



SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES

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Service That Becomes a Lifestyle

If you ask Lori Culberson about her plans for the day, the evening, or for the weekend, those plans will probably involve serving military families. Military survivors of central Florida have begun benefitting from Lori's level of commitment and service.

This June, the number of Survivor Outreach Coordinators in Florida was increased from five to six. Lori will be assisting military survivor families from Camp Blanding, near Starke, FL.

For Lori, twenty-five years as a military spouse makes serving families in the military a normal part of her everyday lifestyle. Her husband's military career included 16 years of active duty service in the Air Force and Army, as well as 10 years in the Florida Army National Guard.

"During my husband's 25 year military career in aviation, we have dealt first-hand with the loss of personal friends in training accidents and combat action," says Lori. "These experiences have provided a high level of compassion and respect when dealing with the Families of our Fallen Heroes."

For 10 years prior to joining the Survivor Outreach program, Lori served Florida Na-

tional Guard families as a Family Assistance Specialist, also at Camp Blanding. Her commitment to provide quality support to the families of our military remains a constant goal.

Lori's resilience and innate ability to adjust to changing circumstances will be vital in her approach to assisting survivor families. She believes empowerment comes from the knowledge of available benefits and resources which can help families that have experienced the death of a soldier to eventually become more independent.

She says that when she learns that a soldier has died, she thinks of her own family, and how death would impact her as a wife, and mother of two college aged sons.

"Supporting families doesn't just mean answering the phone or emails. That's just a start. What's important is forming relationships and partnerships with those who have sacrificed so much," says Lori.

Lori serves honored families in Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Levy, Hamilton, Madison, Marion, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union Counties.

See page 6 for a map showing Survivor Outreach Services county assignments.

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Snapshots is a section that consists of many different kinds of benefits, programs, and events. You will be able to look over each Snapshot and decide if you would like more information. We serve all Army Survivors and want you to be able to decide what is important to you. If you have any questions please contact your SOS Coordinator.

You May Be Eligible For a Military ID

Beginning in June, surviving dependents of National Guard or Reserve Service Members who died in a non-duty status can receive a DD Form 1173-1, also known as a Military ID, and will be eligible for commissary, exchange, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) benefits.

Advice For All Military ID Holders

Survivors have reported that if you change your address and update it at a DEERS/RAPIDS Location, be sure to update the address of the deceased Service Member. Keeping both addresses updated is required for some mailing lists and will prevent mistakes.



Can You Help Us Go Green in 2016? Send Us Your Email Address!

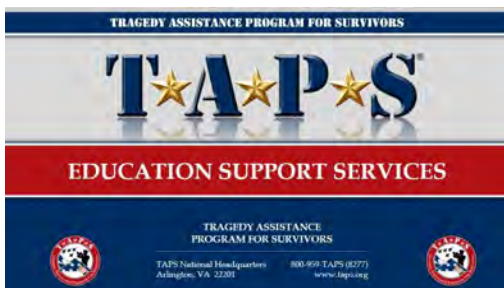
Help us go Green by signing up to receive the newsletter via email. Please reach out to your Support Coordinator to confirm we have your correct email address. As a reminder, we DO NOT provide your personal contact information to any external entity without your permission.

Email Keith Ham: keith.e.ham.ctr@mail.mil

Email Matthew Reeves: matthew.p.reeves2.ctr@mail.mil

Email Lori Culberson: lori.k.culberson.ctr@mil.mil

Florida KidCare is offering grants for children during their 2016 FKC Back-To-School Awareness Campaign. Through FKC, Florida offers health insurance for children up to 18 years old. To qualify for premium assistance, a child must: Be under age 19; Be uninsured; Meet income eligibility requirements; Be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen; Not be eligible for Medicaid; Not be in a public institution. Call 1-888-540-5437 or go to: <http://www.floridakidcare.org>



Educational Benefits Made Simple Thanks to TAPS

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, or TAPS, has created an educational benefit portal on their web site, www.TAPS.org. Click on the "Educational Assistance" tab, then click on the "Search Scholarships Now" Button. Answer a few simple questions, and you will receive a listing of scholarships and grants for which you are eligible. For more information on the scholarships and grants for which you are eligible, contact your Survivor Outreach Support Coordinator.

New Urgent Care Pilot Program for Tricare Prime Beneficiaries

To increase access to care, the Department of Defense is launching an Urgent Care Pilot Program for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries. This program allows Prime enrollees two visits to a network or TRICARE-authorized provider without a referral or prior authorization. For more information, go to www.tricare.mil/urgentcareprogram.



Florida Expands Eligibility for the Florida Gold Star Family License Plate

Most of you, hopefully, already know about the Florida Gold Star Family License Plate that is offered to our Gold Star Families who reside in Florida.

Gov. Rick Scott signed Senate Bill 88 into law on April 6, 2016. What does this mean? The new legislation, which took effect on July 1, 2016, expands the eligibility of certain individuals to obtain a Gold Star license plate in the state of Florida.

The bill extends eligibility for a Gold Star license plate from the surviving spouse and parents only to now include a parent through adoption, foster parent, grandparent, child, stepchild, adopted child, brother, sister, half-brother, or half-sister of a fallen service member.

If the service member was a Florida resident at the time of his or her death, the applicant can be issued the Gold Star license plate for one vehicle per household free of charge. Renewal decals for the plate issued under these circumstances shall be issued at no cost.

If the service member was not a Florida resident, those eligible may be issued a Gold Star license plate upon payment of the license tax and appropriate fees.



An application for a Gold Star license plate requires proof of relationship to the Service Member and documentation from the U.S. Department of Defense (usually a DD 1300) or from its subordinate agencies, such as the Coast Guard, Reserve, or National Guard, deeming a Service Member to have died while in service.

If you would like more information about the plate please contact your Survivor Outreach Coordinator, or go online at: <http://www.flhsmv.gov/specialtytags/miltags.html>

It's important to note that the laws that regulate Gold Star License Plates differ from state to state. The survivor's eligibility for the license plate, the Service Member's cause of death or location of death, fees, license plate appearance, and the application process are not universal. Survivors that relocate to another state sometimes are upset by a new set of rules regulating their Gold Star License Plate. Gold Star Mothers of America have an excellent summary on their website that allows families to see the full spectrum of laws pertaining to Gold Star Plates. Go to:

<http://goldstarmoms.com/Resources/LicensePlateStatus.htm>

Tutor.com for Survivor Children

Tutor.com is a free program that provides individualized on-demand online academic support for children of deceased Service Members. Students Kindergarten-College, of all skill levels, work one-to-one in an anonymous, secure, online classroom with a live expert tutor, at any time, and from anywhere.

Tutoring is available in Math, Science, History, Writing/English, World Languages. Tutoring en Español is available for Math, Science, Social Studies.

<http://military.tutor.com/home>

What Survivors and Their Families Should Expect from their VSO Representative, Attorney, or Agent

When you have an issue with the VA, where do you go for help? A Veteran's Service Organization? An Attorney? An online advocate or agent? How do you know if this person knows what they are doing?

The Department of Veteran's Affairs, or VA, currently offers an accreditation program for VSOs, Attorneys and other Agents, according to VA Deputy Chief Counsel, Christa Shriber and Staff Attorney, Jonathan Taylor.

The VA's Office of the General Counsel manages the VA's accreditation program. The purpose of the program is to ensure responsible, qualified representation for claimants in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for veteran's benefits.

Currently in the U.S., the VA has accredited 9,400 VSO Representatives, 17,000 Attorneys, 400 Claim Agents and 89 Veterans Service Organizations. The VA accredits three types of individuals:

- *Representatives of VA-recognized Veterans service organizations
- *Independent claims agents
- *Private Attorneys

A searchable list of accredited VSO representatives, agents and attorneys is available at the VA Office of the General Counsel website: <http://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>.

An accredited attorney or agent may only charge claimants a fee after an agency of original jurisdiction, such as a VA regional office, has issued a decision on a claim, a notice of disagreement has been filed, and the attorney or agent has filed a power of attorney and a fee agreement with VA.

VA-recognized Veterans service organizations, including their accredited representatives, are not permitted to receive fees for their services in connection with a VA claim in any instance. Fees include gifts or donations. In other words, a practitioner cannot accept a donation of something from a claimant, such as paying for gas, as a thank you for assisting with VA benefits claim.

There are an increasing number of agents and attorneys seeking VA accreditation to represent claimants on VA benefit claims who also have law-related businesses, such as an accounting, financial planning, referral, or elder care business. When a VA-accredited practitioner performs law-related services, or controls an organization that does so, there is a heightened potential for ethical conflicts and violations of VA's standards of conduct and state bar rules of professional conduct.

There are three ways to contact the VA Office of General Counsel on accreditation matters. You can call them at 202-461-7699. You can also email them at ogcaccreditationmailbox@va.gov. Finally, you can send a letter to:

Office of the General Counsel (022D)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

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A Gold Star Letter

17 June, 2016

To: Whom it May Concern,

“You are now a Gold Star wife.” What a fancy title that is! At the time, I wanted no part of it. I did not want to belong to a club of death, suffering, and crying. I did not want membership to this horrific organization. My temporarily insane mind and heart would have loved to simply cancel my affiliation and have my husband, Roger L. Adams Jr. back in my life, but more than that, back in our four sons’ lives. Of course, it is not that simple, and when sanity periodically injected its prickly self back into my life, I opened my mind to what Gold Star is.

Being in the Gold Star family, yes, family, is coupled with sorrow, pride, and at times, painful laughter. That type of laughter is the kind one never thinks they will experience again after they suffer a loss. We have that. We weep and we laugh, and sometimes it’s simultaneous. We understand each other. We need each other. The children need to be with their true peers, which are not always in their schools and play groups. They need to speak freely and learn to have fun with others in their personal prison. Whether words are spoken or unspoken, there is an understanding, and even a physical nod, and always the term, “I know.”

I remember the first Gold Star event I went to. I had a mini chip on my shoulder and a titanium force shield around my emotions. I believed I needed nobody and that I would be *fine*. I was new to this life. I met a “veteran” widow. We do exist. She was happy. She was what I saw in my own future. This sweet woman told me with her actions as well as words that there is life after your love is gone. The hurt does not disappear, but becomes cloudy and muted. Years later I attended another event in Raleigh. I was the veteran widow, and I saw the old me walk in. I chatted with her, and I only hope through my smile that she saw her own possible future. There is healing in healing, and the cycle possesses only love, sympathy, empathy, and compassion.

The patience, kindness, true love, and so many more necessary positive adjectives define this organization. We are welcomed. We have fun. Real fun. We laugh and cry and tell stories. When we are together at Gold Star events, we are truly ok. Gold Star events are the bank to our network. During them we meet new friends as well as old ones. We are a solid force when we are together, no matter what the event is. The friendships that are created are not to be compared with any other kind. They are forever and hold understanding and absolutely no judgement.

In my newer present days and way of living, I cherish the term “Gold Star Wife”. I am proud of what my husband did for our free country. These events and networking are imperative for a healthy trek into our future. I appreciate your time in reading this letter.

My Very Best,

Teresa M. Adams, Honored Widow of Roger L. Adams, Jr., KIA 29 June, 2009



If you would like to share your experiences as a Gold Star Family Member in a future newsletter edition, please contact your SOS Coordinator.

Survivor Outreach Newsletter to "GO GREEN IN 2017"

Starting in January of 2017, this Survivor Outreach Services Newsletter will only be sent out by email.

Why? Along with being "environmentally friendly," printed and mailed newsletters cost you, as a taxpayer, almost 50 cents for each household that receives a mailed copy. Right now, nearly 700 households are mailed the Survivor Outreach Newsletter four times a year. That amounts to over \$1,400 dollars a year just in postage.

Secondly, there are often instances when information comes to us with a very short suspense date, meaning that the only way Survivor Outreach can make you aware in time is if we have an electronic means, such as email, to contact you.

Providing you timely information is important. Benefits and deadlines change, and new programs are coming out all the time. Help Survivor Outreach GO GREEN IN 2017! If you received this newsletter by regular mail, send your Survivor Outreach Coordinator an email today at their address below!



FLORIDA SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

