

Each Baby Bundle contains at least a new outfit, baby wipes, receiving blanket, hygiene product for baby, baby rattle, shampoo and conditioner for mom, nursing pads, and a voucher for newborn diapers. More than 1,000 bundles were assembled and countless more supplies gathered thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Tillis, The Republican Party of North Carolina and volunteers. This donation is projected to support families at Ft. Bragg over the next two years.
ANGELS OF THE BATTLEFIELD
Gala Celebrates 9th Anniversary

The 9th Annual Angels of the Battlefield Gala will honor medics, corpsmen and pararescuemen who administer life-saving medical treatment and trauma care on the battlefield. These Angels of the Battlefield are compassionate men and women who risk everything and are often the reason why so many of our nation’s heroes wounded in battle have made it home to their families and communities. Angels is the only event which recognizes the frontline actions of military medical personnel.

The ASYMCA works with the military Services to select a medic, corpsmen, and pararescuemen from each. The honorees receive awards on behalf of their fellow medical professionals for their dedication and commitment to the mission.

“We are excited to honor our nation heroes, those who step up to the plate to keep us safe and sound. These service members risk everything and are often the reason why so many of our nation’s heroes wounded in battle have made it home to their families and communities,” says VADM William D. French, President and CEO of Armed Services YMCA.

This year’s Honorees include:

Jay Shearer, a 39-year-old Army medic from Escondido, CA, who saved the life of a Marine who was severely injured and dismembered by an IED that he was attempting to dismantle.

Joshua Van Horn, a 29-year-old Marine corpsman from Akron, OH, who provided medical aid to several others after an IED strike blasted his convoy while deployed in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Chris Dixon, a 27-year-old Air Force medic from Newfield, ME, who assisted in saving 18 lives while responding to a mass shooting while recently deployed.

Wayne Papalski, a 29-year-old Navy corpsman from Secaucus, NJ, who rescued a civilian hiker, and the crew sent to rescue her after they became stranded attempting to reach her on a precarious mountain top at 9,000 feet above sea level.

Mya Dejanakul, a 27-year-old Coast Guard corpsman from Redman, OR, who provided lifesaving care to civilians in remote Alaskan villages who would otherwise not have safe transportation or access to medical treatment.

The Gala will honor the service members and feature a keynote address by Admiral John M. Richardson, Chief of Naval Operations. Kim Dozier, a Daily Beast contributor and CNN analyst, will guest-host the gala as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Approximately 300 guests are expected to attend, including senior military leadership and enlisted service members.

Historically, this unique event brings together approximately 300 leaders from entertainment, government, military and private sector to recognize the dedication and bravery of our medics, corpsmen and pararescuemen. The ASYMCA is proud to have honored over 450 to date.
ASYMCA STAFF
William D. French VADM, USN (Ret)
President/CEO
ext. 110, wfrench@asymca.org

Tom Landwermeyer, BG, USA (Ret)
COO
ext. 102, tlandwermeyer@asymca.org

Charlotte Caldwell
Director, PR/Marketing/Social Media
ext. 112, ccaldwell@asymca.org

Ashby Collins
Military Outreach Initiative Rep. (Private Fitness)
ext. 107, acollins@asymca.org

Stephanie Franke
Office Manager/ National Board Coordinator
ext. 104, sfranke@asymca.org

Rose Jeerakul
Assistant Controller
ext. 103, rjeerakul@asymca.org

Laura Kurth
Military Outreach Initiative Rep. (Y memberships)
ext. 100, lkurth@asymca.org

Kema Luis
Director of Human Resources
ext. 101, kluis@asymca.org

Myrna Ramos
Controller
ext. 105, mramos@asymca.org

Giselle Schneider
Operation Kid Comfort /Military Family Month Coordinator
ext. 116, gschneider@asymca.org

Jeff Olson
Director of Financial Development
ext. 115, jolson@asymca.org

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Vernon Wallace
Anthony Wedo
Kathy Zortman

Armed Services YMCA Branch Representatives
Lana Bastin
Fort Campbell ASYMCA
Mike Groothousen
RADM, USN (Ret)
Hampton Roads ASYMCA
Dave Guebert
CAPT, USN (Ret)
San Diego ASYMCA
Ingo Hentschel
Camp Pendleton ASYMCA
Stewart Laing
Colorado Springs/Pikes Peak YMCA
Erik Lind
Alaska AYMCA

Chairman’s Emeritus Council
Michael C. Baker
MCPO, USN, (Ret)
G. Kent Bankus
Frank “Skip” L. Bowman ADM, USN (Ret)
Doug Coffey
Donald Infante MG, USA (Ret)
John J. Mazach VADM, USN (Ret)
Kendell Pease RADM, USN (Ret)
Honorable Joe R. Reeder
Our Mission

The mission of the Armed Services YMCA of the USA, on behalf of the National Council of Young Men’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, is to put Christian principles into practice through educational, recreational, social and religious programs and services for military personnel, both single and married and their family members. The mission is carried out in cooperation with the military.

Fiscal Responsibility

The ASYMCA is a Charity Watch and Charity Navigator top-rated, 501(c)(3) military charity. Eighty-nine cents of each dollar donated is cycled directly back into programming, ensuring the highest quality of services for our troops and families. Seventy-two percent of our support comes from public and corporate donations.