



Kindness begins with the understanding that we all struggle
–Charles Glassman

The holiday season is a special time of year that sparks feelings of excitement and nostalgia for many of us. It is a truly magical time of year when we gather with our loved ones, from near and far, celebrating old family traditions and honoring memories of the past. We usher in our friends and neighbors, creating new traditions and making more memories along the way. The holidays bring out the best in us indeed, but it is essential to remember that the holidays can also trigger stress and sadness for many as well. A variety of things can contribute to these emotions, such as financial stress, loneliness, illness, loss of a loved one, depression, and the list goes on. As you know, our military families have even more stressors such as deployments, PCS, high-ops tempo, cultural and geographical restraints, PTSD, etc. When we combine these stressors with the pandemic challenges we may still be facing (travel restrictions, unemployment, physical/mental health, telework, etc.) as well as the pressures we put on ourselves during the holidays, we quickly understand how someone feel less spirited or have little to celebrate this season.

I think we can all relate to at least one of these stressors, especially the ones we put on ourselves. I, too, have often felt the pressure of meeting my expectations and/or the expectations of others during the holidays. Whether I was trying to make a “new to me” house look holiday perfect, make sure I honored every family tradition, or attended every holiday engagement with my husband while maintaining a perfect sense of holiday cheer; it was all added pressure that I put on myself. Getting caught up in the holiday hubbub and losing perspective is quite easy to do.

Luckily, I am constantly reminded by you, my fellow military spouses, of what the holiday season means and why it’s important to me. I see you giving to our military families and our Airmen, often with nothing in return. I see you seeking out those in need and offering your support. I see you making the best of the holidays with constantly changing scenery and challenging circumstances. I see you giving back every to our Air Force every day, and more so during the holidays. You inspire me and those around you to give back as well, and I am proud to be among such selfless leaders, especially when I see how the smallest act of kindness can bring someone so much joy.

Charles Dickens wrote “No one is useless who lightens the burdens of others” and I hope this holiday season we can all find someone in our community and lighten their burden... someone who is less fortunate, someone who has lost a loved one, or someone who has lost their spirit. Sadly, we don’t have to look far these days. So, let’s all take a spiritual reprieve from the holiday madness and pressures of the season and find someone less willing to celebrate the season ... then let’s become their reason!

Thank you all for what you do every day to inspire me and for all that you are doing for our military families this holiday season! Gen Brown and I are so grateful for your selfless leadership and your servant’s heart!

Warmest wishes for a happy holiday season,

Mrs. Sharene Brown

Sharene Brown, Spouse of the 22nd Chief of Staff of the Air Force

You can Follow me at www.facebook.com/CSAF22Spouse

FIVE & THRIVE

SPOUSE SITREP VOL. 3 DEC 2021



CHILDCARE

Expanded Childcare Program (ECC)

The Department of the Air Force Family Child Care (DAF FCC), Expanded Child Care (ECC) Program assists families in obtaining high-quality childcare from certified providers at or near the installation. Childcare is available for children ages two weeks to 12 years. ECC is available at all DAF led Active-Duty locations with an active FCC Program or at other non-DAF led installations/locations where approved providers are available. Use of ECC is permitted once all paperwork is completed and approved. Parents using ECC are expected to arrange their work schedules to have ample time to be with their children. Care is dependent on the availability of funding and providers.

<https://www.dafchildandyouth.com/expanded-child-care>

Pilot Program

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) Child and Youth Programs (CYP) is piloting a program that allows military families to consider off base childcare that uses state quality-rated programs when military families are unable to secure enough nationally accredited care. DAF CYP is piloting this initiative in Virginia, Maryland, and Nevada. In FY22, this pilot program will be expanded to Florida, Washington State, and California.

SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

10 Great Resources for Military Spouse Jobs

Check out 10 resources for military spouse jobs at: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/spouse/spouse-education-and-employment/10-great-resources-for-military-spouse-jobs/>

New Military Spouse Employment Partnerships (MSEP) Employers

The Department of Defense inducted 45 new companies and organizations into the Military Spouse Employment Partnership. Learn about these new partners and their commitment to recruit, hire, promote, and retain military spouses. https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil/portal/article/military-spouse-employment-partnership-employers?utm_campaign=mos-enews-nov2021&utm_content=html&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

HEALTHCARE

TRICARE Open Season is the annual period when you can enroll in or change your health care coverage for the next year. In 2021, TRICARE Open Season begins Nov. 8 and ends Dec. 13. Any enrollment changes you make will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2022. Open season applies to anyone enrolled in or eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select. Visit <https://tricare.mil/Plans/Enroll/OpenSeason> for more information.

If you're eligible to participate in TRICARE Open Season, you have three options:

Stay in your plan. If you want to stay in your current TRICARE health plan, you do not have to re-enroll. You'll continue in your current health plan through 2022 or as long as you are eligible.

Enroll in a plan. If you are eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select but not enrolled, you can enroll in a plan now.

Change plans. If you're already enrolled in a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select, you can switch plans and switch between individual and family enrollment.

EDUCATION

School Liaison Program MilLife Guide

The Military One Source App now contains a MilLife Guide for the School Liaison Program. It allows families, leadership and community stakeholders to connect fast to support and answers. With 24/7 access to powerful tools and help in your hands, anytime, anywhere. Provides a quick read on PreK-12 Education support along with articles, benefits, tools and connecting with a local PreK-12 education specialist. See link for more information on the Military OneSource App: <https://www.militaryone-source.mil/confidential-help/interactive-tools-services/my-military-onesource-app/>

DoDEA FY21 Grant Awardees

DoDEA received 75 quality and innovative proposals from school districts across the Nation for the FY 21 Military-Connected Local Educational Agencies for Academic and Support Program (MCASP). Thirty-two grants totaling \$46.9M were awarded to military-connected public-school districts. Sixteen school districts affecting DAF-connected students were awarded \$22M to support STEM, Health, World Language and Technical/Career Programs. DAF Installations supported by schools receiving the grants were Offutt, Scott, Eglin, Hurlburt Field, Peterson, Schriever, USAFA, Buckley, Grand Forks, Whiteman, Beale, and Sheppard. Contact Ms. Lori Phipps at 210-774-8673 or your installation School Liaison Program Manager by scanning the QR Code for additional information.

EFMP Special Education Specialist

The Exceptional Family Member Program continues expanding its team of resources at the EFMP Central Cell and now includes a special education specialist as part of continuing efforts to support families. Marcine Woodley recently joined the EFMP Central Cell as a special education specialist. In this role, Woodley will assist families navigating the education system. For more information on this new position, please see article here: https://www.afpc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2831666/efmp-adds-special-education-specialist-to-central-cell/fbclid/IwAR3lwuekQYz3CFn9IBDLQ20r_6svwok-TH0icuAWCLGEaqK395xa51c8T16w/

Power of Partnership in Education

Check out this article that illustrates how we are stronger together, working with our local community partners to make education better for not just our military community but also the civilian community. Consider ways to create these same types of partnerships when trying to tackle Five&Thrive initiatives, as all of these are tied to both family and mission readiness. <https://www.holloman.af.mil/News/Display/Article/2835740/power-of-partnerships-holloman-goodfellow-schools-see-results-set-standard/fbclid/IwAR2jipNjTAGnO9tyw4XxwU8jbArMUv6J3LoAcaLo7KAvWrhjajarXQOP50/>

HOUSING

Moving Benefits

Although May through September is considered prime PCS season, there are military families that PCS during the winter months. Here is a breakdown of your PCS benefits: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/moving-housing/moving/moving-benefits/>

Note: As a reminder, Airmen and Guardians can currently qualify for discounted lodging rates if having difficulty securing housing after PCS to CONUS locations. The discounted rates only apply to on-base lodging for members who have reached the end of the 10-day TLE authorization, and in areas where 60 days TLE have not been approved. This authorization expires 31 Jan 22 and applies to areas experiencing limited availability of rental properties and significant increases in rental costs where Airmen/Guardians are delayed with securing housing. The AFSVC/CC will determine locations eligible for this lodging rate discount. For more information, reach out to your local housing office to see if your location is eligible to the lodging rate discount. The eligible list, current as of 1 December, includes:

Arnold AFB, Tennessee	Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota	Lackland AFB, Texas	Peterson SFB, Colorado
Beale AFB, California	Fairchild AFB, Washington	Luke AFB, Arizona	Randolph AFB, Texas
Buckley SFB, Colorado	Goodfellow AFB, Texas	MacDill AFB, Florida	Shaw AFB, South Carolina
Dover AFB, Delaware	Hill AFB, Utah	Maxwell, Alabama	Sheppard AFB, Texas
Eielson AFB, Alaska	Hurlburt Field, Florida	McConnell AFB, Kansas	Travis AFB, California
Edwards AFB, California	Keesler AFB, Mississippi	Mountain Home AFB, Idaho	USAFA, Colorado
Eglin AFB, Florida	Kirtland AFB, New Mexico	Nellis AFB, Nevada	

DAF Military Housing

Did you know there is a hotline you can call to report a military housing issue that is not being resolved at the local level? Here is a toll free hotline to contact the AF housing section and AFCEC will investigate the issue: 800-482-6431. The Tenant Bill of Rights ensures access to unit maintenance history, and establishes a process to withhold rent payment while in formal dispute resolution. If the 18 tenant rights process is not working at the local level, there is a process to help you address the issues. See article for further information: <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2684039/air-force-makes-more-rights-available-for-housing-tenants/>

SPOUSE STORIES

Together We are Stronger

Heba Abdelaal, Air Force Spouse

This video (<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/819086/oar-oaw-documentary>) beautifully highlights the mission critical work on the front lines of Operation Allies Refuge/Operation Allies Welcome (OAR/OAW). Most of my volunteer time was spent at the Nightingale Theater which, after outgrowing three previous locations, became the primary donation intake site for OAR/OAW. Day in and day out, you'd see the same volunteers come in to help sort donations sometimes for 10, 12 and 14 hours a day – the more items we were able to sort through, the more that could be distributed to evacuees.

Behind the scenes, military spouses and community volunteers also gave in equally meaningful ways. There were the groups who voluntarily made homemade meals and cookies to feed those volunteering and working 12-hour and overnight shifts on base (thank you!), teachers who helped bridge language barriers through games and music, the group of spouses who started a bottle sanitation initiative, the families who picked up and returned donated items that needed to be washed, and several individuals across Europe that volunteered their skills sewing over 20,000 headscarves and modest dress items required for prayer in the Muslim faith.

To all the military spouses and volunteers who kept showing up on the front lines and behind the scenes – thank you. Thank you for giving of yourselves for those in greater need. Your selfless acts of service make me proud to be a military spouse.

KEY SPOUSE PROGRAM MEMO AND SURVEY

The CSAF, CSO, CMSAF, CMSSF and their spouses recently signed a memo to Squadron Command Teams, reinforcing the importance of the Key Spouse Program and soliciting feedback from command teams to help shape the program’s future. Please encourage unit leadership to share their Key Spouse success stories, raise concerns, provide inputs and volunteer to be part of a focus group by taking the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y5XMYKJ>.

ARMED FORCES INSURANCE MILITARY SPOUSE OF THE YEAR

Nominations are open as of November 29 – January 21, 2022. The Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year (MSOY) Program exists to recognize military spouses for their outstanding contributions to the military community and the world. For more information on how to nominate a spouse, please go to <https://msoy.afis.org/the-program>

SPOUSE OF ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER’S SURVEY

DoD is now offering all spouse of active-duty members the opportunity to provide feedback on the most pressing military life issues. The Spouse of Active-Duty Members Survey is conducted every two years and analyzes key issues affecting military spouses, including spouse support, employment and stress. It is important for the DoD to hear from our spouses on those QoL challenges you all face. To complete the 2021 Spouse of Active-Duty Member’s Survey, visit <https://dodsurveys.mil/>

If you are looking for **counseling support** this time of year, there are several FREE resources available to you, to include Military OneSource and Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC). Reach out to your Key Spouse or Airmen & Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) for more information. You can also check out this article from Military OneSource on options available to you and/or your family: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling/military-and-family-life-counseling/7-counseling-options-for-service-members-and-their-families/>

If you are in need of **financial support** this time of year, or if you are looking for ways to give back, here are a few organizations that support military families during the holidays. Please note this is not an exhaustive list: Pay Away the Layaway, Full Circle Home, Operation Christmas Spirit, Operation Holiday Joy (Armed Services YMCA), Operation Homefront, Red Cross, Spirit of Sharing, Soldier’s Angels, Toys for Tots, Trees for Troops, USO, Wreaths Across America, and/or local military installation support through A&FRC.

Note: References to other organizations or the appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement of non-federal entities or imply Department of Defense or Department of the Air Force endorsement of any company or organization.

KEY DATES

29 Nov - 6 Dec	Chanukah
1 December	Civil Air Patrol (USAF Auxillary) Birthday
7 December	Pearl Harbor Day
13 December	National Guard Birthday
18 December	National Wreaths Accross America
25 December	Christmas
26 Dec - 1 Jan	Kwanzaa
31 December	New Year’s Eve