



Air Force



Family Support Network

Fall 2013 Newsletter

September 2013, Issue 13



*Honoring Gold Star
Mothers
Giving Thanks
Articles
Anniversaries
Announcements
Resources*

Air Force Families Forever

“Ensuring that the families of our fallen Airmen are never forgotten by providing immediate and long-term compassionate support.”

Please know that we are not attempting to endorse any company, service or product, nor are we attempting to impose any beliefs on you. We are simply giving you options to explore as you desire.

The Road Not Taken

By Robert Frost

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*



**Gold Star Mother's Day Observed
Sunday, September 29, 2013**



The American Gold Star Mothers Inc. was formed in the United States shortly after World War I to provide support for mothers who lost sons or daughters in the war. The name came from the custom of families of servicemen hanging a banner called a Service Flag in the window of their homes. The Service Flag had a star for each family member in the United States Armed Forces. Living servicemen were represented by a blue star, and those who had lost their lives were represented by a gold star. Today, membership in the Gold Star Mothers is open to any American woman who has lost a son or daughter in service to the United States. On the last Sunday in September, Gold Star Mother's Day is observed in the U.S. in their honor. The group holds a congressional charter under Title 36 of the United States Code.

**American Gold Star
Mothers**

**2128 Leroy Place,
NW Washington, DC
20008 202-265-0991**

www.goldstarmoms.com



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How to Apply for a Gold Star Pin

The Gold Star Lapel Pin was established by Act of Congress (Pub. L. 80-306) on August 1, 1947 to identify widows, parents and next of kin of service members killed in certain operations defined by the law. While enacted after WW II, the award authority is retroactive to WW I, and includes most subsequent conflicts. The Gold Star pins are not awarded by the *American Gold Star Mothers (AGSM)*, but by the Defense Dept. upon completing and submitting a [DD Form 3](#) (AF mail to: NARA, 9700 Page Blvd, St Louis, MO 63132).

There are 2 different pins depending on the circumstances of your loved one's death, though membership in AGSM is available to mothers with either pin. *"Each child is precious and we don't believe that the circumstance of your child's death is important. All served and all undertook the associated risks."*

The following relatives of the deceased are entitled to one or the other of the pins listed below:

Widow, Widower, Mother, Father, Stepmother/father, Mother/father through adoption, Foster mother/father in loco parentis, Son, Daughter, Stepson/daughter, son/daughter by adoption, Brother, Sister, Half brother/sister

Gold Star Lapel Pin – This pin is awarded only to the relatives of those killed in specific conflicts listed on the back of the DD Form 3. If your loved one was killed during the time period of one of these conflicts, but not in the official area of the conflict you will receive the Next of Kin Lapel Pin. Include a copy of the DD-1300 (military death certificate).



Next of Kin Lapel Pin – The Lapel Button is authorized for issue retroactive to March 29, 1973. If you are a relative listed above and your loved one died while on active duty or were assigned to a reserve unit in a drill status, you should be entitled to the Next of Kin Lapel Pin.



For the Next of Kin Lapel Pin, furnish the name, grade SSN, and date of death of the deceased Service person, along with the names and relationships of the next of kin and submit to: National Personnel Records Center, 1 Archives Dr. St. Louis, MO 63138, 314-801-0800, fax 314-801-9195, email MPR.center@nara.gov

THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

By Robert Emmons



Trials and suffering can actually refine and deepen gratefulness if we allow them to show us not to take things for granted. Our national holiday of gratitude, Thanksgiving, was born and grew out of hard times. The first Thanksgiving took place after nearly half the pilgrims died from a rough winter and year. It became a national holiday in 1863 in the middle of the Civil War and was moved to its current date in the 1930s following the Depression.

Why? Well, when times are good, people take prosperity for granted and begin to believe that they are invulnerable. In times of uncertainty, though, people realize how powerless they are to control their own destiny. If you begin to see that everything you have, everything you have counted on, may be taken away, it becomes much harder to take it for granted.

So crisis can make us more grateful—but research says gratitude also helps us cope with crisis. Consciously cultivating an attitude of gratitude builds up a sort of psychological immune system that can cushion us when we fall. There is scientific evidence that grateful people are more resilient to stress, whether minor everyday hassles or major personal upheavals. The contrast between suffering and redemption serves as the basis for one of my tips for practicing gratitude: remember the bad. It works this way: Think of the worst times in your life, your sorrows, your losses, your sadness—and then remember that here you are, able to remember them, that you made it through the worst times of your life, you got through the trauma, you got through the trial, you're making your way out of the dark. Remember the bad things, then look to see where you are now.

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_can_help_you_through_hard_times#sthash.Ut4lloZg.dpuf



Gratitude & Forgiveness, and Their Influence on Your Happiness

REACHOUT.com

Being grateful—or having gratitude—for the past, can positively affect your future. Research has shown that people who think about the past in an optimistic way have increased capacity for happiness. You might experience a variety of feelings when thinking about the past—from pride, satisfaction and contentment, to bitterness and anger. These feelings are all actually controlled by your memories, which you can manage.

If you have bad memories, you might be able to change them to neutral or good feelings by challenging your thinking or through forgiveness. This means that you have ultimate control over your feelings about the past. If you can control your thoughts and feelings, you can influence your happiness. This might not be easy at first. Talking to a spiritual counselor or mental health professional can be a helpful way to manage difficult experiences so that your feelings about them become neutral.

The past doesn't dictate your future

Do you believe that your past determines your future? If you do, you're reducing the amount of control that you have in what happens in your life. If you believe you have no control over your future, you're also more likely to experience the feeling of "stuckness,"—like no matter what action you take, it won't make a difference to your life. Research suggests that childhood events don't always determine the course of your life. You don't need to be a prisoner of your past and it doesn't have to determine your future. You can control your future, your thoughts about the past and present, and the way that you act on these feelings.

Forgiveness

If you have intense and frequent negative thoughts about the past, it's likely that these thoughts will block any positive emotions like contentment and satisfaction. Sometimes it might seem like there are good reasons for not forgiving and for holding on to bitterness. If you're having trouble deciding whether to forgive, you might want to evaluate the pros and cons of forgiveness. Your experience could be a very complex and



difficult one. It might be especially difficult to forgive if you've been really hurt by someone (or some situation). Forgiveness can take time, and it's ok if at first it hurts too much to forgive.

However, if you reach a point where you're no longer feeling bitter, forgiveness can give you a much greater chance of moving on and enjoying life. Forgiveness transforms bitterness into a neutral feeling, or even a positive feeling, making you happier. In addition to having a positive impact on your happiness, if you forgive, you're more likely to be in better physical health, especially when it comes to your heart. If you choose to reconcile with a person after you've come to terms with a situation, there might be even more benefits. Your relationship with that forgiven person is likely to improve greatly—and better relationships can lead to increased happiness.

Challenging negative thoughts

In addition to forgiveness, challenging your negative thoughts about the past can be helpful. By challenging these memories, you might realize that the way you think about the event is not actually "correct" or accurate, and that this faulty thinking is making you feel negatively about something that actually deserves neutral or even positive feelings.

Other tips that might help

It takes practice to be able to identify and change negative thinking about the past, and it might not be easy at first. Forgiveness is not always an easy choice. The following tips might also help you challenge negative thoughts and make decisions to forgive.

Find support. Talking to people you trust and respect about the way you feel can be helpful, particularly if you talk to people who have experienced a situation similar to the one you're in. Try talking to a family member, friend, teacher or counselor.

Keep a diary, in addition to your gratitude diary. You might be experiencing a whole lot of thoughts and feelings about the past, and it might help you keep track by writing them down. Once you identify negative feelings about the past, challenge them. See if you can re-write history.

Remember that the way you think about the past will influence the way you feel about it, and you can control this! Try out some of the suggestions, and see if you can re-shape the way you think and feel about the past, and increase your happiness. For more tips, check out the What is Happiness Fact Sheet (<http://us.reachout.com/facts/factsheet/what-is-happiness>).





Where am I?

I wake up in that familiar state of surrealism.
I am not confused or disoriented. I am not asking
myself, "Where am I?"

I am just not certain about reality.
I am not ill, or psychotic, delirious or demented.
I know what I have to do...work, laundry, etc.
I pay the bills, I make meals, I care for the pets.
I call my kids, I call my Mom, I call my friends.

I go to meetings, I go to church.

I exercise, I pray.

I function.

ON THE OUTSIDE.

Where am I?

I am missing my son... that's where I am.

Judy Gentz, GSM
Capt Joel Gentz, KIA 6/9/10



Jessica Tarver

Friday, August 30th would have marked the 29th birthday of my daughter, Jessica. That day, I enjoyed driving to Kansas to be with Avery, my youngest son (20) and I saw my oldest son Chauncey (US Army) a few weeks earlier. I knew I didn't want to go to Pensacola to visit the site of her remains but I did know I wanted to be in the presence of at least one of my sons so that was the reason for the trip. Getting away just for those few hours proved to be very rewarding, it was the coming back that once again took me through the emotional turmoil of GRIEF!

I spent Labor Day going through papers, receipts and old bank statements and lo and behold, I found a letter that Jess wrote to me while in boot camp dated October, 2002. She briefly talked about her purpose and reasons for joining the military and one of those reasons was to get closer to God. She said, they had prayer every day, she would even be asked to lead prayer and that her name was on the prayer list. She talked about how fast she has to eat in order to be on time for everything and that she wanted "sugar". She mentioned they didn't know a lot about what was going on in the world and that sometimes their instructors would fill them in. At that time, she mentioned, she had heard about the "sniper." It was comforting to read something once again that she had written.

The picture is from 2008. Her birthday.



I ♥ my brother

By Hattie Lou Stapleton

My brother, SSGT Thomas Jay Perkins' birthday is this month. September 29th came and went last year. Mom and dad were there with us to visit his grave, but as life is wont to...other more pressing things came up and we didn't have much time. There were things that happened that day that we all think we're to coincidental. Things that TJ would have loved to see happen. Maybe he had a hand in them? We like to think so.

Hitting the full year mark in April was hard, yet it went easier than expected. Probably because we went on a family vacation. Staying home to focus on the day he left the earth is not something any of us wanted to do... We held him as he took his last breath on that day. We won't ever forget that. We would rather remember the day God brought him to us.

This is the second birthday since his passing. I wish I could say this year is easier than the last, but there are moments I have where I can't breathe. Moments where I remember him so clearly that when reality hits again, it's all just happened a moment ago. To quote Green Day, "Wake Me Up When September Ends."

As soon as September hit, I went to his grave. I sat there just talking to him the same as I did when he was alive. Playing country songs I remember him singing, just wishing I could hear his voice. There were times after I said certain things that I could just imagine what he would have said. Most times it involved calling me a name. We were close, but that was our relationship. Name calling at its finest. At least we were honest with each other even if it involved him calling me a brat...

When I speak of him, which I do now in passing, it's without the heavy pause as I focus on missing him. Now I smile as I relay whatever thought comes to my mind about him and then move on with the conversation.

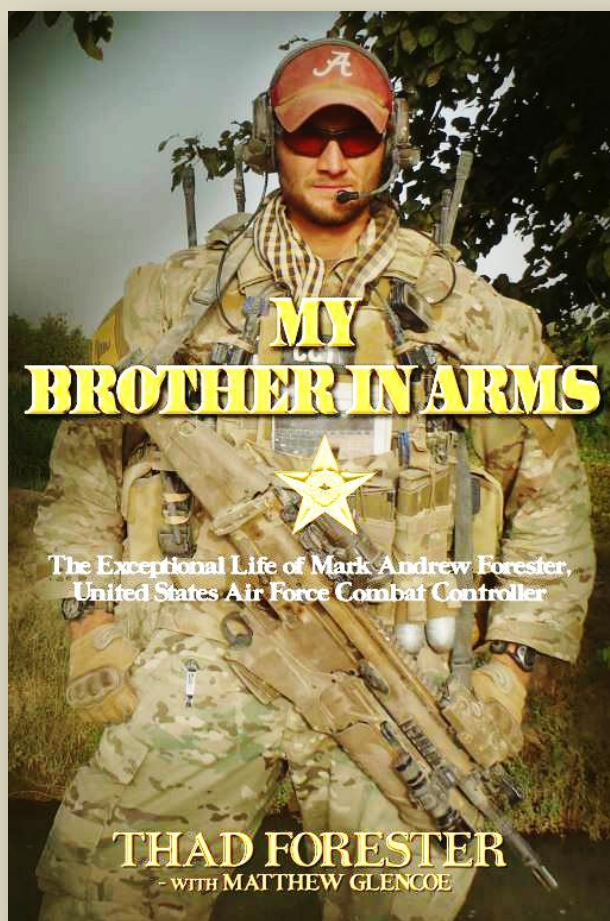
At times I never thought I'd recover after I lost him. There were times I just wanted to curl into a ball and give up. Dealing with that pain was so overwhelming that I couldn't even talk to my husband about it. He wasn't there, how could he understand what it's like to lose the sibling you're the closest with? I learned as time went on that he didn't know because I wasn't willing to open up and tell him. I've since remedied that situation.

So, now, I tell him when it becomes too much. When I need a quiet moment to assimilate my thoughts or just a hug to let me know I'm not alone. I hug my daughters close and encourage their relationship because I know that one day these memories will carry them through the rough times.

Since TJ passed away, I've learned that instead of focusing on the life he can no longer lead, I would rather live a life as full as his was. With love and laughter and caring. I strive on a daily basis to be a better person in hopes that when my time comes, it will be said that I lived just half as well as he did.

So, Brothermine, I say 'Happy Birthday' with a heart that misses you deeply. I'm glad you are no longer feeling any pain and that is the only reason I can say it with a smile. I doubt I'll ever stop missing you.

My Brother in Arms



By Thad Forester

To highlight the third anniversary of Mark's death, his biography, called "My Brother in Arms," will be released Sept 29, 2013. I've put my heart and soul into this the last three years. Mark was my brother and my buddy, and the world needs to know the man and warrior he was. It's not a memorial in print, but rather a record of his life, from early childhood, to his missionary service, to his trials, spiritual beliefs, military service and then to his final battle.

Speaking of Mark's final battle, which earned him the Silver Star, an Apache aviator (the low bird) said: *"I have never witnessed such an act of heroism in my three years of fighting in combat. I have over 2,700 hours total time with 1,500 hours of combat time in both Iraq and Afghanistan... JAG 28 continued to advance on the enemy while taking intense enemy fire, and continuously fired his weapon in an attempt to get to his fallen teammate and destroy the enemy."*

To learn more about the book/e-book and how to order, visit:

www.markaforester.com

ANGELVERSARIES

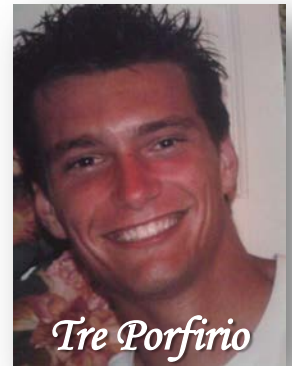
"WHEN OUR LOVED ONES BECAME ANGELS"

Carolyn: "My husband, Lt Col David Lincoln died November 18th of last year. We knew it would happen just didn't know when. He was my boy's Daddy. They miss him so much. His angelversary is coming quickly, and we will no longer be able to say 'last year at this time we went fishing, camping or we celebrated his birthday this way'.....so this year, to honor and remember his home going, we are going to write little notes, put them in balloons and send them to heaven for Daddy." The holidays this year will not be the fog of last year's, this year we will KNOW he is not with us, it will be hard, BUT we also know he is in a better place where he is feeling no pain."

In memory of Lt Col David Lincoln, R.I.P. 11/18/12

Karl: "I would like my son, SrA Tre Porfirio, remembered.
Love Dad"

In memory of SrA Tre Porfirio, R.I.P. 10/08/88 – 11/28/10



Chrissy: "November 18th is Ryan's fourth year in Heaven. This day still comes with a heavy heart, many tears, and blessed memories. I am fortunate that Ryan's resting place at the Roseburg National Cemetery is in our hometown so I can visit often. I wanted to share a blessing that came about when Ryan was laid to rest. Our Roseburg National Cemetery is beautiful; however, the parking lot isn't owned or maintained by the National Cemetery and it is a dirt easement that was in very poor condition. After attending Ryan's service, very dear friends of ours established a non-profit organization called Guardians of Heroes (Guardiansofheroes.us) to raise money to pave and beautify the parking lot to honor ALL who gave their life to our country and their families who visit. Our community has come together with such care and generosity. The project has begun and in the center of the parking lot will be a courtyard laid with engraved bricks. Through the tragedy of losing Ryan, a beautiful blessing has come to many who visit the Roseburg National Cemetery, and it brings some happiness amongst the sadness. *In memory of SrA Ryan Matthews, R.I.P. 11/18/09*

Linda's Challenge

By Linda Ambard, wife of Maj Phil Ambard

I literally hyperventilate every time I think of Dover. I run my DE marathon there by choice because terrorism is not going to win. I struggle with terrible flashbacks to the 21 gun salute, the flag draped boxes, and the piercing wails that filled the cold dark night-- my wails of a broken heart.

I run because I need to honor and I need to remember so many who were there picking up the pieces.

I love you all and know that you understand the journey I am on. Thank you for being the pink polka dots and bubbles in my heart. L

*P.S. If you are near Dover on **Oct. 20th**, Keith and I will be running this thing and taking no prisoners. 26.2 miles of fun, my third marathon in four weeks, and my hardest emotionally.*

Come out and stand as one to make a loud foot stomp on the course or at the finish line!

Race Information

Monster "Mash" Marathon

Dover, DE

Saturday October 19, 2013

Marathon Or Half Marathon. At Dover International Speedway next to "Miles the Monster"

Dover, DE

Benefiting the "Wounded Warrior Project"



RESOURCES



Providing college scholarships and educational counseling to military children who have lost a parent in the line of duty. Our vision is that every such child can have a debt-free college education.



TAPS
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

800-959-TAPS

*CARING FOR THE FAMILIES
OF OUR FALLEN HEROES*

**Oct 4-6 Ohio Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp,
Cleveland, OH**

Oct 16-20 Austin Siblings Retreat, Austin, TX

**Nov 1-3 National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar and Good
Grief Camp for Young Survivors, Colorado Springs, CO**

Nov 6-10 Boston Parents Retreat, Boston, MA

<http://www.taps.org/events/list.aspx?id=89252>



Tutor.com for U.S. Military Families Fact Sheet: **Air Force**



Tutor.com for U.S. Military Families Program Overview

The Department of Defense MWR Library Program and Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provide online tutoring and homework help from Tutor.com at no charge to all K-12 students in National Guard, Reserve and Active Duty military families. Tutor.com for Military Families allows students to connect to a live tutor online at any time for one-to-one help with homework, studying, test prep, proofreading and more. Eligible students can sign up and log in at www.tutor.com/military.

Free Around-the-Clock Help

Access to Tutor.com for Military Families is free 24 hours a day, seven days a week—no appointment needed. Regardless of where they attend school, students worldwide can access the online service using any internet-enabled device, including smart phones.

40 Subjects, All Skill Levels

Math: Elementary, Mid-Level, Algebra I and II, Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, AP level

English: Essay Writing, Grammar, Literature, AP level

Science: Elementary, Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, AP level

Social Studies: U.S. History, World History, AP level



Students go to www.tutor.com/military and click on their service to get a tutor.

Expert Tutors

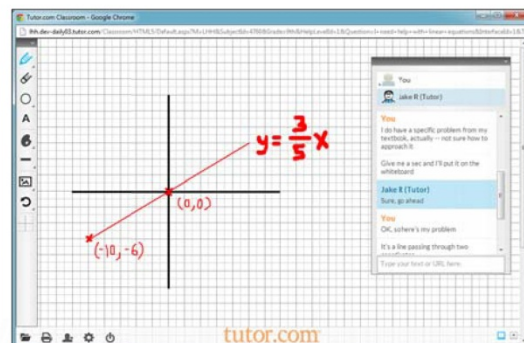
Every Tutor.com tutor is a carefully screened expert. Our team of more than 2,600 tutors includes certified teachers, college professors, graduate students, select undergraduates from accredited universities and other professionals. We employ military spouses, and approximately 9% of our Tutors are affiliated with the military. Tutor.com tutors are primarily based in the U.S. and Canada, with some bilingual specialists located internationally.

Safe, Secure, Anonymous

Our commitment to safety starts with our rigorous tutor application process, an extensive background check, and a probationary period before an applicant becomes a certified Tutor.com tutor. Students and tutors always work anonymously and no personal information is shared during sessions. Ongoing session review and mentoring ensure that our tutors maintain the highest standards of quality and safety at all times.

Eligibility

Go to www.tutor.com/military/eligibility to see who is eligible to access Tutor.com for Military Families.



Students work one-to-one with a tutor in a secure, online classroom, which features an interactive whiteboard, file sharing and instant messaging.



Air Force Families Forever

Robin L. Raine, Program Manager



302-677-2328

Mailing Address:

**AFMAO/AF Families of the Fallen Support
116 Purple Heart Drive
Dover AFB, DE 19902**

For more info & past newsletters go to:

<http://www.mortuary.af.mil/library/familiesofthefallensupportbranch/index.asp>