

AMERICA'S DEFENSE

★ COMMUNITIES ★

WE ARE ONE COMMUNITY

**America's Great
Defense Communities**

**How Communities Are Helping the
Military Prepare for Climate Change**

**Installation Commanders
Sound off on the Importance of
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**Defense Communities Respond
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December 2020



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Why 'One Community' Matters



By Tim Ford, Chief Executive Officer, ADC

The events of the past year, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have reminded us that when it comes to the big issues facing our installations, service members and their families, the fence line does not matter.

When communities and bases are working as one, we make a difference. This is not a new idea, but an idea that is taking on new meaning and impact. It's the inspiring story of being "one community."

In this issue of *America's Defense Communities*, we share the story of how being one community is making a difference.

"We Are One Community" tells the compelling story of how communities answered the call of duty during the pandemic, and how we are now tackling the difficult issues of racism and inequality. While our year changed, we are excited to still share the stories of this year's class of Great American Defense Communities in "How We Serve: 5 Communities Show What Being Great Means."

And we look ahead to one of the biggest issues facing DOD: climate change and how that will impact communities and families in "Thinking Outside the Fence

Lines." Finally, we look across the country at "What We Do" and hear about stories of partnership and collaboration from the people and places who are making a difference.

We don't know what the year ahead will bring us, but we are hopeful that we can return to whatever normal might look like now. Regardless, the work of America's defense communities will continue, rooted in the compassion and support for the military, and focused on being "one community."

A special thanks to USAA, whose support for this project and the entire military community over the past year has been inspiring. What makes your community great? Share your stories at info@defensecommunities.org to be a part of making sure every defense community is a great place for our military to call home. 🇺🇸



Courtesy of Fort Jackson Public Affairs Office

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Left to right: Spc. Kala Gonzalez discusses her job at Times Square in New York City, in support of the Department of Defense COVID-19 response in May 2020. U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Rachel Thicklin; Col. John Schutte, 19th Airlift Wing commander, along with members of the Association of Defense Communities, meet with Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson in Little Rock, Arkansas, Feb. 25, 2020. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Jessica Cicchetto; Proposed "Aim High/Big Sky Recreation Center" to be constructed near Malmstrom Air Force Base, MT. The project is being funded by the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP). Photo by Senior Airman Chiyanna White

On the cover: U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Francisco Bolanos and his son sit in front of Rivers Elementary School on August 17, 2020 at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Breanna Klemm

PUBLISHED BY



ABOUT ADC

ADC builds resilient communities that support America's military. We are the connection point for leaders from communities, states, the military and industry on community-military issues by enhancing knowledge, information sharing, and best practices. With nearly 300 communities, states, regions, and affiliated industry organizations, ADC represents every major defense community/state in the nation.

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AMERICA'S DEFENSE

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2020 EDITION

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Community Snapshots

America's Defense Communities looks back at some of the moments that caught our eyes over the past year.





1 Marita Chapa, a Jackson County Memorial Hospital registered nurse waits to watch a flyover at the hospital in Altus, Oklahoma, May 1. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Kenneth W. Norman **2** The playground sits empty at Centennial Park at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, April 23, 2020. Air Force photo by Cynthia Griggs **3** Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Garvida assists the Washington State Department of Natural Resources fight wildfires near Inchelium, Washington. Photo by Master Sgt. Tim Chacon **4** Airman 1st Class Cheyenne Hudspeth poses for a portrait with a face covering. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Lauren Parsons **5** Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright poses with an Airman after speaking at an event commemorating Black History Month in February 2020. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Emmeline James **6** A child of an Air Force Airman displays artwork in her family's front window to spread cheer during a COVID-19 stay-at-home order. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jessi Monte **7** ADC interviews U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Thomas Van Dorple at Jacksonville High School for a video on the region's cybersecurity program in February 2020. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Aaron Irvin **8** Joy Gingrich and Sarah Web, community volunteers, present Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Walker, 75th Air Base Wing Command Chief, with thousands of homemade face masks for the base military and civilian Airman personnel. Air Force photo by Todd Cromar



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WE ARE ONE COMMUNITY

2020 has been a year like no other. Faced with challenges, America's defense communities answered the call of duty to battle the pandemic and confront the challenges of racism and inequality. In big acts and small deeds, they showed we are one community.



ANSWERING THE CALL OF DUTY

**Strong
Communities
Respond to the
Pandemic**

By Leif Walcutt

In addition to protecting our nation, service members during the COVID-19 pandemic also needed to think about the welfare of their own families and community. Thanks in part to quick response and unrelenting ingenuity, the military and defense communities came together to solve many of the challenges presented by this global health crisis.

U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Brian Coleman of the Missouri Air National Guard loads a pallet with bags of food for the Backpack Buddies program. Children enrolled in Backpack Buddies receive a healthy breakfast, a healthy lunch and a healthy snack each weekend during the school year. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Patrick Evenson



A New Norm for America's Education System

Although virtual education has become ubiquitous for most parents and students throughout the nation, the learning curve of how to adapt to shuttered schools was an immediate challenge for educators and communities.

Knob Noster Public School District in Missouri had an added challenge of adjusting to an online format: For the rural Missouri community of 1,600 students, which heavily serves the needs of service member families based at **Whiteman Air Force Base**, internet connectivity and access to equipment were pressing needs.

But through grants funded by the Department of Defense Education Activity, Knob Noster was able to provide every student from first through 12th grade a laptop to continue their education.

Additionally, the school system outfitted school buses as wireless hotspots to provide connectivity to families without internet access.

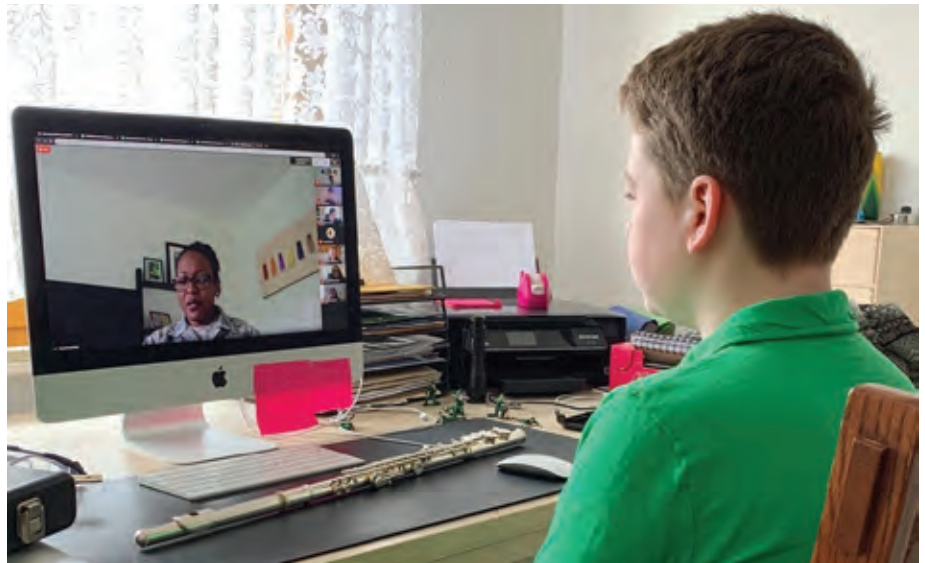
“Within one and a half weeks, we had surveyed parents and figured out the needs for laptops and internet connectivity. We gathered every laptop we could find, and we were able to give a laptop and internet to every family who needed them.”

JESSE NAJERA

Superintendent, Silver Valley

“We’ve sent the buses throughout the community,” Knob Noster superintendent Jarrod Wheeler said. “Some families can drive to them. Others are in low-rent housing areas and complexes. Some are parked in specific driveways in far corners of our district.”

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, the **Silver Valley United School District** had experience dealing with a certain kind of distance learning: The system’s only high school is 35 miles from **Fort Irwin**,



Jacob Porter, a seventh grader at Landstuhl Elementary Middle School, located near Ramstein Air Base in Germany, participates in a joint after-school virtual program with U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Sarah Howard, Air Forces in Europe Band flute musician. Air Force Courtesy photo

California, where the parents of most of its 400 students are stationed.

“Within one and a half weeks, we had surveyed parents and figured out the needs for laptops and internet connectivity,” Najera said. “We gathered every laptop we could find, and we were able to give a laptop and internet to every family who needed them.”

The school’s nutrition team distributed meals to anyone under 18 who needed them. They served more than 100,000 meals between March and June.

Local leaders also credited close partnerships for their successful transition.

Working to Fight Food Insecurity

Loss of employment coupled with social distancing caused many to worry about how they would put food on the table for themselves and their family.

Military families in **San Diego** received a helping hand from **Armed Services YMCA San Diego**, which distributed approximately 350 boxes of food in April alone. The organization has provided meals to 1,600 families during the ramp-up of the pandemic, an increase of over 280 percent, according to the organization.

Nonprofits in **San Antonio** and **Bexar County** received nearly \$375,000 from

Bank of America to help combat food insecurity in the region. San Antonio Food used \$200,000 for its programming that serves the needs of approximately 60,000 families per week.

“Many of our local residents and businesses, like others around the world, are hurting during the coronavirus crisis, and by working with leading local nonprofits, we are able to deploy critical resources to immediately address some of their most pressing, basic needs,” said Jessica Miller, Bank of America San Antonio Market President.

“Many of our local residents and businesses, like others around the world, are hurting during the coronavirus crisis, and by working with leading local nonprofits, we are able to deploy critical resources to immediately address some of their most pressing, basic needs.”

JESSICA MILLER

Bank of America San Antonio Market President

“The pandemic hit, and suddenly everybody wished [Click2Go] was everywhere. We already had it in a few places, with a limited experiment. Now the conversation has turned to, ‘How quickly can we get this put in place?’ This is something that folks are really relying on.”

LISA HERSHMAN
DOD’s chief management officer

Lincoln Military Housing partnered with Operation Homefront to provide essential goods to families at **Camp Pendleton** using a drive-through distribution center.

Click2Go, the Defense Commissary Agency’s curbside pickup program saw a 43-percent increase in usage since the pandemic began.

Stepping in to Support the Emotional Needs of Vulnerable Populations

Social distancing and isolation have a severe effect on the emotional and mental well-being of service members and their families.

“We know resilience is within us,” said Audri Buegelsdijk of Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors during a COVID-19 Military Support Initiative town hall on self-care and resilience for military families. “In the military, there’s this attitude that we can do it again, because we did it before.”

Within days of the virus’s arrival in Georgia, the Robins Regional Chamber in Warner Robins, Georgia, home to **Robins Air Force Base**, had launched its Robins Strong initiative, including a resource website that became the primary source of information for the sprawling, 150,000-person community that lacks its own TV station or daily newspaper.



Sgt. 1st Class Michaela Shelton, a member of the U.S. Army Field Band from Fort Meade, leads a virtual sing-along during the pandemic. “Music has the power to heal and inspire and unite,” Shelton said. Photo by WBAL-TV

The chamber shifted its focus from events and fundraising to supporting members and providing information.

“We made a hard pivot to fill the gap,” chamber CEO April Bragg said. “And, so, it’s, ‘What do you need? How are you doing? How can we help?’”

Those especially vulnerable to social isolation of the pandemic were children of service members.

Sgt. 1st Class Michaela Shelton, a member of the U.S. Army Field Band from **Fort Meade**, Maryland orchestrated a virtual children’s sing-along to build community during times of social distancing.



Tiara Edwards loads groceries for one of the first customers to use the Fort Lee Commissary **CLICK2GO** online ordering/curbside delivery service, August 4, 2020.

“I had been hearing from a lot of parents that there has been a lot of anxiety at home for kids who are adjusting to this new normal, so I thought I’d reach out to my children’s chorus, who are all military children,” Shelton said.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Fill Gaps in Critical Supplies

Early in the pandemic, supply chain disruptions caused a critical strain on manufacturers meeting the demands of essential goods, such as hand sanitizer and face masks. Throughout the nation, private companies reassessed and transformed their business operations to ensure the public was protected against the threat of COVID-19. This also rang true for DOD entities and companies related to the defense industrial base.

When the Army needed parts for a ventilator model that was no longer produced by the manufacturer, it turned to the Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center at **Rock Island Arsenal**, Illinois.

“The entire nation being in need at the same time really calls for an all-hands-on-deck approach,” said the center’s commander, Col. Martin Hendrix III. “Being that we’re part of the Army Organic Industrial Base, we have the ability to turn on a dime when the Army needs us to do something.”



JUNCTION CITY KANSAS

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A community located in the Flint Hills of Kansas and just outside the gates of Fort Riley, Junction City is a stellar example of a community that supports their military neighbors. Fort Riley is home of the 1st Infantry Division, "The Big Red One", the longest continuously serving division in the Army today.

Junction City prides itself on its support of Soldiers and their families. From the Home Away from Home program that pairs new soldiers with community members to the Old Trooper and Lady Troopers organizations that don't miss a deployment or redeployment ceremony, Junction City offers support whenever and however possible. Military leaders are consistently surprised by the high level of support and care their military families receive while stationed here. The goal is always to help Fort Riley continue to be the best place to live, train, deploy from, come home to, and retire to.

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1. MAC Welcome Home Event 2. Heritage Park Civil War Arch 3. Kansas Vietnam Veterans Memorial
4. CG's Mounted Color Guard 5. Junction City 6. 4th of July Parade 7. Fort Riley
8. MAC Welcome Home Event 9. GADC Presentation w/ Senator Moran



1



2



3



4

1 Crane Army Ammunition Activity employees mix ingredients for a modular hand sanitizer production line to replenish the DOD stockpile and alleviate stress on the commercial hand sanitizer market. Photo by Mallory Haag

2 Marine Staff Sgt. Quincy Reynolds displays a mask created on a 3D printer from Camp Courtney's 3rd Marine Logistics Group. The unit used cutting-edge additive manufacturing technology to mass produce and distribute personal protective equipment in the fight against COVID-19. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Nickolas C. Beamish

3 Danielle Frank, a military spouse, uses video conferencing technology to stay in contact with family during COVID-19 quarantine. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Frank

4 Support the Enlisted Project (STEP), in partnership with KMG Psychiatry Group, provided urgent food and household items to active duty and veteran families in crisis from their offices in Scripps Ranch, California. Photo by STEP

“Most responses are stress reactions. People will experience changes in sleep, decreases in a sense of security and safety, and physical symptoms like irritability and distraction. These responses are usually time limited and associated with the disaster event from a time perspective.”

DR. STEPHEN COZZA
Senior Scientist,
Center for the Study of
Traumatic Stress Medicine

A partnership among the **Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Explosive Ordnance Disposable Technology Division**, Virginia Tech and Carilion Healthcare formed to upgrade the standard Stryker Flyte System, which has two pieces, a reusable helmet with a top mounted-fan, and a single-use face shield known as a toga.

Their modified concept adds one or more layers to the toga to make it as effective as an N-95 mask, the respirator recommended by the CDC. They tested it in a mock hospital setting and found that the fit “exceed[ed] the requirement for an N-95 by a factor of three.”

TechMGM, a tech initiative by **The Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce** in Alabama, fostered a collaborative effort between Air Force innovation specialists, local 3D makers and area students to produce 3D-printed personal protection equipment (PPE) for the region’s health care workers.

Air University’s MGMWERX innovation center took the lead in providing materials for printing and assembling the PPE. The local makers collaborative called Montgomery Fighting COVID, as well as students from 10 local public and private schools provided logistics and support to print and assemble the masks. 🇺🇸



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THE COVID-19 MILITARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Inspiring and Informing Defense Communities Throughout the Pandemic

By Leif Walcutt

From the outset of the pandemic, the COVID-19 Military Support Initiative (CMSI) was established to provide up-to-date news, resources and virtual town hall events to assist defense communities, service members and their families throughout the immediate response period of the crisis.

CMSI was a collaboration among ADC, Blue Star Families, and participants of the White Oak Collaborative. CMSI events reached thousands to inform and inspire the greater military community about its grit and resilience in the face of adversity.

Here are a few highlights from the series.

Collaboration between State, Local Governments and the Military

“Everyone understands the deep connections between installations and communities,” said Sal Nodjomian, CEO of Matrix Design Group who moderated an April CMSI town hall on partnership

building. “Both are highly dependent on each other,” he said.

Lisa Swoboda, Senior Director of Military and Federal Affairs at the Maryland Department of Commerce and Col. Erich Spragg, Garrison Commander at Fort Meade in Maryland discussed how their organizations have been working together to maintain critical services and support for essential personnel and families.

“Communication is key to overcoming this pandemic. Whether it’s communicating what the states’ mandates are or CDC guidance,” Swoboda said. “Information needs to trickle down to all levels,” she said. Swoboda referenced a newly released zip code map of Maryland that shows largest coronavirus concentrations in the state. “It especially showed the disparity by race.”

Coronavirus response measures “come with a cost,” Spragg said, pointing to the disruption of military families’ lives, but assured that response actions are “absolutely the right response.” Spragg says maintaining a strong relationship with local state and government authorities is crucial during this time. Without collaborative efforts, “Fort Meade would not be protected,” he said.



Matt Borron, Executive Director of ADC, speaking during the CMSI Six Months in Review Event.



Supporting Veterans During Crisis

“When facilities began to expand their services to the veterans in the community they serve that were not just pandemic-related, we were able to text veterans for the first time and let them know when the facility would be opening up, what services it would have and how they make their appointments,” said Dr. Lynda Davis, chief veterans experience officer at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Davis was the keynote speaker at the July 30 virtual town hall, “The Evolution of Veterans Health Care During the Pandemic.”

One major shift was veterans’ embracement of telehealth. VA officials said technology related to virtual health is continuing to evolve.

“We are all-hands-on-deck with making sure we have the ability to support veterans with learning the technology and teaching them the digital skills that they need,” said Dr. Leonie Heyworth, who leads VA telehealth services.

Adapting to Education’s ‘New Norm’

“There is concern from parents and also students who are being very honest in their feedback that Mom or Dad or the other adults in their family might not be prepared to be full-time educators,” said Pamela Brehm, the senior director of military and government programs at tutor.com, during CMSI’s virtual town hall, “Strategies for Resuming K–12 Education.”

The panelists encouraged parents to document their students’ work and communicate with their schools when they get the opportunity.

Patricia Ewen, representing the Department of Defense Education Activity, said parents who have had to take on the role of educator should remember that typical school days include only about three hours of direct instruction and that teachers are accustomed to helping some students catch up in a new academic year.

“Doing your best is enough,” Ewen said. 📞

“Communication is key to overcoming this pandemic. Whether it’s communicating what the states’ mandates are or CDC guidance. Information needs to trickle down to all levels.”

—Lisa Swoboda, Senior Director, Military and Federal Affairs, Maryland Department of Commerce

“Self-care does not look the same to everyone. The important thing is that we give ourselves permission to self-care. Sometimes as parents we feel like we have to put our kids first. If we are not taking care of ourselves, we may not be doing a very good job of taking care of our kids.”

—Maria McConville, a veteran and the spouse of Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville

“The concern we have here is twofold: making sure that we understand who all the military spouses are and making sure that we understand what jobs they can actually vie for, and then creating the right conditions such that we can connect them with those jobs. That sounds pretty straightforward. It’s not.”

—Joe Driskill, president of the Association of Defense Communities



Screenshot from a CMSI town hall entitled “The Evolution of Health Care for Veterans During the Pandemic.”

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GREAT AMERICAN
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2020

Facing Racism and Inequality in America's Defense Communities

By Grace Marvin

Multiple events in the past year have highlighted the issue of racial inequality in America and shaped an ongoing national discussion. This conversation has been embraced by our military leadership—both uniform and civilian—who have made it clear that the military needs to do more. As defense communities, we work to reflect the values of the military and support their mission—and that mission now includes strong efforts to address racial inequalities. At the same time, we also must recognize that the challenges of racism in the military—and how we end it—is not solely a military issue.

Once separated by fences and uniforms, defense communities and bases are now interconnected in every way—except sometimes in their diversity. While today our country's military is more diverse than ever, some of our defense communities are the least diverse places in the country. This means the military may be asking service members to live in communities where they may not feel completely welcomed.

ADC believes this is something that we can do better. We are committed to supporting our communities in their local efforts to create more equitable and welcoming environments for all service members and their families to call home.

Each community needs to determine how they want to reflect this issue in conversations locally. Our ADC initiative will provide the support, information and resources for those interested in exploring these issues.

This initiative is made possible through the support of Booz Allen Hamilton.

One Military, One Community, is a national conversation within the greater military community working to ensure that every family arriving at their new duty station will never have to face racism, intolerance, or inequality. To learn more about the initiative, visit onemilitaryonecommunity.org.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Courtney M. Ross gives a kiss to his son during the command sergeant major's retirement ceremony in Indianapolis in May 2020. Army photo by Mark R. W. Orders-Woempne



ONE MILITARY COMMUNITY ★

This initiative will advance this goal by focusing on **four key actions**:

- Listening to those who have experienced the impact of racism and inequality to ground our efforts in their experiences;
- Understanding the issues of racism and inequality in military communities and developing a strong analytical foundation;
- Planning for collective action in every defense community by creating a roadmap; and
- Learning from each other through resources and engagements that enhance awareness, increase understanding, and keep this conversation alive.

CONVERSATIONS ON RACIAL JUSTICE

In September, the Association of Defense Communities launched One Military, One Community. The purpose of this new initiative is to create more equitable communities for service members and their families to call home. *America's Defense Communities* spoke with four individuals who shared their experiences serving in the military and how the events of this past summer have impacted their lives.

As told to Grace Marvin

Learn More

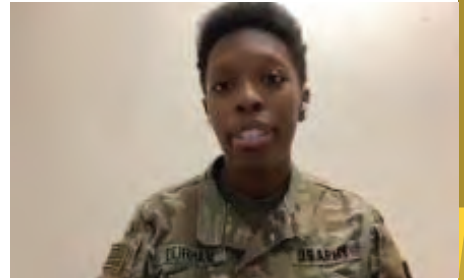


To see the full One Military, One Community interviews visit ADC's YouTube channel.

“

We are trying to take all these precautions. We shouldn't have to, but we do. Knowing that in certain situations if we do get pulled over, it is always, 'Yes ma'am, no ma'am. Yes sir, no sir.' Always having our documents in a quick-to-find location. We try not to be out too late. We get phone calls on the daily, around seven. 'Hey where are you?' 'Are you at home?' Within my family, there are more precautions. [Our parents] don't want us to be the next breaking news."

Tila Durham, Specialist, U.S. Army



“

I am proud of the measures that the Army has done to ramp up on issues of racial justice. The senior leaders, as soon as all of this happened, started looking at things—programs and initiative that we have in the Army that may cause some type of institutional bias or discrimination. One thing that Secretary Esper did was to look at the promotion boards process. Your file goes before a group of officers. In your file there are all your evaluations and a photo of you. It is thought that this could be an institutional bias. Starting soon the Army will eliminate the photos in the packet."

Ivan G. Bolden, Colonel (Ret.), Army Civilian



“

When it comes time for us to consider where we are PCS-ing next, we have to have a conversation. Is it safe for us to go there? Is it safe for us to bring our two black sons to that environment? Will their worth and value be challenged? My job, our job, is to protect them."

Katie Hutchins, Air Force Military Spouse and Health Consultant



“

One instance that I thought of was as I was leaving the 81st Airborne division. I was PCS-ing and moving to Northern Virginia. A white officer friend of mine said he had a friend that could help me find a realtor. I called the individual that my friend gave me and told him who I was. And as I started to talk to him about the neighborhoods I was interested in, he started to steer me away from some, because he assumed that I was white. This was in 1998, and it was a clear indication of an agenda. And it was very hardening, I just was like 'I can't believe we are still having to deal with this.'"

Greg Gadson, Colonel (Ret.), Motivational Speaker



St. Clair County

ILLINOIS

Located in Southwestern Illinois, St. Clair County is part of the greater St. Louis region. The St. Louis region is a bi-state region including both Illinois and Missouri. While St. Clair County is the designee, this achievement is a community effort reflecting the efforts of many. The region is honored to be included in the 2020 class of Great American Defense Communities.



"Scott Air Force Base is not only an economic development driver for St. Clair County but it also provides trained, skilled, and ambitious talent to our region's employers. More than 60,000 active duty, guardsmen, reservists, spouses, retirees, and their families bring their wealth of knowledge and experience to the area. Having military families mingled into the neighborhoods throughout the county brings new cultures and the opportunity to be part of diverse communities exposing our residents to new ideas and traditions. The region's dedication to a joint partnership with Scott AFB has created a sense of community that extends far outside of the gates and has ensured local communities and businesses understand the quality of life, career opportunities, and personal satisfaction our service members, retirees, and their families are looking for. The entire St. Clair County region stands shoulder to shoulder with Scott to enhance the mission of the instillation and is equally dedicated to working together to ensure that families feel welcome and included. It is always our desire to create an atmosphere that will make military families want to call St. Clair County home."

Mark Kern, St. Clair County Board Chairman


Home of Scott Air Force Base



Pfc. Diana Olivares-Salazar prepares to administer COVID-19 tests at a drive-thru test site on July 9. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Lauren Warner

Secretary of the Air Force Barbara M. Barrett swears in Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. during a transition ceremony at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, Aug. 6, 2020. Air Force photo by Eric Dietrich





A pilot with the 421st Fighter Squadron returns to Hill Air Force Base, Utah in October 2020 following a six-month deployment. The region surrounding Hill Air Force Base was recognized as a 2020 Great American Defense Community. Air Force photo by R. Nial Bradshaw

HOW WE SERVE: 5 Communities Show What Being Great Means

The 2020 Great American Defense Communities share why and how they go above and beyond to serve the service members and military families that call their regions home.



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30 Communities and Counting

Celebrating Communities Going Above and Beyond



Key

- Class of 2020
- Class of 2019
- Class of 2018
- Class of 2017
- Class of 2016

A new website by Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Home Base Arkansas, will help families find schools and get their children registered early. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mariam K. Springs



**CENTRAL
ARKANSAS**

FINDING A HOME BASE

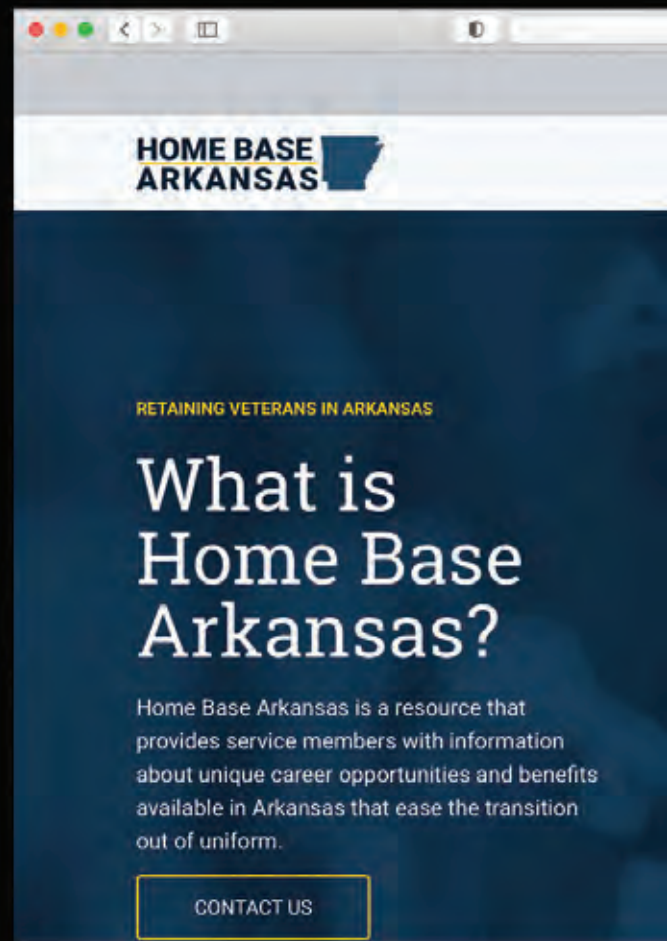
By Haley Shapley

A new Arkansas website helps transitioning service members find jobs, connect with resources and feel welcomed.

Every year, approximately 200,000 service members transition out of the military. Arkansas wants their talents.

“These people are highly educated, highly motivated, and they possess all the soft skills that any employer would want,” says retired Col. Robert Ator, Director of Military Affairs for the Arkansas Economic Development Commission.

He was tasked by the governor with making Arkansas the most military-friendly state in the nation. His solution? Home Base Arkansas, a program dedicated to connecting veterans and transitioning service members with job opportunities, incentives, information and opportunities unique to Arkansas.



A family views an aircraft put on display after being flown over Arkansas to thank the community for 65 years of support and partnerships at Little Rock Air Force Base October 8, 2020. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mariam K. Springs



The associated website, HomeBase Arkansas.com, helps families find good schools and get kids registered early; lets them know about the state's automatic spousal licensure; and curates a list of benefits the state provides, such as tuition discounts and tax exemptions.

Perhaps the most valuable resource from Home Base Arkansas is its comprehensive job search functionality. Through attending job fairs, Ator saw airmen who weren't interacting with the employers and didn't understand how to re-enter the job force. He knew there had to be a better way to meet their needs, at their own pace and place, and a website seemed like an optimal strategy. While there are online tools that allow one to enter their specialty code and pull up jobs related to what they were doing in the military, Ator didn't think that was enough—what about those who had earned college degrees in something outside their military specialty and were leaving precisely because they hoped to try something different?

"I wanted us to have a platform that would allow them to search for where their interests lie, where their degrees lie, where the opportunities lie," he says. "Whatever career field they're looking at, they can search not only what education do you need to have, what is the likely salary range for this job, and what jobs are available in the state of Arkansas, but it allows them to actually apply for those jobs straight from this website."

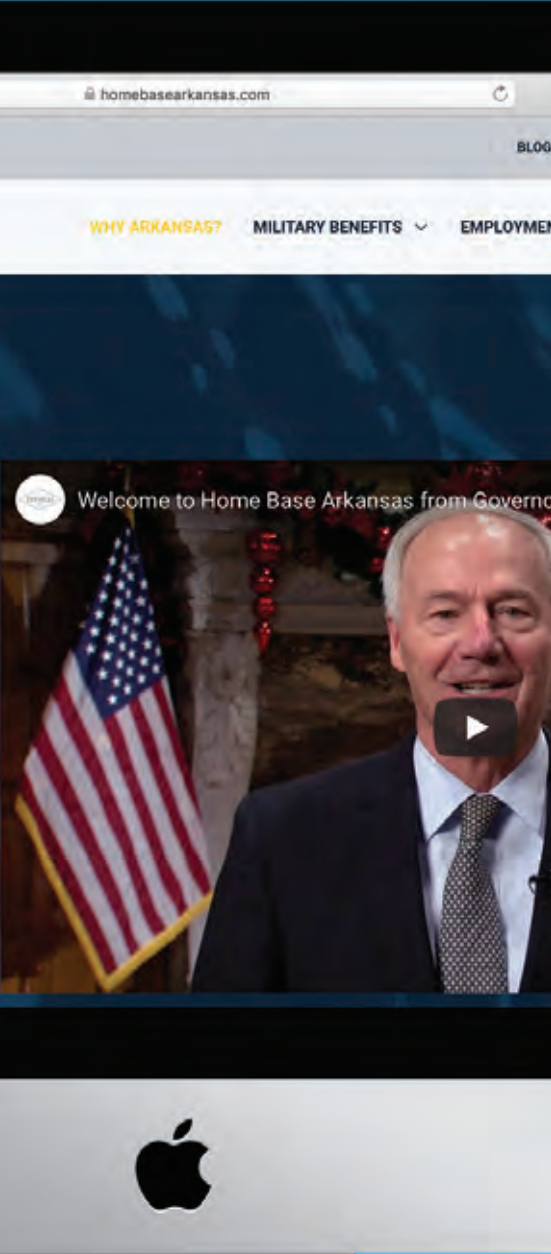
Beyond listing opportunities that already exist, Ator wanted to be sure that future entrepreneurs had resources, too. Home Base Arkansas partners with Boots

to Business from the U.S. Small Business Administration, an entrepreneurial education and training program aimed at transitioning service members and their spouses. They also refer people to the Department of Defense's SkillBridge program, which allows service members to gain civilian work experience through apprenticeships and internships during their last six months of service.

"When they step out of the uniform, they step right into a job, and they're fully trained and ready to go," Ator says.

For the former commander of the 189th Airlift Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard, extolling the benefits of Arkansas is a pleasure. The Air Force brought Ator to the state in 1991, and he spent the majority of his military career at Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville. The Natural State, as it's known, offers a variety of outdoor activities, four distinct seasons, and a low cost of living that makes for a high quality of life.

Plus, the state recognizes how valuable it is to welcome current, transitioning and retired service members into its communities. For example, Ator says, when working on the spousal licensure bill, "I went directly to the legislature, and they bent over backwards to give us exactly what we needed," he recalls. "We're all working together to take care of our folks that are in uniform and when they leave the uniform. That encompasses the entire spectrum of Arkansas's government and society, and it's kind of a unique place in that regard." 🇺🇸



A HOME



Since 2017, a program welcoming Fort Riley soldiers to the region forges strong bonds between the civilian and military communities in greater Junction City, Kansas.

By Grace Marvin

Phyllis Fitzgerald was the mayor of Junction City when she decided that something more needed to be done to make soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Riley feel welcomed. She focused her efforts on younger soldiers because after nearly 42 years, Fitzgerald still remembers what it is like to arrive at your first duty station.

“Being a retired soldier myself who went in at the young age of 17, that was my first time away from home,” Fitzgerald says. “It can be a little bit scary out there. But there are a lot of communities that are willing to really open their doors and their hearts to these young soldiers, and I think it really makes a difference.”

Fitzgerald researched what other defense communities had done to acclimate service members to their new assignments and discovered the “adopt-a-family” concept.

She worked with Fort Riley to adapt the concept. In December 2017, the Team Flint Hills Home Away from Home, “Adopt A Soldier” program was born.

Community and base leaders mask up and stand behind a sign at Fort Riley. From left to right, Col. Will McKannay, Garrison Commander; Nate Butler, MAC chairman; Craig Bender, MAC Director; Allen Dinkel, Junction City Manager; CSM Timothy Speichert. Photo courtesy of Fort Riley

away
from

JUNCTION
CITY,
KANSAS

HOME

“Our goal was to find ways to get soldiers out of barracks, out of the gates of Fort Riley and into our community,” Fitzgerald says. “The program matches local families with a soldier to host. Maybe they invite them over to dinner or go to church together. What is great about it is that the family benefits as well. They learn more about our military through their soldier.”

Since then, over 172 soldiers have been matched with local families. One of those soldiers is Jeremy Folkerts, who was matched with the Bender family in November 2019. Folkerts was an officer when he started in Home Away from Home. What he sought to get out of the program was a bit different than other soldiers.

“I’m not really that much of a social person, so I was looking for some way to connect with like-minded people,” Folkerts says. “For me personally I was looking for that connection and sense of family time

even though I was away from my own family. For younger soldiers, it’s a hot meal. A place to stay that is not the barracks.”

The Benders have hosted multiple Fort Riley soldiers over the years, and their adopted service members often end up feeling like extended family.

“We’ve had our soldiers out to local baseball games, out on the boat, for cookouts, for dinner and for Christmas,” says Craig Bender, Military Affairs Council Director for the Junction City Area Chamber of Commerce. “It is really just a matter of how much a family or a soldier wants to be involved. It may be a phone call once a month or maybe they are at your house every weekend. We’ve been lucky to see ours a couple times a month.”

Craig and his wife Karen even helped Folkerts and his fiancé Shelby coordinate their virtual wedding ceremony at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“They needed two witnesses, so they asked, ‘Hey Craig and Karen, would you two be willing to be witnesses to our wedding?’ and we said of course,” Bender says.

“I don’t know what we would have done if the Benders hadn’t been there to be our witnesses,” Folkerts adds.

Parents of soldiers have expressed to Fitzgerald how comforting it is to know that their child has an additional support system in place while stationed at Fort Riley.

Fitzgerald says communities that want to start a similar program of their own should know it takes dedication.

“You must promote it,” she says. “I use social media and work with the fort to brief new soldiers about the program. The fort is very helpful in that every soldier hears about it when they process in. The program stays alive because I keep it alive.”

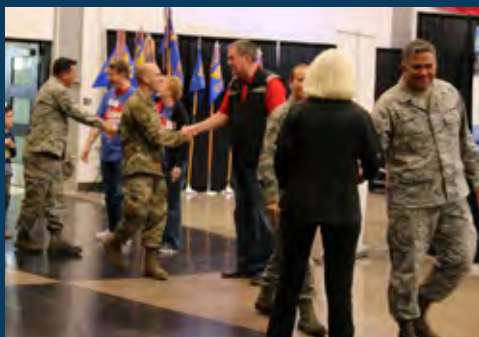
1 Home Away from Home founder Phyllis Fitzgerald (center) during her promotion ceremony to Chief Warrant Officer 2 at Fort Riley in 1992. Photo provided by Phyllis Fitzgerald **2** Jeremy Folkerts and his wife Shelby pose on their wedding day. His Home Away from Home family helped the couple plan their ceremony. Photo provided by Jeremy Folkerts **3** Craig Bender (left) poses with his soldiers, Jeremy Folkerts and Nathaniel Davis, at a socially distanced gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo provided by Craig Bender





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C-5M Super Galaxy prepares to land on the at Travis Air Force Base, California in September 2020. Widespread wildfires affected air quality across the west coast of the United States, causing evacuations across The Golden State. Photo by Heide Couch

ALL FOR ONE

Dyess Air Force Base, home to the 7th Bomb Wing of the Air Force Global Strike Command and the 317th Airlift Wing, enjoys a strong partnership with the City of Abilene, Texas.

By Willona Sloan

GREATER ABILENE REGION, TEXAS

IN ABILENE

“Abileneans understand Dyess Air Force Base and the mission better than other Air Force bases, and that’s key and critical. They understand that both wings deploy to keep Abileneans free—whether it’s a B-1 Bomber or C-130,” says Gray Bridwell, vice president of the Military Affairs Committee, a public-private partnership of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce, Development Corporation of Abilene, individuals and local businesses.

The partnership between the city and the installation is based on mutual respect, trust and support.

“The partnership between the city of Abilene and Dyess Air Force base has been tremendous. We appreciate the support that Abilene leadership and the community as a whole has given, and we are certain that we will continue to foster and build this relationship for years to come,” a representative from the Dyess AFB Public Affairs Office said by email.

The residents of Abilene make service members feel welcome in the community in a number of ways, such as the The Home Away From Home program, which connects first-time airmen with host families who introduce them to the local area and offer emotional support. “[The program] has been a huge success and makes airmen feel welcomed if they may be away from family for the first time,” said the Public Affairs representative.

Abileneans also show their support through the World’s Largest Barbecue. This annual event, organized by the Military Affairs Committee, brings together 200 volunteers to serve approximately 5,000 attendees.

“It’s not your run-of-the-mill meal,” Bridwell says. “There’s 3,300 pounds of beef brisket, 600 pounds of sausage, 300 gallons of ranch-style beans, 500 gallons of iced tea, 50 cases of cookies and all the trimmings.” During the annual barbecue,



the Dyess AFB Family of the Year award is announced. Unfortunately, this year's barbecue had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another disruption caused by the pandemic has been to local businesses, but volunteers and community-based organizations have stepped up to help. Through a volunteer effort (not associated with Dyess AFB), military spouse Jennifer Barry Sumangil and several volunteers built support for businesses in Abilene that have been impacted by the pandemic.

"We started to notice that some businesses couldn't afford to stay open," Barry Sumangil says. "Salons were hit really hard; gyms were hit really hard. That's when we started to see businesses closing."

Barry Sumangil launched a Facebook group in March to connect residents with businesses. Then she put together a team of volunteers who worked to raise funds for local businesses and review grant applications.

People could make donations or purchase T-shirts that would fund grants through the Small Business of Abilene COVID-19 Relief Fund, distributed by the Community Foundation of Abilene. "We were able to raise almost \$15,000," says Barry Sumangil. With the initial effort, the Relief Fund helped 20 businesses.

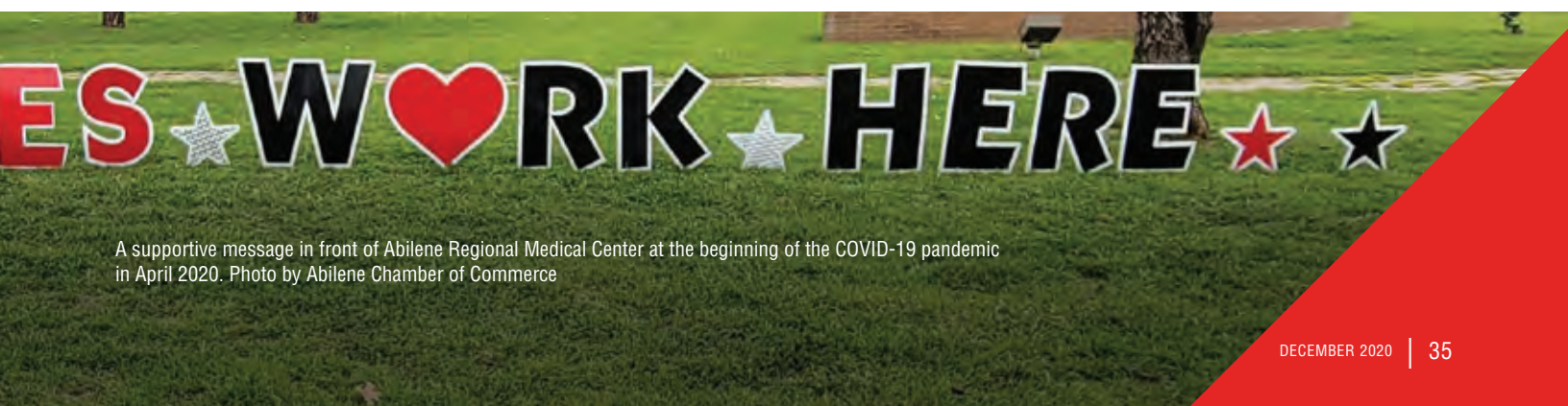
Since then, the relief efforts for local businesses have continued to grow. The Abilene Reporter-News reported in June 2020 that the Development Corporation of Abilene had established its own fund that it administered. In June, \$1.27 million of \$3 million planned in grants had been awarded "to give economic relief to companies affected by COVID-19."

Even during challenging times, the community of Abilene continues to band together to ensure that families continue to be safe and healthy, and that businesses can thrive. 🍷



(Top) A static Curtiss P-40E Warhawk is displayed outside of the front gate at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. Dyess AFB is the home to the 7th Bomb Wing and the 317th Airlift Wing. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Colin Hollowell

(Bottom) A volunteer serves military members during Abilene's World's Largest BBQ in 2017. The barbecue hosted nearly 5,000 military members and their families with the help of almost 200 volunteers from the local community. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Rebecca Van Syoc



A supportive message in front of Abilene Regional Medical Center at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020. Photo by Abilene Chamber of Commerce



Families gather for the annual Salute Picnic at Hill Air Force Base on Aug. 2, 2019. It was the 19th year the Top of Utah Military Affairs Committee sponsored the event for Hill's military and family members. Air Force photo by R. Nial Bradshaw

**DAVIS
AND WEBER
COUNTIES,
UTAH**

A BIG

COMMUNITY WITH A COMMON MISSION

Located in northern Utah, Hill Air Force Base is the Air Force's second largest base by population and geographical size. The 75th Air Base Wing oversees 1 million acres and more than 1,700 facilities.

By Willona Sloan

Mechanical bull riding during the annual Salute Picnic at Hill Air Force Base. The first event was held December 2001 as a welcome home celebration for military members deployed following the September 11 attacks. Air Force photo by R. Nial Bradshaw



Despite its size, Hill AFB provides a strong sense of community and works to enhance the quality of life for members of the military and their families, installation staff and local residents.

“It’s almost hard to find a dividing line, other than that chain link fence, between Hill and the community. It’s just a very tight-knit community,” says Kevin Sullivan, an Air Force veteran and executive director of the Utah Defense Alliance.

Local Economic Impact

Hill AFB is the largest single-site employer in Utah. It creates approximately \$1.47 billion in jobs with a \$3.7 billion total annual economic impact, according to *The Hill Economic Impact Analysis 2019*.

Hill AFB leaders actively build and maintain partnerships with local business and economic development communities.

Col. Jon Eberlan, 75th Air Base Wing commander, throws the ceremonial first pitch on Aug. 9, 2019 at Lindquist Field in Ogden, Utah. Each year, the Ogden Raptors and Top of Utah Military Affairs Committee offer tickets to Hill Air Force Base personnel and their families. Air Force photo by David Perry

For example, they serve on the Top of Utah Military Affairs Committee, which is jointly run by the Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce and the Davis County Chamber of Commerce, and participate on the Ogden-Weber Chamber Board of Governors and Chamber Workforce Committee.

“We are extremely grateful for [Hill AFB] and its ongoing commitment to partner with the chamber to effectively unite with businesses, government, health care, education, non-profit groups and other organizations throughout the area to make a positive impact on our economy and quality of life,” says Chuck Leonhardt, president and CEO of the Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce.

Improving military spouses’ career opportunities has been another priority. Two years ago, Utah passed legislation to honor the professional licenses of military spouses (in several professions) that had been attained in another state, making the installation an exemplar in licensure portability.

According to *Air Force Magazine*, in a recent Department of the Air Force assessment, Hill AFB was one of only three installations to earn “top marks in both public education quality and licensure portability.”

Annual Salute Picnic

The community shows its support for military families with the Salute to Our Nation’s Defenders Picnic. Run by the Top of Utah Military Affairs Committee, it includes food donated by restaurants and

dozens of volunteers and brings together nearly 4,000 attendees.

“It is one way the community says thank you to the folks on base,” says Sullivan.

This year’s picnic was, unfortunately, canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Hill AFB community addresses the pandemic, it will also be celebrating its heroes in the fight. On its website, Hill AFB plans to feature profiles of mission essential personnel working “on the ‘frontlines’ supporting [Hill AFB’s] mission, people and families during the COVID-19 crisis.”

Family Retreats

In partnership with Hill AFB, Wolf Creek Foundation offers weekend-long retreats for members of the military who are deploying, and their families. Families relax and connect, and they participate in activities facilitated by representatives from Hill AFB, including a program to help parents and children deal with deployment issues.

The retreat helps families through the emotional time and lets them know they’re not alone.

“The best part is the interaction between the community and the active-duty families,” says Sue Munson, executive director of the Wolf Creek Foundation. “The families leave with the sense that this community really cares about them.”

Due to the pandemic, the fall retreat was canceled, but the goal is to come back stronger in 2021. “Next year, our goal is three retreats. We’ll see how that shakes out,” says Munson. 📧



Community Connection

Throughout the years, the cities surrounding Scott Air Force Base have made it a point to roll out the welcome mat to military members.

By Haley Shapley

Back in 1950, tensions were high between the personnel at Scott Air Force Base and the community. A national magazine article reported that the airmen in St. Clair County, Illinois felt they were charged higher prices at local businesses, were treated unfairly by the police for minor offenses and were shut out of housing options. The community thought the airmen caused disturbances, damaged property and came into conflict with labor unions.

A solution was needed. That's when the Belleville Chamber of Commerce stepped in.

They planned the First Annual GI Pal Dinner, with entertainment from the likes of the Lone Ranger and Tonto, and a fancy meal featuring Shrimp Arnaud and Lobster Newburg. Each local businessperson who bought a ticket also sponsored the ticket of a service member.

Then—executive vice president of the Belleville Chamber of Commerce Walter E. Wagner said, “Officers and airmen looked at their Belleville hosts and they seemed to say: ‘Ye gods, who ever told me that you people weren’t human!’ The Belleville men and women in turn said, ‘When are we going to get together again? These are fine American boys!’”

It was a night to remember, but it was just the beginning.

At the dinner, the Belle-Scott Committee was announced, with the goal of promoting a good working and social relationship between the Belleville area business community and Scott AFB personnel.

Seven decades later, much has changed, but the Belle-Scott Committee is still going strong. Monthly meetings are held in a variety of locations to familiarize senior base leadership with what's in the

area, from unique shops and a historic theater to the local newspaper and manufacturing plants.

“Support of Scott Air Force Base and our military families is regional,” says St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern. “While departments of St. Clair County government support military families with valuable services including workforce development, emergency management services, and education, we also appreciate the opportunity to assist other organizations, including the chambers, with their efforts to support military families.”

The dinner has evolved over the years but still has the same basic premise: Each ticket purchased by a community member comes with a hosted spot for a service member. Now known as the Belle-Scott Enlisted Dinner, the event features a receiving line for airmen to be welcomed, a steak dinner and a ceremony honoring veterans.

“It's just a great event,” says Rick Stubblefield, executive director of St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants & Economic Development Departments. “They always have a lot of distinguished speakers, and it shows enlisted personnel how the local community feels about them.”

Belleville's not the only city that works closely with Scott AFB. The O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce has a committee of its own, known as the Military Affairs Committee, which hosts a variety of events and initiatives, including Salute to Scott.



Airmen exit a C-5M Super Galaxy at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., Feb. 14, 2020. The aircraft was used to deliver supplies as part of a humanitarian mission. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Miranda Simpson

Team Scott members help prepare a giant banana split during the 21st annual Salute to Scott Picnic. Air Force photo by Airman Erica Holber-Siebert

ST. CLAIR COUNTY, ILLINOIS



This annual event has morphed over the past 25 years, from a picnic in the park to what is now a business expo and festival with a focus on classic cars.

They've also taken on projects like sponsoring the building of a trophy case at the high school for the Junior ROTC, providing pumpkins for carving and preparing dorm dinners.

"I personally am retired military, and I remember living in the dorms," says Debbie Arell-Martinez, executive director of the O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce. "It's nice to have a home-cooked meal when you're away from home."

Thanks to the work of these chambers of commerce—along with base leadership, the local government, and many other groups and individuals—those negative headlines from 1950 no longer apply.

"Our community truly embraces having Scott Air Force Base here and recognizes the importance of the sacrifices the airmen make," says Wendy Pfeil, president and CEO of the Greater Belleville Chamber of Commerce. "We just want them to know they're welcome here in our community, and we would love to have them stay." 📧

Airman 1st Class Anthony Johnson-Wilson shakes hands with a member of the Belle-Scott Committee at the annual Enlisted Dinner. Air Force photo by Megan Friedl





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*CLIMATE CHANGE***THINKING
OUTSIDE****THE
(FENCE)
LINES****By John Conger**

Imagine you're running a military base. For those of you who already do, imagine this morning. You're basically running a small city that's home to critical military missions, and your job includes ensuring those missions are able to continue.

Now imagine that the power goes out. The water taps run dry, and the toilets have stopped flushing. The civilians you need to run your base aren't there today—no contractors either. You're also missing the two-thirds of your military personnel—the ones who live off-base—because the roads are out. Communications are down. And you? You're still expected to get the job done.

Obviously, that's just a thought experiment, but when you think about it that way, it's easy to see how sustaining the military mission depends on the towns and communities that surround a base. Over time, the support from defense communities has been welcomed. DOD doesn't have the resources to fund everything itself. Local communities with roads, schools, utilities, housing and hospitals have been there, supporting our national defense and our military families, so the Defense Department can focus on core missions. DOD quite literally cannot afford the alternative. It may be a privilege for a community to host a



Members of the 458th Airlift Squadron assess damage at Scott Air Force Base after a large storm created high waters and flash flooding throughout the base, Aug. 12, 2020. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Solomon Cook

As DOD wrestles with the need to improve its resilience—its ability to take those punches and keep fighting—it will need its community partners to do the same.



Naval Air Station Pensacola sustained water and wind damage from category 2 Hurricane Sally. The storm landed in Gulf Shores, Alabama on September 17, 2020. Photo by Naval Hospital, Pensacola

military base, but the military should be incredibly grateful for its neighbors.

This is even more true when disaster strikes.

There are a multitude of examples in recent years. Hurricane Michael devastated Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. Hurricane Florence dropped more than two feet of rain on Camp Lejeune. A third of Offutt Air Force Base was inundated as the Missouri River reached record levels and swamped over the levies that protect the base. Wildfires forced evacuations at bases across California such as the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Naval Air Station Point Mugu, Vandenburg Air Force Base and Camp Pendleton. Mother

Nature isn't pulling any punches, and as the climate changes, she's hitting harder.

As DOD wrestles with the need to improve its resilience—its ability to take those punches and keep fighting—it will need its community partners to do the same.

The first major resilience efforts have been about planning, which isn't the most compelling thing in the world until you realize that investing without planning is like firing without aiming. Installations are looking at their internal vulnerabilities and external (community-based) dependencies—trying to assess the best places to invest.

For example, Congress required the Navy to look across its shipyards and

Flooding of runways at Offutt Air Force Base on March 16, 2019. An increase in water levels of surrounding rivers and waterways caused by record-setting snowfall caused widespread flooding across the state of Nebraska. Air Force photo by TSgt. Rachelle Blake



1 Norfolk Naval Shipyard held a groundbreaking ceremony on November 4, 2020 for the new \$43.6 million Dry Dock Floodwall Protection Improvements Project. The project is part of the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program, a 20-year, \$21 billion program dedicated to refurbishing and modernizing the nation's four public shipyards. Photo by Shelby West

2 A demolition project of the Tyndall Air Force Base chapel on February 11, 2019. The installation incurred a total of \$5 billion in damage as a result of a direct hit from Hurricane Michael, which was a Category 5 storm. Photo by Senior Airman Javier Alvarez **3** Inside Irwin Water Works, a water treatment plant completed in 2016 located in the High Desert of Southern California. The plant can clean up to 2.5 million gallons of water per day for Fort Irwin. Photo by Brooks O. Hubbard IV

determine where investments would be required over the next 20 years. One of its most urgent priorities after that assessment was to elevate the floodwalls around the dry dock in Norfolk. Sea level rise was posing an increasing risk to multi-billion-dollar submarines undergoing maintenance. Congress funded the project without argument.

In many cases, vulnerability assessments will lead DOD to look at investments outside the fence line. When you recognize that the safety of Offutt AFB depends on a civilian-owned levee, it could prompt a modest investment to avoid a billion-dollar recovery cost. A look at energy resilience in Norfolk might point out substations in danger of flooding. Out west, installations and communities might team up on water conservation or forest management to ward off wildfire. As Tyndall AFB rebuilds, it's building stronger buildings and thinking about how to withstand the next hurricane. It needs its neighbors to do the same.

On a good day, the synergy between installations and defense communities is incredibly smooth. On their worst day, they need to be able to count on each other. Ultimately, installation resilience has to be viewed as a regional problem, with solutions no more limited inside the fence line than the flood, storm or wildfire will be.

Mother Nature doesn't color within the lines. We need our imagination to stretch beyond them as well. 🌀



1

Naval Station Norfolk has spent nearly \$120 million to raise two of its piers, as well as restoring others. The installation is also planning a \$250 million restoration project that includes demolishing two of its 100-year-old piers and rebuilding one new pier at NAVSTA Norfolk. At the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, the Navy is investing more than \$40 million in raising dry dock floodwalls to protect submarines and ships undergoing maintenance. Furthermore, the Department of Defense, along with other federal agencies and local stakeholders (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, Norfolk and Virginia Beach), is participating in an innovative study in Hampton Roads to address recurrent flooding and sea level rise.



2

Since Hurricane Michael's devastating effect on Tyndall Air Force Base in 2019, a disaster that imposed \$5 billion in costs, the installation has become the bellwether for resilience innovation for the U.S. military. Dubbed the "Base of the Future," the Tyndall has been reinventing itself to incorporate resiliency, innovation and technology as main components to the rebuild plans. This includes adapting renewable energy and storage systems to provide diversity in case diesel fuel is unavailable in an emergency; and adapting landscape management practices to enhance coastal resiliency.

Since Hurricane Isabel in 2003, Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia has implemented a three-pronged system to ensure mission readiness and resilience in the face of sea level rise. This includes a shore stabilization effort to construct a natural storm barrier; master planning which involves elevating structures 10-feet above sea level; and a flood barrier program utilizing 50,000 sandbags throughout the installation.

Drought conditions cause a scarcity of clean water in California, posing a risk to readiness for installations in the state. In 2016, the Army completed a \$100 million water treatment plant at Fort Irwin, capable of cleaning between 2 and 2.5 million gallons of water per day. The project reinforces one of the service's resilience programs: the Army Net Zero Initiative. Net Zero is a holistic strategy founded upon long-standing sustainable practices and emerging best practices to manage energy, water and waste at Army installations.



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The fence line doesn't matter when you are trying to tackle the big issues facing our installations, communities, service members and their families. When communities and the military are working as one, big things can happen. The story of what defense communities are doing today to support our military is inspiring and has a big impact across the country.



FORGING A PATH FORWARD

More than ever, the ties that bind military installations and the defense communities they call home are crucial. Complex challenges call for innovative solutions. It requires buy-in of diverse stakeholders and creating trust among partners. From creating stronger quality of life programs for military families, to inking multi-year infrastructure projects to increase readiness, defense communities are working together in innovative and inspiring ways.

Partnerships that Build Strong Defense Communities

By Leif Walcutt





Northern Virginia Signs IGSA with 3 Installations

PCS moves can cause a financial strain on military families, especially if a military spouse requires constant updating of their employment certifications.

An intergovernmental service agreement (IGSA) signed between **Northern Virginia** and local military installations on July 16, 2020 will expedite the state's military spouse occupational and professional licensure process.

"As an Army veteran and as a Virginian, I am committed to ensuring the commonwealth continues to provide an environment where our veterans and military families can thrive," said Virginia Governor Ralph Northam.

"This legislation will enable the spouses of the men and women who serve our country to maintain their professional licenses and continue their careers in Virginia with a streamlined and simple process."

The bill is estimated to assist approximately 14,450 spouses who require a license to work in Virginia.

In a batch of IGSA's signed between Northern Virginia and local military installations for quality of life issues, the parties also agreed to provide opportunities for road maintenance supply and services in the area.

"**USAG Fort Belvoir, Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, and Marine Corps Base Quantico** will partner with Northern Virginia Regional Commission for road maintenance supply bulk purchase through Virginia Department of Transportation vendors," according to a document provided to ADC.



Kansas and Kentucky Promote Career Opportunities for Military Spouses

Earlier in the year, **Fort Leavenworth** created a partnership with local employment agency KansasWorks as well as Military OneSource to help incoming military families 60-120 days prior to arrival to help start the job search process. Furthermore, Leavenworth's on-base family, morale and welfare representative also highlighted a priority system for working parents.

In July, The Knox Regional Development Alliance (KRDA) announced a similar partnership with Kentucky Career Center and **Fort Knox** to better serve the military spouse community with career development when moving to the region.

"We are tapping into our caring, supportive community to help our military spouses connect with organizations and people who may open the door to a new employment opportunity. As expected, the community response was immediate and overwhelming and we couldn't be more grateful," said KRDA CEO Brig. Gen. Retired Jim Iacocca.



Defense Community Partnerships Supporting Infrastructure, Mission Readiness

An IGSA signed between **Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC)** and the county of Ventura in California is expected to save government spending, increase Navy operational efficiencies and enhance mission effectiveness.

The IGSA supports an ongoing program with Ventura County Public Works Roads and Transportation to provide road maintenance services to the base. The program provides up to \$1 million of reimbursable road maintenance services to NBVC annually and will streamline the contracting process to provide faster maintenance response.

Meanwhile in **Colorado Springs**, the community is working closely with its installation partners to learn how it can become more resilient and promote sustainable energy solutions.

A Sustainable Energy Plan by the Colorado Springs Utilities (Springs Utilities) Board is designed to reduce its carbon footprint by 80 percent and decommission its coal generation by 2030.

The plan was inspired partly by energy resilience efforts from one of the local installations, **Fort Carson**. The base has dedicated significant resources to sustainable energy in recent years. This includes building the largest battery energy storage system developed and installed at an Army facility. Officials estimate it has saved nearly \$500,000 each year.

"The Army and Fort Carson are after reliable and resilient power," said Hal Alguire, director of Public Works at Fort Carson. He said that "efforts to become more energy efficient have been a big part of our partnership with Springs Utilities."



Pandemic Partnerships Serving Beyond the Fence Line

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, military installations and the Department of Defense stepped in to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for communities that experienced a shortage of equipment.

When the pandemic first began, Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced a partnership between the **Texas Military Department** and Prestige Ameritech that increased the production and distribution of PPE by approximately 2 million masks per week.

Essential partnerships also extended to COVID-19 testing. In **Pulaski County, Missouri** over 700 residents received free COVID-19 tests from a two-day mass testing orchestrated by the county, state and nearby Army installation **Fort Leonard Wood**.


"This event, along with the ongoing and unique collaboration around prevention, proactive measures, communication and planning, will help inform leaders, businesses and community members throughout the county to better evaluate risk conditions and effectively make decisions as we all continue working together through a phased approach to resuming safe and normal operations," said **Sustainable Ozarks Partnership** Executive Director Dorsey Newcomb.

WORKING TOGETHER

Four installation commanders on how a strong force and a supportive community are intrinsically linked.

Much of a service member's experience at an assignment depends on whether they and their family feel at home in the cities, towns and regions that surround the installations. ADC spoke with installation commanders across the nation about the importance of having a welcoming and inclusive community for their service members to call home.

As told to Grace Marvin



The relationship between Dyess Air Force Base and Abilene, Texas is phenomenal. This is my fourth assignment here and when I found out I was coming back, it felt like coming home. We like to talk about the big programs that the community puts on for the base, like the World's Largest BBQ, but really it is not about that. It's when you walk around town, the people embrace you and you feel like you are part of the community. You're not some outsider who happens to wear the uniform. How the community embraces the airmen and their families is absolutely different than any other assignment I've had.

**Col. Jose Ed Sumangil, Commander,
7th Bomb Wing, Dyess Air Force Base**



Regional community support of historic Fort Riley, Kansas matches its legendary description, as previous commanders have proudly noted and I've quickly recognized. Recent formal partnerships between Fort Riley, Junction City and the surrounding Flint Hills communities include three signed and active Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSAs). Informal partnerships strengthen Fort Riley's standing as an Army installation and its reputation within the state. Local leaders understand the economic importance of the post and are intentional in cultivating relationships with the 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley leaders and its soldiers. Community-initiative programs such as Flint Hills Home Away from Home reinforce the Army's priority of people first.

**Col. Will McKannay,
Garrison Commander, Fort Riley**

Little Rock Air Force Base is the beneficiary of long-standing support from the Central Arkansas community. I can tell you on a personal level I arrived here almost three years ago and from almost day one I was welcomed as if I was family. I know our airmen across Team Little Rock feel the same way. The community support that is provided allows us to focus on what is important as defenders of our nation's freedom.



**Col. John Schutte, Commander, 19th
Airlift Wing, Little Rock Air Force Base**

In the 78 years the base has been here, we have built a symbiotic relationship with the local community. We don't have the encroachment challenges that other installations and communities have to work through. When we build, we do it in a way that works for the local community. When the community builds, they do it in a way that works for us. Certainly, relationships boil down to people. You won't find a more military-supportive community than the one you'll find in Bay County. I can't go downtown in my uniform without somebody stopping me and saying, "Thank you for your service." That fuels us as airmen and military members to want to do our jobs.



**Col. Brian Laidlaw, former
Commander, 325th Fighter Wing,
Tyndall Air Force Base**

DCIP

Defense Community Infrastructure Program Launches

In September, the Department of Defense announced 16 grants totaling approximately \$50 million under the Defense Community Infrastructure Pilot (DCIP) Program by the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). Here's how our communities will be putting their funding to work.

By ADC

Abilene Independent School District's proposed project will construct a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) classroom and laboratory to support military families at **Dyess Air Force Base**. The 6,786 square foot area will host a maker's lab, a world-class facility that provides specialized equipment to elementary students including 3D printers, robotic arms, laser engravers and a vinyl cutter. **Total: \$959,831**

South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority will begin a \$12,625,900 project to construct an indoor recreation facility and wellness center to support the military families at **Ellsworth Air Force Base**. **Total: \$6,312,950**

Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency will commence a \$18,100,000 construction project for a Watertown Family YMCA Community and Aquatics Center to support military families at **Fort Drum**. **Total: \$9,000,000**

The city of Sierra Vista's \$1,538,000 project will construct an Emergency Medical Services substation to support the military families at **Fort Huachuca**. **Total: \$1,438,000**

Valley Unified School District in Barstow, California will use its funding to enhance Silver Valley Unified School District Sports Complex for families at **the Fort Irwin National Training Center**. **Total: \$521,695**

The city of Hampton, Virginia will commence a \$1,858,022 project to enhance Hampton's Air Power Park and Museum and provide year-round access to museum grounds, benefitting **Joint Base Langley Eustis**. **Total: \$707,008**



Service members and military families at Ellsworth Air Force Base will soon have a new indoor recreation facility and wellness center. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Christina Bennett



The Fort Drum community will use its funding to construct a new YMCA. Army photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class James Vazquez



Marine Corps Base Quantico's Warrior Challenge will benefit from accessibility upgrades. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Rebekka Heite



Proposed Magic City Discovery Center will benefit families living in the City of Minot and on Minot Air Force Base. Air Force courtesy graphic

Military families at **Fort Leonard Wood** will benefit from Waynesville R-VI School District's \$1,354,475 project to enhance the Early Childhood Center. **Total: \$677,238**

Students hailing with parents at **Fort Polk** will reap from Louisiana Department of Economic Development's partnership with Vernon Parish School Board to construct a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) laboratory, as well as learning spaces at Leesville Junior High School, Leesville High School, Pickering Elementary School and Vernon Middle School. **Total: \$6,839,476**

A \$2,988,432 project to improve access to a Pre-Kindergarden-8th Grade Charter by Lawndale Educational and Regional Network will aid military families at **Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling**. **Total: \$1,494,216**

The municipality of Chalan Pago-Ordot in Guam will use its funding toward a \$6,506,426 project to construct a Multipurpose Recreation and Emergency Center to support military families on **Guam**. **Total: \$3,506,426**

Military members rotating on and off **Joint Region Marianas** will benefit from a project improving utility infrastructure in support of life, health and safety. **Total: \$335,000**

The city of Great Falls plans on using its funding towards a \$20,000,266 construction project of Aim High – Big Sky Recreation Center, supporting military families at **Malmstrom Air Force Base**. **Total: \$10,000,000**

Families at **Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune** will start a \$5,000,000 project to reconstruct the Jack Amyette Recreation Center. The facility sustained extensive damage from Hurricane Florence in August 2018. **Total: \$1,000,000**

Prince William County received half of the funding it needs for a \$500,000 project to enhance a warrior challenge course with accessibility improvements at **Marine Corps Base Quantico**. **Total: \$250,000**

Military families at **Minot Air Force Base** will benefit from the city of Minot's \$13,977,964 project to construct the Magic City Discovery Center, featuring STEAM training. **Total: \$6,293,820**

Mountain Home School District will use its funding to improve its local elementary and middle schools which support families at **Mountain Home Air Force Base**. **Total: \$426,500**



The Fort Drum community will use its funding to construct a new YMCA. Army photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class James Vazquez



The Fort Leonard Wood community will see improvements to its Early Childhood Center. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ashley Maldonado-Suarez



Artist rendering of proposed Aim High/Big Sky Recreation Center Malmstrom Air Force Base. Courtesy photo by Malmstrom Air Force Base



ADC President Joe Driskill introduces the first installment of ADC's Summit Series. Screenshot from ADC Summit Series



House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith tours Northwest Harvest food distribution center in Kent, Washington May 1, 2020. Smith said DOD was "very responsive issuing PPE and testing equipment" during the pandemic. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. John Hughel



TOGETHER FROM AFAR

Highlights from ADC's Summit Series

By ADC



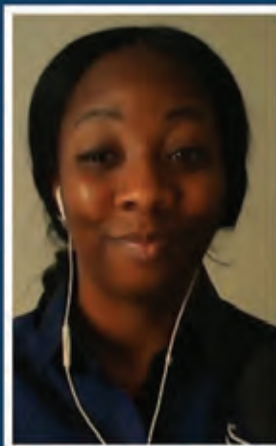
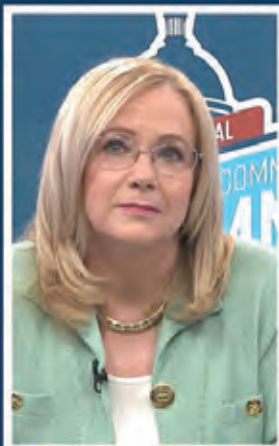
Former ADC President Mike Cooper discusses the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act with Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman James Inhofe. Screenshot from ADC Summit Series

Needing to adapt to safety measures of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Association of Defense Communities quickly sprang into action to reinvent its annual summit. Spanning five weeks, ADC brought together leaders and experts to initiate conversations about the critical issues affecting our defense communities. Here are some highlights from the series.

“The relationship between the surrounding community and service members is crucial to quality of life issues . . . We want to build on that initiative and expand it so it’s comprehensive. The needs of service members and their families when they are in and when they are transitioning out are myriad [such as job training, education or child care]. We’re making progress but we have a long way to go.”

**Rep. Adam Smith,
Chair, House Armed
Services Committee**

Karen Holt, a member of the ADC board of directors, hosts a panel on military family readiness with military spouses Bree Carroll and Paulette Fryer. Screenshot from ADC Summit Series



“We need to pay attention to our service members’ mental health. One thing that I believe that is on most people’s radar, but is always something that hides in the corner, is the invisible wounds issue. We have been at war for over two decades, and there are a lot of people out there that are struggling. What I want to reassure everyone is that we have their best interests at mind and make sure they get the help they need. That’s the least the nation can do for them after everything they have done for us.”

**Ramón “CZ” Colón-López,
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

“Our military spouse community is extremely resilient. Military spouse unemployment rate is typically four times higher than national average. What we find during the pandemic is that we’re becoming more creative in seeking report.”

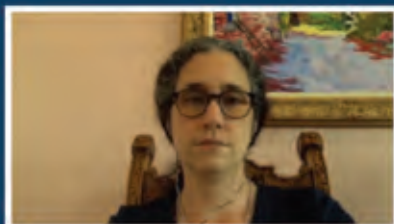
**Bree Carroll, 2020 Armed Forces
Insurance Air Force Spouse of the Year**

“The role of defense communities and their military families is essential; it’s multidimensional. Your community is an essential link between all volunteer force and the communities they serve . . . The partnerships in defense communities are absolutely critical to success.”

**Michèle Flournoy,
Former Under Secretary
of Defense for Policy**

“Last year’s NDAA bill was more on the European initiative, what we are doing to counter what Russia is doing over there. This year it was the Pacific deterrents. For people that have traveled to the South China Sea and seen what China is doing with no authority . . . All of our partners, friends and allies over in that part of the world are all hedging on both sides because the U.S. has not been as visible in what we have been doing.”

**Sen. James Inhofe, Chair,
Senate Armed Services Committee**



ADC President Joe Driskill moderates a panel featuring Dr. Nora Bensahel, Visiting Professor of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; Gen. James Holmes (ret.), Senior Advisor, The Roosevelt Group; and Tony Johnson, Defense & Foreign Policy Strategist, Truman National Security Project. Screenshot from ADC Summit Series

Continuing the Best America We Know



By Joe Driskill, President, ADC

In Bob Greene’s bestselling book, *Once Upon a Town*, he tells the story of North Platte, Nebraska, a remote community whose residents took it upon themselves to provide food and support to over 6 million GIs traveling by rail on their way to serve in WWII. Every day, the town’s train station transformed into the North Platte Canteen. Staffed entirely by local volunteers, it was open from 5 a.m. until the last troop train of the day pulled away after midnight. No one asked them to do this, and except for a \$5 bill President Roosevelt sent, there was no government money.

It’s a remarkable story of selfless gratitude and an example of “the best America there ever was.”

The story of North Platte and its appreciation continues today in hundreds of communities that serve as home to our military. Through war and peace, defense communities make sure our service members and their families have the support they need and the quality of life they deserve.

It’s no longer as simple as a hot meal. Today’s defense communities manage a complex set of issues that range from infrastructure to education, child care, housing, encroachment, food security, and the list grows every year.

Once separated by fences and uniforms, defense communities and bases are now interconnected in every way. We are *one community* and that means we must begin to think and act together. A community’s gratitude provides the foundation, but helping to ensure our service members and their families live in the communities they deserve requires a new way of thinking, investment and collaboration.

The Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP), a new source of direct

federal investment to defense communities is a good start, but in its first year showed that the need greatly exceeds the dollars available. Originally envisioned for improving traditional infrastructure, the first DCIP grants focused on quality of life. These are important investments, but it doesn’t solve long-standing infrastructure problems that impact bases and missions.

The future of our military family readiness depends on the readiness of our communities. We need to think about investments in our communities the same way we think about investments in other components of readiness. It can’t be an afterthought anymore. We need a one-community approach that builds on existing programs like DCIP, but the approach should also provide more comprehensive solutions to building community support.

Our defense communities are ready to meet the future challenges of supporting a high quality of life for service members and families. Guided by a fundamental commitment that goes back to that train station in Nebraska, America’s defense communities continue to be the best America we know. 🇺🇸



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