

## BLUE STAR WELCOME WEEK 2021

# IMPACT REPORT

### DID YOU KNOW?

More than a third of military families have no one to ask for a favor

This finding from Blue Star Families' 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey sent shock waves throughout the military-connected community. **We knew we had to take action to combat the widespread isolation military and Veteran families face.** These days, military moves are not onto bases but into local neighborhoods where it can be harder to make connections.

**ONLY**  
**27%** of active-duty family respondents feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community. (2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey)

**What if we could bridge the civilian-military divide by creating moments of welcome and a sense of belonging for those who have sacrificed so much for our country?**

**When families feel a sense of belonging, everything else improves** – financial security, mental health and wellness, resilience, and even military readiness.



Small acts of kindness and connection can go a long way towards easing a military family's transition into a new area. – First Lady Dr. Jill Biden





The sooner and the better they [military families] get integrated into the local community, the happier they are. — General Joseph Dunford & Ellyn Dunford, Blue Star Welcome Week Honorary Co-Chairs



## We did it! We made a difference for military and Veteran families through Blue Star Welcome Week 2021.

### More participants felt welcome compared to 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey active-duty respondents.

(70% of active-duty family BSWW participants agreed they felt welcome in their local civilian community, compared to 49% of 2020 MFLS active-duty family respondents.)

This annual nationwide initiative was the missing event on the calendar that the general public didn't know was needed until we offered it as a solution to address

the isolation that military-connected families face. This week focuses on honoring active-duty service members, Veterans, and their families who serve and sacrifice alongside them. What is more, it **prompts the country to come together in a spirit of welcome** for the approximately 600,000 active-duty and transitioning military families who move into new communities each year.

### Military Family Lifestyle Cultural Competence Subscale

Greatest contributor to Community Capacity for Resilience

3.06

among all active-duty family respondents (2020 MFLS)

3.54

among Blue Star Welcome Week participants



Blue Star Families is a great introduction to a new duty station. Everyone is so friendly and eager to help find places of interest to share. I have met many friends thanks to Blue Star Families events.

— Brandi, West Point NY Military Spouse



# BLUE STAR WELCOME WEEK 2021

SEPTEMBER 25—OCTOBER 3

The average military-connected family moves three times as often as their local peers. That's every two to three years on average! And, while more than 70% of families live off base in their local communities, many do not feel a strong sense of belonging to those communities. Blue Star Welcome Week builds a better sense of belonging and community for all of us.

## Event Highlights

258M

Total Potential Impressions Across All Communication Channels

1,529

Welcome Cards Signed

79

Events Hosted

130+

National and Local Partners Engaged

24

Local, State, and Federal Official Government Proclamations Issued

We caught the attention and extensive support of household-name businesses, elected officials, military and government leaders, senior military spouses, celebrities, and other trusted friends of Blue Star Families in the military- and Veteran-connected community.

**Together, we moved the needle in the right direction for military and Veteran families by providing moments of welcome. Thank you!**

## Meet Emily

After finding herself out of a job due to the pandemic and in a difficult situation financially, with no prior military experience or exposure, Emily and her husband decided to start their journey as a military family.

Seemingly overnight, they moved from their home in Texas to their first duty station in San Diego. They left family, friends, and the network of support she and her kids had always relied on.

“I was a wreck honestly,” Emily recalled. “I had joined every informational group out there on Facebook for military families just trying to figure out what to expect.

**It was such a tidal wave of information, and it was overwhelming and intimidating.**

Learning where to grocery shop, where the grocery store even is, where the best restaurants are, how to avoid the interstate — all those little things that you take for granted were extremely difficult to figure out. Not to mention, suddenly not having any of the family and friends I had always leaned on. **It was scary, but I did my best to find a place to start learning.”**





## Community Outreach Highlights



## Blue Star Families' Impact

**Emily's search for information led her to Blue Star Families.** At first, she saw and applied for a room makeover that Blue Star Families was offering in partnership with Macy's. Out of thousands of entries, her family was randomly selected as a winner, and they received a dining room and living room overhaul in July. Since then, **Emily has stayed connected with Blue Star Families' San Diego Chapter and has looked for ways to pay the support forward.**

Emily did not waste any time. She connected with Blue Star Families' San Diego Chapter Director, Maggie, and started planning her first event: a Coffee Connect at her local Starbucks as part of Blue Star Welcome Week. **"I wanted to host an event with Starbucks to give new spouses in the area an opportunity to meet, chat, connect, and learn about everything Blue Star Families has to offer,"** Emily said. "Moving to a new community can be very intimidating to break out of your shell and really jump in and get to know the neighbors that surround you. **Finding a support system to help you during those not-so-easy times is such a blessing and much-needed tool. It was so rewarding and beautiful to see other new spouses, like me, meet friends and also learn about the incredible resources available to help them all year long.**"

Blue Star Welcome Week is just the beginning for Emily. She is already gearing up for her next Starbucks Coffee Connect and cannot wait to welcome military and Veteran families to the community.

“What a great initiative and I know that military families ALL over will feel more a part of their communities because of you and your Blue Star Families team.”

— Mrs. Mollie Raymond, Spouse of General John “Jay” Raymond, Chief of Space Operations

## Community Outreach

Blue Star Chapters nationwide took an active role in bringing Blue Star Welcome Week to life! Chapter Directors and Blue Star Volunteers organized local and virtual event opportunities with neighbors and businesses to engage military and Veteran families and connect them with their communities. From Starbucks meet-ups to professional sporting events and tours of Central Park, military and Veteran families explored the places they call home. During Welcome Week, teams participated in a virtual race, traveling nearly 300 miles around seven military installations and raising awareness for the active-duty and transitioning families who move into new communities each year. Racers received a paracord bracelet created by Kayla, a military kid. With these bracelets, individuals and communities can show their support for military families during Blue Star Welcome Week and beyond.



97%

of Blue Star Volunteers said they were likely or very likely to volunteer for an event like this again in the future

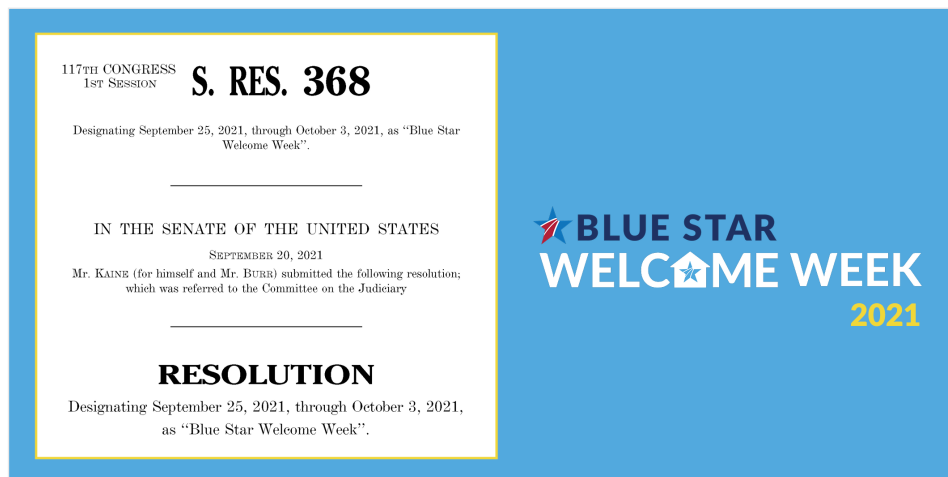
## We Created A Moment

Through Blue Star Welcome Week 2021 events, held from New York to Hawaii, we connected military and Veteran families with their communities and each other. People like Emily, missing the familiar support of family and friends, gathered as individuals and as families to **build up a defense against the isolation** that pushes in on those who relocate regularly or those who have not yet established their roots.

This **moment was amplified** by a United States Senate Resolution, broad government support, a wide-reaching communications campaign (which included some fun celebrity participation!), trusted partners, and high-profile supporters.

91%

of businesses, organizations, and government entities said they were likely or very likely to return next year



“All this week, we’re welcoming military families to their new duty stations and communities across the country. It’s a time for us to come together as Americans. It reminds us that we owe service members and their families more than our gratitude. You’ve answered the call to serve. We have a responsibility to make sure you have what you need to support your families. This week, and every week, let’s celebrate our Blue Star Families. — Senator Sherrod Brown, Ohio”

## Government Support

Government officials at local, state, and federal levels showed up to support military and Veteran families during Blue Star Welcome Week. They issued proclamations, created encouraging videos for our families, and attended local events to extend an in-person welcome, further exhibiting the wide range of support garnered for this initiative.

### Government Support Highlights

24

Proclamations by local, state, and federal entities

11

Government officials recorded personal videos of support, including Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, and Senator Mitt Romney


10

States represented

#### First Lady Dr. Jill Biden

**First Lady Dr. Jill Biden** • September 29 at 10:50 AM

Approximately 600,000 military-connected families move every single year – leaving friends, family, and neighbors behind to start anew, again (and again). This can lead to feelings of isolation, disconnectedness, and exhaustion. That's why it's on all of us to welcome them and make them feel like they belong. During this #BlueStarWelcomeWeek, make sure to reach out to the military families in your communities. Introduce yourself, bring over a meal, share neighborhood tips on good restaurants, or fun neighborhood parks. Small acts of kindness and connection can go a long way towards easing a military family's transition into a new area.



**Blue Star Families** • September 24

Many military families now live in neighborhoods instead of on base military housing, but isolation can prove challenging. By being a good neighbor and welcoming military and veterans into your community, you can help improve their lives and ultimately, improve your community! Watch this special message about the isolation that military families face from Co-Chairs General and Mrs. Dunford, Sheila Casey, and Iris. You can learn more about ways you can welcome military families and veterans at [bluestarwelcomeweek.org](http://bluestarwelcomeweek.org)

[Craig Newmark](#)  
[USAA](#)  
[Macy's](#)  
[The Boeing Company](#)  
[CSX](#)

You and 1K others • 151 Comments 72 Shares

#### Arlington Public Schools

**Arlington Public Schools** • September 27

APS is proud to participate in Blue Star Welcome Week, a nationwide initiative to build a better sense of belonging and community for military families. Blue Star Families empowers military families to thrive by connecting them with their civilian neighbors to create strong communities of mutual support. APS will highlight Blue Star Families Welcome Week this week via our social media channels. Feel free to share your own welcome messages by replying to this post.



12 • 1 Comment 1 Share



## Media

Major media outlets and household-name celebrities answered the call to create moments of welcome for those who have served and sacrificed for our country. The result was a resounding increase in awareness of Blue Star Welcome Week and the needs of military and Veteran families. Receiving social media shoutouts from public figures elevated the energy during event week!

### Media Highlights



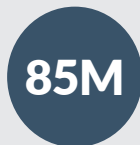
Total Potential Impressions



Total Potential Media Impressions



Total Potential Social Media Impressions



PR Newswire



Fox



CNN



Satellite Media Tour

### In the News

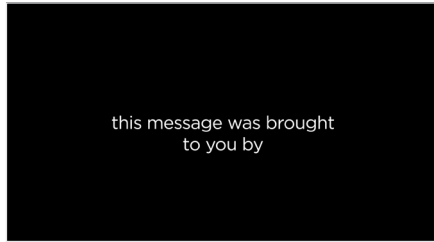
FOX



CNN



Comcast PSA



VA



DoD



Celebrity Endorsements

Blake Shelton (19.8M)



Mark Hamill (4.7M)



## Partners

Working with national and local partners was paramount to the success of Blue Star Welcome Week. Their commitment to the mission and activation of their networks to get involved provided national support and visibility, as well as the execution of on-the-ground engagements.

### Partner Highlights

25

National Nonprofit  
Partners

108

Local Partners  
Supporting Events

39

Resources Provided  
by Partners to Share on the Blue  
Star Welcome Week Website

### Military Child Education Coalition

Military Child Education Coalition  
September 29 at 12:23 PM · 🌐

#DYK that #milkids change schools 6-9 times, on average? It's up to us to ensure our students from #MilitaryFamilies feel welcomed and know they're an important part of our community! Join us as we celebrate #BlueStarWelcomeWeek <https://bluestarfam.org/>

**BLUE STAR WELCOME WEEK 2021**  
SEPT 25 - OCT 3

GET INVOLVED

MCEC

USAA CSX macy's BOEING Craig Newmark Philanthropies

21 22 Shares

## Partners





## Supporters

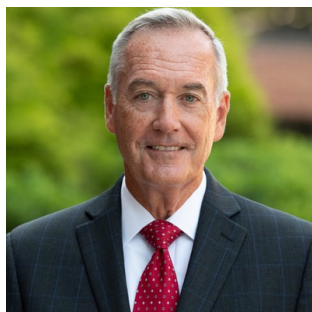
Blue Star Welcome Week benefited greatly from the fantastic support of a wide range of advocates – from our honorary co-chairs and committee members to senior military spouses and public figures. These individuals served as champions for this initiative, using their significant influence to emphasize the importance of creating a sense of belonging for military and Veteran families.

## Honorary Co-Chairs



### Harriet Dominique

Honorary Co-Chair, Blue Star Welcome Week  
Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer and Corporate Responsibility Officer, USAA



### General Joseph Dunford

Honorary Co-Chair, Blue Star Welcome Week  
U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)  
19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



### Mrs. Eilyn Dunford

Honorary Co-Chair, Blue Star Welcome Week  
Military Family Advocate



### Craig Newmark

Honorary Co-Chair, Blue Star Welcome Week  
Founder, Craigslist and Craig Connects  
Board Member Emeritus, Blue Star Families

## Honorary Committee Members

- Mr. Rahn Bass, Spouse of Chief Master Sergeant JoAnne S. Bass.
- CDR Ruth Lescher, USN (ret), Spouse of Admiral Bill Lescher, Vice Chief of Naval Operations
- Mrs. Krysti Pereira, Spouse of Command Master Chief Jahmal Pereira, Deputy Commandant for Operations, U.S. Coast Guard
- Admiral Paul Zukunft, U.S. Coast Guard (ret), and Ms. Fran DeNinno
- Lieutenant General Gwen Bingham, U.S. Army (ret)
- Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, U.S. Army (ret), and Mrs. Kathleen McMaster
- Mrs. Mollie Raymond, Spouse of General John “Jay” Raymond, Chief of Space Operations
- Mrs. Sharene Brown
- Thomas J. Donohue, Retired President & CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
- Command Sergeant Major James Sims, U.S. Army (ret)
- General James L. Jones, U.S. Marine Corps (ret), 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps, 14th Supreme Allied Commander Europe
- Brigadier General Michael Meese, President, AAFMAA, and Mrs. Ramona Meese
- General Larry Spencer, U.S. Air Force (ret), and Mrs. Ora Spencer

## Funders

Backed by generous funders, **Blue Star Welcome Week** raised \$1.2 million to ensure military and Veteran families get connected and feel welcome in their communities, so they can thrive. These charitable efforts made a tremendous difference in the scope of what we were able to accomplish this year, and we look forward to growing awareness, participation, and impact in the years to come!



USAA supports Blue Star Welcome Week as an innovative way to mobilize Americans to make a positive impact on military service members, Veterans, and their families. We invite individuals, families, and businesses to join this movement. Together, we can proactively welcome even more military families into our local communities and help them foster a sense of belonging.

— Harriet Dominique, Chief Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Corporate Responsibility Officer, USAA

## Now it is time to build on this moment and turn it into a movement — together!

Blue Star Welcome Week 2021 became a **nationally-recognized moment** that helped combat the very real problem of isolation and create a sense of belonging for military and Veteran families. **But our work together is far from over.**

Now is the time to **continue to explore the potential for military families** when they plug into a neighborhood support system. Not to mention, the **possibilities for communities** when military and Veteran families establish roots and invest themselves in the experience of their duty station or forever home.

Let us build on the momentum fueled by our partnerships to **create a movement** in the years to come—a movement that can **bridge the civilian-military divide** and **empower even more military and Veteran families** to feel a sense of belonging in the

communities where they live and serve. We are excited for the journey ahead, and we hope you are, too.

**We cannot do this important work without you!**



“ I moved here two weeks ago from Germany. You are the only person who has welcomed us and asked us how we are settling in. Thank you for the warm welcome!

— Attendee of Tampa Bay Lightning Event, Blue Star Families of Tampa



# Blue Star Welcome Week Community Impact

