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Voiceover:

Communities in the Fight. Creative Solutions Make a Difference. General Charles Q. Brown Jr is the chief of staff of the United States Air Force. He is responsible for the organization, training, and equipping of 689,000 active duty, guard, reserve, and civilian forces serving in the United States and overseas. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he is an advisor to the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council, and the President. Mr. Matt Borrón is the executive director for the Association of Defense Communities, a national nonprofit organization representing communities and states with significant military presence. For over a decade, Mr. Borrón has dedicated his career to advocating for communities, service members, veterans, and military families on the local, state, and federal level. He has also served as a member of the United States Army Reserve for the past 18 years.

Mr. Robert Moriarty is the deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for installations. He oversees the management, policy, and oversight of Air Force installation programs. In this role, he is responsible for Base Realignment and Closure, installations planning and strategy, strategic basing, public and private partnerships and more. Mr. Moriarty served as an active duty in a variety of Air Force civil engineering positions before serving as a senior executive.

Mr. Glenn McDonald is the vice president for strategic projects and development for Gulf Coast State College in Florida. He serves as an alternate to the Air Combat Command Civic Leader Group and co-chairman of the Tyndall Community Service Committee. He received the 2017 Chairman's Award from the Bay County Chamber of Commerce for his work to help Tyndall Air Force Base. Mr. McDonald participates in and chairs many community, civic, and military organizations.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Well, good afternoon everyone and welcome to the last panel of today, Communities in the Fight. Creative Solutions Make a Difference. My name is Kathleen Ferguson and I'm your moderator for today's panel. I spent nearly 35 years working for the Air Force, the entire time as a civilian, never in uniform. I was an active duty military spouse and I am an AFA board member. Just before retiring, I was the principal deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for installations, environment, energy. And what I would tell you is during my time there, I used to meet with about 70 communities throughout the United States each and every year. And what I would tell you also is they're all very committed to the mission of the Air Force and the support of military members and the families that live in their communities. So really today, we want to open all of you in this room up to that, and how you can be engaged, and how you can help out in your local communities.

During my time in SAF/IE we created the Air Force Community Partnership Program as a pilot. It was assisted by new legislation that Matt Borrón down at the end here was very effective in getting passed. And what we learned is there's tremendous opportunities to create win-win opportunities for both the installation and the community outside the gate to solve challenges. Mrs. Brown, thank you for the opportunity to participate or for allowing me to participate in the panel today and for your vision to foster community partnerships. Chief, thanks for being here and for your leadership and support to Airmen and Guardians and their families. And for the rest of the panel, again, thanks for being here. Community partnerships are not new. They've been around since the very beginning of the Air Force 75 years ago. In 1947, communities often provided land free of charge to the Department of the Air Force to allow the construction of the new military installations. DOD and Congress provided the rest, they did the housing, the hospitals, the flight line, the schools, and the shopping, and everything was on base.

An Airman in the 1960s, and even when I started working for the Air Force in the early 1980s, you never had to leave the base. You had everything inside that confines of the base and really the base did not talk a lot with the local community. Well fast forward, a number of years that I'm not going to do in my head for you, but 70% of our military families live off base and the military family has changed. Back in the 1960s and even early 1980s, spouses didn't work. It was highly discouraged for spouse to work. And today, we are looking for opportunities to increase opportunities for spouse employment.

In other words, the fight has evolved. And really today, our panelists are going to discuss how our military members and their families and their commanders can engage with the community to help solve some of the most affecting quality of life challenges that we have. And you all know them as well as I do, housing, medical, quality of education, spouse employment, and childcare. But just quick before I begin with questions to the panel members, there's a group of folks in the audience today that I want to recognize, and they're the head of the Chief Civic Leaders Program, very engaged. And if you could all stand up, I think we've got a 10 or so of them in the room today.

These are the folks throughout the United States that support the men and women in uniform each and every day. They don't do it for money. They don't do it for themselves. They're all volunteers. I've known some of them for over 20 years, and they do it just because they love the Air Force. So when you're around here the next couple days, go ahead and meet them, find out what they're doing in their communities to help the military members. So given that short introduction, I'd like to turn now to the first question, and chief here get the first question. You and Mrs. Brown travel all over the world and meet with Airmen and their spouses. Can you share what you've seen as some of the primary challenges facing Airmen and their families today? And what are some ways that communities can help?

CSAF Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr.:

Good. Well, thanks Kathleen for moderating today. And also thank to our Department of Air Force Civic Leaders for not only being here today, but the work that you do in your communities at the support of Airmen, Guardians, and their families. Well, it's pretty simple because Sharene actually put it all together on what impacts our families as she put together the Five & Thrive. Let me just give you a little background. I have nothing to do with Five & Thrive, never came up with the idea. This was all spouses writing this and putting this together. And it's the five key areas that the feedback that we get when we travel and as we engage with families and Airmen, childcare, education, healthcare, housing, and spouse employment. If I'll take a minute just on each one of those, we hear a lot about childcare and it's the same thing either on base or off base around the communities, the availability of the childcare.

And this is why it's so important, again, to not only what we do on base and it's not all the brick and mortar, but it's the other ways that we help families with childcare. But it's also what we are able to do in communities and some of the initiatives we're trying to do to make it affordable for families to get childcare and not get on a long waiting list when they show up at each location, you have to start over again. It's particularly important for our military to military couples that have work hours that aren't always predictable, and so that's important. On the education piece, we are an EFMP family and so it's been something we've been focused on for a long time, just not only for us but our EFMP family members, almost 30 now. We pay attention to that aspect of education and how it drives decisions for our families of what base you want to go to what communities are going to live in.

At the same time, the housing is a key factor. And then housing is we want affordable housing and not everybody loves on bases. Kathleen described many of our families live outside the base, but they also don't want to have a long commute to get to base. And they want to have quality schools where they can send their children and feel safe about their education and their just safety in general. On the healthcare, I think we've all dealt with TRICARE. But we also think the aspect of how do we make sure

that, as we go to various communities, that the healthcare is there one, and then that they accept TRICARE. And this is something that we're going to work on and continue to work on as well. And then the spouse employment. I really applaud the work that's been happening around the various parts of the country on reciprocity, but we got to continue to push on those.

What I will tell you is when, probably three or four secretaries ago, the secretaries, all three secretaries, the Department of the Air Force, the Department of Navy, Department of the Army signed a letter that talked about, as we made basing decisions, how education and spouse employment was going to be graded or be part of the decision making process. And I will tell you, it is driven a full out competition. So when we travel, I hear so much about what different communities are doing to support on education and spouse employment, but you got to hit the other three of the Five & Thrive. And part of that is how we open up our bases, get to know the communities.

And the last thing that I've also highlight, which is really important is the School Liaison Program. If you were here in the panel last night or yesterday, spouses in the fight, Suzie Schwartz help get school liaisons in every community. They actually have the access and have a good understanding of how to support. And for all of us in uniform and our spouses and our families using the school liaison, and then for the communities embracing the school liaison will be important. So many different factors I think that we can work through, but it takes a team effort not only for those in uniform but also in our spouses, but to the communities as well.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Thanks Chief. Chief, you mentioned a little bit about the housing crisis and what impact that has on military families. Can you explain a little bit about what DOD may be doing to help mitigate the lag in basic allowance for housing? And what the Air Force can do to maybe mitigate some of these challenges?

CSAF Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr.:

Well, I mean there's a series of events that have happened all over the course of the past couple years. I don't think anyone of us would've predicted a global pandemic that drove the housing prices up to where they are, and then you tie in inflation as well. And then we have a process for housing allowance that is not as responsive as it needs to be in some cases. This is something we're working with the Air Force but relate to the Department of Defense because it impacts all the branches of the service. Last year, we were able to do some temporary, pretty quick reaction to raise housing allowances and some key areas, realizing we probably didn't hit all the areas. No matter where you live, there's probably someone in your organization or someone on your base who's being impacted by the housing crisis.

At the same time, we extended the temporary lodging allowance, partly because it was taken people so long and families so long to find housing. The typical 10 day was not long enough, and so that was one part. The other thing we also try to do too is make sure that the lodging matched up with your housing allowance so that you weren't getting the hard, large lodging bill and your housing allowance wasn't matching up. So those are some of the areas. Areas that we're focused on right now is how do we be a bit more responsive on some of our allowances to match up with what the economy's doing. At the same time, what I'm advocating for is it's not going to be a roller coaster ride. So as a family, you can actually have a budget, build a budget, and you can get a little plus up when the economy gets in a position where it's not so good.

But it may come down a little bit too when the economy gets better. But we don't want to make it such a big swing that you can't predict each month what your paycheck's going to look like and you can actually have a budget. But we got to be a bit more responsive and I think we have all the data and all

the tools, but our processes are thought out modern time versus internet time. We got to actually start to move in a direction to move a bit faster, and that's the area we're focused on. I know CMSAF, she's here in the audience. That's something she's focused on with her counterparts from across the other services as well.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Thanks, Chief. So next question for Matt Borron. Matt, we talked a little bit about Five & Thrive and the quality of life stressors, the five quality life stressors and that they're directly tied to military family readiness, resilience, and retention of force. As executive director of Association of Defense Communities, you see firsthand what communities are doing to help Airmen, Guardians, and their families. Can you give us a couple of examples of what you're seeing and what communities have done in this area and what makes them successful?

Matt Borron:

Sure. Thanks, Kathy. But first of all, who here is not heard of the Association of Defense Communities? No hand. Okay, shame on you, who's ever holding their hand up. Quick history, we've been around for 50 years and we got our start back when DOD could close bases and they didn't have to ask Congress for permission. They could literally just padlock the gate, throw the community the key, and say good luck. And they did that, they closed a lot of bases, and then the dreaded BRAC process up to the '80s and '90s in 2005. So we were these communities who had gotten together where this had happened and they said, "What do we do now? How do we recover from having the biggest economic engine in our community ripped out? How do we replace X thousand amount of jobs?" And so for a long time, probably the first 30 years of our existence, we were worried about things like economic redevelopment, environmental cleanup, land transfer, kind of all of these awful issues.

But if you fast forward to today, our membership is almost entirely communities that host active military bases. Some of them are here in the room. The issues are different but the impetus is the same, right? It finally dawned on communities that they couldn't take their base for granted, right? That they had to be doing everything for that base, that they would do for an Amazon HQ2, really looking at it through that economic development lens. The issues keep increasing, it used to be about land use and infrastructure and encroachment, and that's still a big issue. But now, you're seeing the issues that Ms. Brown is worried about and concerned about. This quality of life and these five issues that her initiative is tackling, I think, drive home something that ADC has always said, "The issues you want to tackle cannot be tackled only within defense line."

All of this stuff transcends that defense line. And if you're not working with your community, you're not going to make a dent into it. And it's good to see that the Air Force a beauty, I think writ large have come to understand that. The intergovernmental support agreement, I think helped really drive home that message. Now we have the Defense Community Infrastructure Program, which Congress funds up to a hundred million, allowing DOD to provide grants for off base infrastructure that somehow supports the mission. We wrote that very broad, so it could be quality of life, it could be schools, roads, utilities, rail, kind of, you name it. But to your question, there are a lot of cool things happening out there. But I'd tell you what, it's an issue that I've been hearing more and more about. I was in California for a defense forum two weeks ago and what the Space Force folks talked about and then what the governor talked about was workforce and the need for a pipeline for a defense workforce.

We were in Tullahoma two weeks ago, Arnold Air Force Base, 57 active service members there, but then X thousand amount of contractors, but they talked about that too. I was up at Sub Base New London in Connecticut, the folks from Electric Boat came up to me and said, "We're worried about a workforce."

We're worried about it 10, 15 years from now." So they've started investing in grade schools, creating STEM programs for fifth graders, and then advanced welding and manufacturing for high school students. If you go out to, where was it? Little Rock Air Force Base, we went and toured the high school off post. The air base is teamed with the high school to create a class around cyber security. So Airmen actually come and teach a class three times a week that they get credit for all on coding and cyber security, creating that pipeline right into that installation.

These folks are in uniform, and that really transcends the different types of problems that we're talking about. Now you need recruitment, right? Are the skills that we're training our service members for right now, are those being trained in high school and grade school? And if they're not, then we're missing out on something that's going to be more and more important as we move forward. We have future missions and evolving missions. Also, I would point out that in Maryland, they've done something really innovative that brings the state to the communities and the bases together every month to talk about just these types of issues.

And then the state starts putting additional resources into school programs, the spouse training programs. This is happening all across the country, but the point is you have to tell those stories. It takes a lot of risk from that mission support group commander, right? He has to be willing to maybe think outside the box and say, "This might fail. And I don't know if the lawyers are going to let me do it, but I'm going to give it a shot." A lot of times, they succeed. And when they'll succeed one place, you can steal those ideas for other places. Thanks, Kathy.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Thanks, Matt. Mr. Moriarty, building up what Matt just talked about and Five & Thrive, can you tell us how the Air Force Community Program works and how the program and Five & Thrive are related? And what the installations and communities can do to get the most out of those programs?

Robert Moriarty:

Thanks, Kathy. So for the last several months, Mrs. Brown and I and the partnership team there within my area meet and discuss ideas and do that. I think one thing that's apparent is the Air Force is a large organization, and we have a lot of authorities at our disposal. Sometimes it takes a little bit of effort to make sure we're in concert with that and also working with the communities and the installation. So with the conversation Mrs. Brown and I have, it allows us at least to sync up what she's hearing on the road within the Five & Thrive program. Those are five pillars that are very important we work. Then there's all other pillars that we work in addition to that to include mission requirements and other requirements. One thing that's interesting is we've got three communities here that we're going to recognize at the end for some innovative work.

But as I was talking to them, they reminded me every installation has unique problems and unique solutions. If I was to issue policy that said we shall do this, like Fairchild, we're going to have everybody work with the community to build a CATM range, a firing range for it to keep our folks up, that would not work, right? Because every base doesn't have that and every community's not willing to do that. But there are other things they are willing to do. I think as we look across the needs and we work with the installations, the thing we've seen successful is where the installation and the installation commander. We don't fund a billet to this out of the secretary or the Air staff, but where they will dedicate an individual to do that and lead that effort and put the unity of effort? Because I'm looking at JBSA, and we're missing one commander two from the last four years.

But some of their initiatives, one thing, is you got to pass the baton to the next commander. Some of these initiatives can take long time. General Brown challenge us to break down barriers and try to look

for new ways to do it. It doesn't happen fast though, right? Sometimes we have to get legislation, sometimes we have to look at different authorities. I would say when you talk about a partnership program, I would say it's more of a mindset than a program. Because within there, we talk about intergovernmental service agreements, which are basically services that we want to do, grass cutting, trash pickup, snow removal, fixing roads. But that's only part of the partnerships that we have. We have a whole host. I see the two chiefs up here, I mean we've gotten dormitory capacity in some of our smaller communities through partnership.

We've gotten educational opportunities through partnerships, but all started with some installation devoting resources, a community devoting resources, us figuring out a way. And what we try to do is enable that. So if Mrs. Brown identifies a problem that she's heard on the street or our folks, we have partnership brokers out there to help so we can trade good ideas, but it's not one size fits all. And you recognize, Kathy that the Air Force is much different than some of us came in, and we are more and more dependent upon the communities than we ever were before. I think that's good. I think there's things that the communities can do very well for us and things that we still need to do ourselves, but it's really dependent upon where we are. But as Mrs. Brown says, we got to listen to those voices out there and see what those needs are.

I think in some cases, there were some needs that weren't met, not because we didn't want to, but because they didn't funnel in the right place. We have tremendous amount of authorities. People say, well, you need more legislation, probably not. There are some things maybe in some areas, but for the most part, we have a lot of tools at our disposal. It's getting a smart people that can look at it and go, "Man, I use a hammer normally, but I can use a screwdriver here." And you go, "I never thought you could do that." "Well yeah, we can. I mean we can write different things." So I'm really excited about the opportunities for the future. So thanks for that.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Yeah, thanks Bob. That was very interesting. Now Glen, we're going to take it down to the installation level. You've been active in numerous organizations in Northwest Florida over the years, specifically designed, help Tyndall and your military members and their families that are stationed there. Can you tell us what makes Bay County and Panama City a great defense community? And give us your most satisfying example of helping Airmen and their families.

Glen McDonald:

Thank you Ms. Ferguson. I live in a community of about 185,000 people. I know several of us in the audience live in smaller communities. We know out of 185,000 people, there's one person out there that doesn't support the military members of the military families. And I am still trying to find them. I'm going to find them, and if anybody out there knows, let me know. We now judge ourselves in Bay County as in pre Michael and post Hurricane Michael in 2018. Most people judge themselves by families. When they had kids, when they went to college, we judged by hurricane and pre Michael. We put together a Thanks a Million campaign that we started in our community so that there was no gap that a military member could have that we could not sustain. So military gets reimbursed for books and tuition. We were finding through the Airmen that some of them need their engines repaired, some of them need transportation, some of them need childcare, some of them need food.

So we created a Thanks a Million campaign and that's thanks a million to all of the military so that there are no gaps. We have paid for engine repairs, we have paid for tires, we have paid for bicycle tires, we paid for food, we paid for childcare. There will be no gap in Bay County. We also really got encouraged by the Air Force taking the leadership role on support of military families. I want to thank you for the

courage because those things that you put out for license reciprocity and for education have made our communities better.

It's not only made our military families better, but it's made us better. We started working simple things, work with your teams. We have great teams mostly associated with economic development. We put all of our economic development in our chambers in one room and we said, "What would you do?" And some of the greatest things that came out of that room were really small things. I have a couple of examples that I hand out after this, but we created a sticker for all of our businesses that is very simple. It says, "Support our troops hire military spouses." So in every business...

Thank you, I only have 50 to hand out here so you can take them home. But we have them at our college, our universities, at our city halls, in our businesses, everywhere you go. And it sends a message where you don't have to tell people, you can just see it on a sticker. The next thing we did was career source, hired two employees just to do military spouse employment, but also dependent employments and to put our money where our mouth is. Those are both military spouses that do both of those jobs. And the last thing, which is the big thing, we started small, thank you, was we were the first 5G community that returned small community after Hurricane Michael. So Verizon came in and put 5G into Panama City, and we had a lot of time with their leadership teams. Their VP of HR was sitting down with me and she said, "Glen, what can we do?"

And I said, "I would like for you to put a fully transportable job for military spouses into Verizon." And she said, "What does that mean?" And that I said, "This means if you work at Tyndall and you're a military spouse, and you move anywhere in the world to another base, you still have a job. You're still vested in your retirement program. You're still vested in your culture and you do it." And Verizon, she said, "First thing was a great thing." She said, "Glen, that's a great idea." The second thing she said, "It scary me." She said, "Nobody's ever asked us to do that." So today, every big company that's downstairs, if you can do that, put a fully transportable job for not only military spouses but for military members on your roles, so that they can transfer all over the world and keep all of the benefits, and they don't have to start again at every place that they go.

We've also worked very hard on education. We knew first a lot of low income families need mentors. So recently, our chambers put out an initiative to recruit enough mentors so that no child, any child was on a waiting list for a mentor. So I want tell you all the really good story for my wife. My wife was one of the new volunteers. And about three weeks ago, she went to her mentor training session and she was up front with all of her friends and all the other people we had recruited. And then seven military members from Tyndall came in and sat in the back of the room. They looked great. They were young. They were very diverse, and they cared about our families in our communities. And my wife had a smile on her face for two weeks. She was so proud of America, the Air Force, and those young men and women that Tyndall sent to be volunteers.

I was talking to her earlier today, she saw one of them on the school and she's so proud. So in the education, we did mentoring, we're putting business members on our school boards. School boards are the hardest races in this country to elect for. People don't want to do that job, but they're the most important jobs we can do. So we're recruiting business members. We just put our first business member on our school board unopposed in our election. We have a pretty good agenda. And the last thing we're doing is we need really good data systems. The chief talked about data systems. We need data on every student, not just at the school level, not just at the teacher level, but on every student. So we know exactly when they need to be read to at the end of the day, when they need a mentor to read to them when they come to lunch with them. We need to know exactly where that student is and we need to help them in everything we do. So Kathy, I hope I answered your question.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Yeah, thanks very much, Glen. Thanks for what you do for our military members and their families. Chief, another question to you. Collaboration is a key term in your strategic approach, accelerate, change, or lose. Can you give your thoughts on how the Air Force communities and Congress can work together to develop creative solutions to quality of life, mission readiness, and installation, resilience, challenges, and opportunities?

CSAF Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr.:

Sure. Bob kind of highlighted that it doesn't necessarily requires legislation, it just require support. And too often, we try and we make problems harder than they have to be sometimes by not knowing who to go to or who to engage with. The key part for us is with our wing leadership, squadron leadership, and I look at our honorary squadron or Honorary Commander Program to build those relationships within the community.

Now, I'll go back to the time I was a squadron commander. We still stay in contact with our honorary squadron commander and we can go back to that community and still connect. The collaboration areas as we look at our various base is that, as I mentioned, we're not in a process to close base, but we want to make sure that the base we have have the right facilities, have the right support. And a lot of that happens in the relationships we have with the community and with the Congress.

So the examples that I would give you is as we start to make transitions and missions is not holding onto the past, it's really not so much the platform that's there, but we want to make sure that there's still valid employment, number of jobs, those things within the community. And that's where the collaboration and dialogue happens between the Department of the Air Force, with our Congress, mayors, with our communities. We want to make sure the same level of jobs. We also make sure they support the mission of United States Air Force, and that's where that balance is. We've done that at Robins, we're going at a Grand Forks. And the same time, some project brings in new facilities that come in, but there's also the collaboration on enhanced use lease and other areas that we're able to do in communities. And part of that is really the engagement with the communities.

Later this week, I'll have a chance to meet with all the wing commanders from across the Air Force. And one of the things I'll talk to them about is get to know your community leaders. If you know them, they can actually help move some things along and may have some ideas that was already been mentioned by my other panel members that there's plenty of opportunities there. If you make the right connection, you've already heard, they've got a lot of energy and a lot of things they want to be able to do. And that to me is one of the key ways about collaboration, getting to everybody in the room, sitting around the table, and figuring out, best of all, how to do this. We're not talking past each other, we're actually talking to each other, and then figuring out how best to bring together some solutions for Airmen, our families, and for our Guardians. And as it was mentioned earlier, it doesn't only help the military member and their family, it obviously helps us community at large, and I think that's an important aspect as well.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Thanks, Chief. Very well said. So I want to circle back to Mr. McDonald and you mentioned Hurricane Michael back in 2018. Can you tell us how there were partnerships and relationships that the community made with the Department of the Air Force prior to the hurricane helped in recovery efforts? Give us some thoughts on how the military members in the communities out in this audience can learn from that.

Glen McDonald:

Yeah, I appreciate the chief. I think empowering your wing commanders to go out and integrate with the community is probably the most powerful message you may be send in the future. We had done five community partnerships in six months in the summer before Hurricane Michael. So in June, we completed five community partnerships. And what that had done is given us some small wins, some momentum, but most importantly, it given us relationships and trust and connectivity with the entire community. So when the hurricane hit in October of 2018, when the wing commander... Hurricane Michael was the third most powerful storm ever to hit the United States and it went bridge to bridge to Tyndall, so Tyndall has a bridge on each side. The eye of the hurricane was bridged to bridge. So after the hurricane, Colonel Laidlaw, our wing commander at the time, he knew everyone from the community partnerships. He knew the county manager, he knew the city manager, he knew the sheriff, he knew the police, and he didn't have to reach out to Tom or I to get that.

He knew everyone. So we first set up a direct line of communication to our emergency operations center. That was the first thing that we did. And then when we started working on the rebuild of Tyndall and the rebuild when the water was going to come back, when the electricity was going to come back. All that information was directly communicated from the business and civic leaders directly to the wing commander. Then we were talking about rebuilding Tyndall. We had our entire legislative delegation, and our Governor Scott was in place when the hurricane hit, and now, Governor DeSantis. They were able to make the rebuild of Tyndall, the number one initiative on their entire priority list.

So that immediately put our congressional delegation, our senators, our local and state legislatures all on the same page. It was very, very helpful. But I will tell you the foundation was set with community partnerships and community leaders that work with our wing commanders here today. We don't wait. My advice to everyone, do not wait. Don't think someone else is going to do it. Be kind and courageous and go talk to your military members. And when you have an idea, don't be scared to talk about it. Some of the greatest ideas come out of the smallest thoughts. The hurricane was an example of the relationships that we had and what we've been able to do since then. We're still working on building the base of the future and we're very excited. So thank you for the question.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Yeah, thanks. So Mr. Moriarty back to you. Can you give us a few examples of some innovative partnerships that the Air Forces execute with some of the communities? And then as a follow on question, if you can explain to the audience what they can do to learn more about community partnership program, and how they can become involved?

Robert Moriarty:

Sure. Last week with the governor from Idaho in talking about Mountain Home, interesting partnership where we're having a little water issues out there at Mountain Home with the wells we've got. They're going to put a pipeline into the Snake River and the state's going to pay for that, and we're going to build a water plant on the base, and that partnership has gone. The wing commander at the time was a colonel. Now he's a one star. Hopefully, he is not a two star before we finished that. But that partnership started to make sure that base is viable in the future, and we both had an interest in that. But again, that broke down a lot of barriers. I'll tell you, I started work in supporting the wing commander at that time in a previous job. And when it came back to me in the building, I was like, "Well, this doesn't look exactly like what I thought it was going to look like, but it works."

So I mean, again, this gets back to there might not be the answer you started with, but you need a solution, and smart people figured it out. We got three communities here today we're going to

recognize. One is Fairchild range. I mentioned earlier firing range, which typically we would do as a milcom project. We would go to Congress, ask for the money, build it, and then operate it ourselves. In this case, the community needed a new firing range for their law enforcement and we needed it. So they went out, got the money, and they're building it, and then we will pay as a service to use it. Innovative solution, we get our folks trained and we didn't have to tie up a lot of money and we worked with the community there. JBSA has a whole host as you can imagine, Joint Based San Antonio, it's a mammoth of an installation, but we have a lot of partnerships with the community there with the City of San Antonio.

One of them is a blanket in intergovernmental service agreement where we can stripe and repair roads and do other things. And then there's a whole host of other agreements we have with them. And then Altus, we were talking earlier, I think this conference actually is the size of Altus, the community. I mean literally 16, 17,000 people here. And yet that community we were talking, years ago, they identified, we put the training unit for our new tanker there, and it created a lot more folks there in a very small community. So they worked to the city, provided land, and they went out to developers and developers said, "We still need a little more help." So the state provided money for the infrastructure, the electrical piping, water piping, and infrastructure work.

And then the developer comes in and we're going to end up with somewhere between a hundred and 150 ish units for Airmen at E4, E5 range and apartment style. So those are three creative opportunities that are out there. These don't have to be big, big wins. They can be little things that we partner with. I think communities, if you look at outside England right now, we've been, I see Mr. Oshiba in the audience, we've been working with the community leadership there and the community for CDC. Sometimes we can work with the community. They can facilitate commercial development there for childcare where we didn't have it before. I think some of you, and I know in San Antonio you do this where you mentor other communities. Probably, the best place to get help is to talk to other communities. People you'll meet here today that you can go to and say, "Hey, how did you do it?" And you can learn from them.

Toniann Fisher from my staff runs the partnership program. We have a website. We can give you afterwards and advertise, but that's a good place, and we have brokers for each of the installations which we can help. So I think part of it is, just if you don't have a good setup with the Five & Thrive, some of the communities have actual committees that are focused on the Five & Thrive, those five things. So they have set groups that are meeting on that. Maybe for some of you that isn't what you need, but I think getting our spouses more involved and our family members to help, and as where Mrs. Brown's really been instrumental in this really grassroots kind of helping us while the military members are doing what they do, but hearing from the spouses of where they need help, and then Mrs. Brown helping them get educated on where to ask.

I know sometimes we get very frustrated because we don't know where to go. But the installation commanders, the command chiefs, they have a lot of resources available. The only last thing I'd say is I don't see people walk by something. Our leaders will grab an issue if they know about it, and they're looking for them. But I think sometimes we just got to get it into the leadership, whether it be at the wing, the group, or the chiefs, first sergeants, channel it up and then we'll get the right people involved. So for the spouses, if you're not getting your message acrossed, then I would say keep at it. And certainly, Mrs. Brown had offered you that she'll get it and... I'm not saying bypass the chain of command. What I'm saying is if you're that frustrated, there's people inside the Air Force that will help.

I mean there's people outside that'll help too. But I mean we got people inside the Air Force that will help if we know about it. So Toniann Fisher runs our partnership program and I'd offer that up. I also offer up the people that you meet out in the community that are doing this. I see Laura Lenderman's

here and she was a wing commander back at JBSA in the day. Some of the issues she started with and Heather Pringle started with, now the general's got there, and he's working those issues. So they take time to foster. But your civilian community, they'll be there to continue. So Kathy-

Matt Borron:

Bob, are there any other places maybe in a couple of months where communities and installations can learn from one another, maybe cross service-

Robert Moriarty:

There might be an opportunity in Phoenix with Association of Defense Communities coming up and Mrs. Brown may be on a panel there strangely you would ask. She might be on a panel there hopefully where we could further discuss this if folks wanted to in more detail. Good question. Thank you, Kathy.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Well thank you. So we have just about two minutes left and I wanted to give the panel members just one last opportunity to give 30 second pitch on the one thing they want the members in this audience take away. And I will start with Mr. McDonald in the end.

Glen McDonald:

Yeah, I would recommend that you get engaged, be forthright, go have the conversations. The Air Force and the military needs to tell us the community what they need, and we need to tell them what we can and can't do. But start small, develop the trust, the relationship, the collaboration, and go really hard and fast. Because communities are in the fight and we have to make a difference.

Kathleen Ferguson:

Mr. Borron.

Matt Borron:

I would just reiterate that community, that one community concept, whether you're talking climate change, whether you're talking quality of life, housing, defense line doesn't matter anymore. And we've heard it here, whether it's a hurricane or other types of natural disasters, if you're not working with your community partner, you're not going to solve the issue. And frankly, a lot of military leaders I talk to, those missions support group commanders, they need top cover. They need to be told that seek out those partnerships, do this. It's okay, you're not going to get your hand slapped for talking with the mayor and the chamber of commerce and the county and trying to figure out innovative solutions that your lawyer might not like, but there are ways around that.

Robert Moriarty:

We got a lot of lawyers, so sometimes it's a matter of finding the right lawyer. And I only mean that tongue in cheek for the lawyers in the room because sometimes there's a lawyer that understands the authorities is different. So I just challenge it, keep pressing hard as General Brown says. Let's make sure we know what our problems are and then we'll lock arms. I've been impressed with the Air Force my whole career, which has been a little while now, that we get the right leaders in the seat today to solve these problems. So thank you for your service and thanks for what you're doing. Thanks for the spouses

that are here that are part of the fight. And Five & Thrive is a good thing, it helps connect us. So thank you.

CSAF Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr.:

Two points. Relationships matter and proceed until apprehended. Let me just explain those very quickly. For your relationships, you never want to cold call somebody in a crisis. So build the relationships before you need them. And that was really highlighted what happened there at Tyndall that you knew just to call because there was an issue. You never burn a bridge. You may not use it very often, you may not see eye to eye, but you may need that bridge at a later dates. Never burn it and proceed until apprehended. What I mean by that is figure out what it is you want to do, start down a path, just communicate what you're doing, that provides a top cover. You have my top cover.

We cannot continue to do the same thing, expect a different result. So we got to challenge ourselves. I believe in challenging the status quo and driving some things. And sometimes we need people at a lower level to start doing some things to make us nervous, and then let's have a conversation. I often talk about Ted Lasso. I'm sorry, I want to keep going for a second. I started watching Ted Lasso because of my staff and one of the things he said, "When you're driving change or going against a challenge, it's like riding a horse. If you're comfortable, you're probably not doing it right." If we're driving change, we should be a little bit uncomfortable. If you're too comfortable, then we're not doing something right. So think about Ted Lasso next time we want to drive some change. Thanks.

Kathleen Ferguson:

I wanted to say thanks to everybody in the audience today for participating. And thank you to each of the four panel members for being up here and sharing your experience and expertise and helping to get that word out. Just finally, we have, as Mr. Moriarty already pointed out, we have three outstanding communities in the audience today that are receiving recognition letters that were signed by the Secretary of the Air Force for their innovative partnerships that Bob talked about. So I'd like to invite each one of them. First, Altus, if you can come up to the front to get a picture taken with the team.

