

# UNITED FORCES & FAMILIES ENGAGE

*Elevating*  
Family Readiness



Brought to you by  **AFA** AIR & SPACE  
FORCES  
ASSOCIATION



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# Heather Campbell

**MILITARY FAMILY ADVOCATE & MILITARY FOOD INSECURITY SME**

Heather Campbell is a nationally recognized subject matter expert in food insecurity and quality of life within the military community. As a Registered Dietitian her expertise in nutrition for at-risk families was met with lived experience in food insecurity as a young active-duty Air Force family. Her dedication to research, community connection, and solution-focused conversations have led to impact with the highest levels of decision-makers.

To read Heather's entire biography, go to "Meet the ENGAGE Team" on page 30.

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# The AFA Perspective

**Family.** It's a word that carries a personal meaning for so many of us. When discussing family readiness, we must first put aside limiting beliefs of what a family is.

At the 2013 Air & Space Conference, then CMSAF Jim Cody summed up 'family' by saying "It can be a spouse, a child, a parent, a friend, a wingman, a neighbor. Our families sacrifice and serve along with us. Their strength is our strength."

A decade later, at the 2023 AFA Warfare Symposium, Maj. Bridget Pantaleon said, "Family means a lot of different things to a lot of different people, but that definition belongs to our Airmen and our Guardians. Our families, however we define them, they are force multipliers and they have operational consequence."

There are countless examples of how families, however they are defined, come together to support our Airmen and Guardians. When I hear the words of CMSAF Cody or Maj. Pantaleon, my thoughts go to the beauty of a United States Space Force family pinning ceremony at a Basic Military Training Graduation.

During these special events, new Guardians receive USSF family pins and cards to write a personal note. These are presented to a family member that may be a spouse, parent, sibling, friend, teacher or anyone who is there to support our newest Guardians.

These families come together in San Antonio, full of pride, to support their Guardian. They leave part of an even bigger family. They have been welcomed into a chosen Guardian family.

At the Air & Space Forces Association (AFA), we remain committed to supporting our Airmen, Guardians and Families. We believe that family readiness is directly linked to stronger families,

united Forces and the mission effectiveness of the Air and Space Forces. That's why we created United Forces & Families (F2).

Our United Forces & Families vision is a culture where strong families continually build stronger forces. We accomplish this through *listening, amplifying, connecting, and building*. We formed an incredible F2 Task Force in 2022 to listen to the needs of our Air Force and Space Force families. We plan to continue this through an expanded advisory board and new opportunities in 2025. We have built new grant opportunities which have included the USSF family pinnings and supporting the SWORD Athena Family Readiness Summit at Joint Base Langley-Eustis. Many other initiatives have been executed at the installation level thanks to connections with AFA chapters around the world.

Along with our United Forces & Families sessions at the Air, Space & Cyber Conference, this ENGAGE edition amplifies the importance of family readiness and the changemakers currently leading the charge. After eloquently laying out diverse challenges and opportunities, Heather calls on our military community to join together to truly achieve family readiness.

If you're reading this, you can make a difference by listening, amplifying, connecting, and building with us. Our Air Force, Space Force, and AFA Family must come together to support family readiness to achieve mission readiness. Many of us consider this a chosen family. Whether that's how you define family or not, we hope you'll join us in our commitment to family readiness. Let's go ... *together*.



*Kari*

Kari Voliva  
AFA Vice President, Member & Field Relations



# MISSION

AFA's mission is to promote dominant U.S. Air and Space Forces as the foundation of a strong National Defense; to honor and support our Airmen, Guardians, and their Families; and to remember and respect our enduring Heritage.

## The F2 Mission

To unite forces and families, strengthening quality of life for Air and Space communities.

## The F2 Vision & Values

A culture where strong families continually build stronger forces.

Inclusion | Family | Community | Education | Advocacy

# VALUES



*where strong families  
build stronger forces*

# Elevating Families

**M**ilitary families are unique, set apart from the other 99% of Americans who have never served in the Armed Forces. While each individual family is motivated by different factors, there is a shared sense of pride in knowing that even daily activities are markedly different from the average American's routine.

*However, as far back as the 1980s, military families have struggled to balance the needs of the military mission of their servicemember with the ever-changing needs of the modern American household.*

The diversifying landscape of the family creates a crucial need to shift our focus as a service towards more adaptable and multifaceted support structures that can effectively meet the varied needs of modern military families. Successfully meeting these diverse and ever-changing needs directly impacts readiness at all levels, ensuring that servicemembers can perform their duties with the assurance that their families are well-supported and resilient.

Simultaneously, the global stage is primed for a Great Power Competition (GPC) between the United States and rival nations which has created an increased focus on preparation and deterrence for competition, crisis, and conflict on the global stage. This escalating concern led Secretary Frank Kendall to release guidance to reoptimize the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) efforts in March 2024 at the AFA Warfare Symposium. In "The Case for Change: Optimizing for Great Power Competition," Chief of Space Operations General Saltzman asked, "How does great power competition impact your day-to-day mission?"

To fully support the current and future needs of the day-to-day mission within the Air Force and Space Force, it is imperative to understand that the mission starts at home with family readiness.

*Military families must be confident in their ability to meet the needs of their household in a variety of quality-of-life areas, similar to what is taught in Maslow's*







*Hierarchy of Needs before they can be expected to have peak performance for the mission.*

It's important to note that while no two families are alike, our military families match the diversity of our country and often face many of the same challenges as our civilian counterparts. Our diverse families must have the confidence to ask for help and also have access to the support and resources they need to thrive.

To meet these basic needs, Airmen, Guardians, and their Families should know how and where to access additional support when needed. When military households are stable, servicemembers are focused, and our national defense is secure. Military families must also understand how to support the mission and engage in official channels of communication and support in the event of escalating competition, crisis, and conflict.

Throughout this edition of ENGAGE are stories, resources, and opportunities to connect and support AFA's steadfast mission to promote dominant U.S. Air and Space Forces as the foundation for strong National Defense through our local AFA chapters and the communities that support them so that all Airmen, Guardians, and their Families can remain focused on innovation for the future fight.



Heather

Heather Campbell  
Author | Military Family Advocate

In recent years, military families have faced increasingly difficult circumstances leading to a "Taking Care of Our Service Members and Families" memo from Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and to the House Armed Services Committee forming a quality-of-life panel that specifically investigated the rising concerns in the military community. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explains that the most basic human needs must be met before individuals can advance through other areas of need to reach their full potential. With an alarming percentage of military families preoccupied with basic needs like safe and affordable housing or adequate food, that leaves limited mental capacity to seek an understanding of the mission they are supporting.

# Current Successes

## *What's Going Well*

In 2023, AFA launched a new grant program under **United Forces & Families (F2)** to invest in family readiness and quality of life opportunities for Airmen, Guardians, and their Families. In February 2024, AFA partnered with Air Combat Command's Sword Athena and military families by underwriting the costs to bring the Joint Base Langley-Eustis Family Readiness Summit to life. Sword Athena is a working group of volunteer Airmen that come together to propose solutions to female and family-centric barriers to readiness.

Lt. Col. Sharon (Spider) Arana, the Sword Athena team lead, stated that “families are an integral part of the mission,” and that the Readiness Summit focused specifically on “readiness, not support.” In 2023, Sword Athena pushed 10 separate initiatives to the appropriate places for policy changes, four of which came from that year's Family Readiness Summit. The hope is that through policy changes, the Sword Athena team can help lead the way for culture changes to create equitable conditions for the mission and the families.

In response to working with the AFA F2 program, Arana shared, “The grant process was great. We had so much support the entire time. Such a fulfilling experience.” Collaboration is part of the culture of the Sword Athena team from the beginning of any proposed changes. They recruit members from across career fields and push ideas to existing advocacy groups when needed. Arana said the collaboration between Sword Athena, Air Combat Command, and AFA's F2 grant process, helped the team, “Knowing that together, there's so many of us out here, that we don't have to do [this] by ourselves.” She continued, “My biggest pleasant surprise with the grant process was that we get so used to figuring it out ourselves, [but] with AFA and their team, we felt the grant process was super helpful and so supportive.”

F2 is currently providing field grants to AFA Chapters supporting Department of the Air Force families in initiatives for food insecurity, morale improvement, and professional development. For more information on F2 Field Grants and how to apply, visit [afa.org/f2](https://afa.org/f2).



*“... We get so used to figuring it out ourselves, [but] with AFA and their team, we felt the grant process was super helpful and so supportive.”*

-Lt. Col. Arana



# *Sword Athena*



**138,000+**

families have been supported through F2 Grants



# Making a Difference



One of the superpowers of the educated and driven population of military spouses is their ability to use their time and talents on behalf of their community to solve complex problems that are sometimes overlooked when prioritizing the overall mission. Leslie Janaros demonstrated her problem-solving superpower as the co-founder of Five and Thrive with fellow spouse Marion Wilcox, alongside their initiative champion, Mrs. Sharene Brown, the spouse of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During the pandemic, while the Janaros family was at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base where her Active-duty husband was stationed, Leslie was working to address education challenges that military families face in Texas. Leslie's experience as a veteran, military spouse, involved parent, and professional volunteer led her to work on behalf of the military community that her family has come to love. While planning an education-focused summit for military families, Janaros met with other leaders and realized the shared challenges encompassed more than just education.

Janaros and her colleagues narrowed their focus to five quality-of-life issues that military families experience:

Childcare, Education, Housing, Healthcare, and Spouse Employment.

Janaros said the goal was simple, "Identify the challenges, advocate for changes, empower spouses to be their own advocates, then put the resources all in one place."

For Janaros and her team gathering information on the problems was important, but the work was just beginning. *"We want to highlight these challenges, but not stay there. A big part of Five and Thrive for us was to highlight the resources that already exist and to really focus on community partnership and addressing these challenges at the local level."*



Five & Thrive's Military Community Quality of Life Experience Graphic

Janaros explained that another focus of the solutions-oriented Five and Thrive approach is gathering and applying relevant data. "If you can show with data that this [is] actually happening, then you can get to solutions. [Working]



without solutions, without data can have you spinning your wheels and not addressing the real concerns.”

The five quality-of-life focus areas are accompanied by five lines of effort: advocate for quality-of-life improvements, foster community partnerships, consolidate quality-of-life resources in one convenient location, educate families, leaders, and community partners on existing efforts and best practices, and promote the exceptional value of the military-connected spouse, according to the website [www.fiveandthrive.org](http://www.fiveandthrive.org).

Including community partners, existing efforts, and consolidating resources has been the focus from the beginning. If military families are experiencing common concerns then “we’ve got to be able to work with our local communities to share best practices,” Janaros said. The goal is always to find solutions and then share that information. “It’s not just one solution, it’s going to take lots of new solutions to create change.”

*Janaros shared that one of the keys to the success of Five and Thrive has been the inclusion of “leaders at the table who can impact [the] quality of life, as well as spouses sharing their concerns.”* Five and Thrive started within the DAF and is now spreading to other branches of the military thanks to the championing efforts of Mrs. Sharene Brown, spouse of Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Five and Thrive offers a Thrive Guide to find resources and information for creating change in your local community, as well as monthly Sitreps to highlight the work of local and national individuals or organizations contributing to solutions in the five key areas of concern. Five and Thrive also has an ambassador program for individuals looking to help create change. With the recent partnership of Five and Thrive and the National Defense University Foundation, this initiative and the Thrive Guide are expanding to all sister services. To learn more, visit [fiveandthrive.org/about](http://fiveandthrive.org/about).



*“...the goal was simple, ‘Identify the challenges, advocate for changes, empower spouses to be their own advocates, then put the resources all in one place.’”*



## CURRENT CHALLENGES

# What We're Working On

In recent decades, the experience of military families has become an important part of the conversation for **recruitment, retention, readiness, and resilience.**

As more is learned about the complex overlap in quality of life concerns and how they impact these “4 Rs,” it is essential to engage in the ongoing work for solutions.

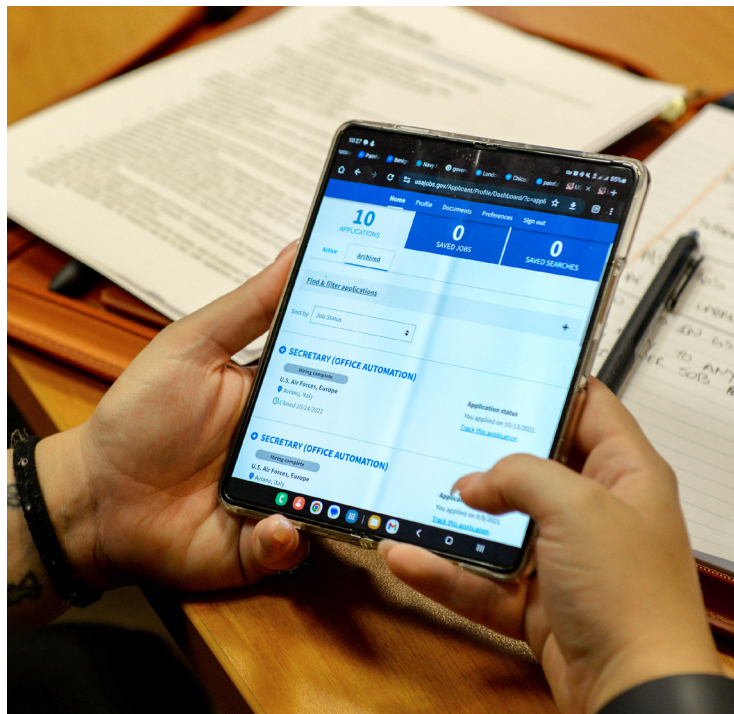
In the last few years, the experience of the modern military family juggling childcare shortages, inadequate housing, limited healthcare, lack of quality education options for dependents, and the financial strain from spousal unemployment or the growing gap between compensation and the cost of living, has caught the attention of both the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the House Armed Services Committee's military quality of life panel.

*Of particular interest is the correlation between these quality-of-life concerns and the mental health of military families as well as the impact on mission readiness for our military members.*

In September 2022, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin released a “Taking Care of our Service Members and Families” memo that focused on the most urgent concerns including housing, commissaries, moving, childcare, and spousal employment. This helped set the tone for the Department of Defense. Not only are families mission critical, but their success at home is directly correlated with the success of our national security.

All of the attention on the urgent needs of military families prompted the House Armed Services Committee





to assemble a Military Quality of Life panel that spent a year researching and reviewing many areas of military life for service members and their families. Their report provided recommendations for housing, pay, childcare, spousal employment, community connection, and healthcare that were ultimately included in initial drafts of the National Defense Authorization Act.

In the summer of 2023, The White House issued an Executive Order for advancing the economic security of military family members focusing on hiring military spouses, caregivers, and survivors.

The correlation between quality of life and mission readiness is well established, and support is growing from various organizations tied to the military mission. Ultimately, with consistent goals and overlapping programming to prevent gaps, quality of life holds promise for military service members and families in the future. When the people supporting the mission are well cared for, Airmen and Guardians can focus on the task at hand, innovate, and win.

*“...not only are families mission critical, but their success at home is directly correlated with the success of our national security.”*

-Summary from Secretary of Defense Austin's September 2022 Memo

**HIRING OUR  
HEROES**

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
FOUNDATION



## EXPERT INSIGHTS

# Carrying the Modern Military Family Confidently into the Future

In our rapidly evolving military culture, connecting with colleagues and teammates is essential to learning their perspectives and insights on our shared mission for national defense.

Across the DAF we have leaders impacting our culture and carrying our Airmen, Guardians, and the modern military family confidently into the future with the balance of quality of life and family readiness at the forefront of their conversations.

Here's what they shared with the ENGAGE team:

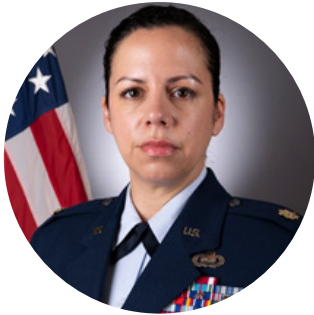


Col. Charlie Norsky  
Commander of Delta 1

As a new military service, the USSF is uniquely positioned to create a cohesive culture of mission readiness that includes families at the most basic levels of involvement. As Col. Charlie Norsky, Commander of Delta 1, shared with our ENGAGE team, "The USSF has the opportunity to take in feedback from all echelons, especially from our newest Space Force spouses in the discussion of how to best serve our Space Force families." By leveraging existing initiatives like the Commander's Key Support Liaison Program, the leaner USSF, "can take inputs from the unit level and report up the chain and provide game-changing feedback to improve the quality of life for our families." Norsky continues on the essential role families have in building mission readiness.

"We cannot overemphasize the importance of making that initial connection with our families. Through efforts like the USSF Family Pinning ceremony at Basic Military Training Graduation, *we are able to message to our families that from day one, they are part of this team!*"





**Lt. Col. Sharon Arana**  
Sword Athena Lead at Air  
Combat Command

"Families are an integral part of the mission," said Lt. Col. Sharon Arana, the Sword Athena Lead at Air Combat Command. To best support family readiness for the mission, Arana believes that *we must prioritize "creating equitable conditions for our mission and our families."*

One of the key components to finding solutions that all stakeholders support is to continuously ask, "What are we doing to hold our communities accountable?"



**K.C. Erredge**  
Air Force Reserve Spouse

K.C. Erredge has spent nearly 30 years in the Air Force community as a spouse on both the Active-duty and Reserve sides of service and currently is the Lead Key Spouse for the Air Reserve Personnel Center. As a Reserve family, she's seen the difference in the military experience for Reserve spouses and children.

"A lot of them in traditional Reserve status might not consider themselves 'military families' because they don't see it and they don't really talk about it. They might not even have ID cards, they don't know how to access the base, they don't know that they can access any military installation for services if they needed." She further explained that sometimes a Reserve spouse might not even know who to officially contact within the unit if there was an emergency with their service member.

This disconnect is especially concerning when we consider the role of family readiness for the great power competition. According to Erredge, *military families should always be ready for crisis and know how to engage officially should an emergency arise.*

She shared a few practical steps that all families, regardless of service status, can take to prepare for everyday crises as well as threats from adversaries:

1. Have up-to-date DEERS enrollment and ID card.
2. Know the official points of contact within their unit.
3. Contact installation legal services to prepare important documents that might be needed, like a power of attorney or wills.
4. Have important documents gathered and accessible (birth certificates, shot records, marriage certificates, divorce decrees, custody papers, school records, etc.)
5. Plan for anything important that goes with you for an evacuation or natural disaster.



**Gina Allvin**

Spouse of Chief of Staff  
of the Air Force, General  
David W. Allvin.

Mrs. Gina Allvin, spouse of CSAF Gen. David W. Allvin, knows firsthand the importance of family readiness because she has seen how quickly a crisis can change the mission.

General and Mrs. Allvin were serving in squadron command on 9/11 and they remember the shock and fear felt around the country and how it was experienced differently within their unit based on the family readiness of each household. It's shaped how she views family readiness ever since.

***“While everyone, both military and civilian, understands that it’s important to be prepared for unexpected contingencies, the need for military families to be ready to respond to unexpected events at any moment is heightened because of the unique requirements that come with military life,” Allvin said.***

She added, “While our off-base community partners are undoubtedly affected by many of the events that sometimes impact our bases, military families often shoulder an increased burden in moments of crisis, emergency, or conflict. It is vital that military families understand their service member’s mission so that they can adequately plan for contingencies that might affect their family with minimal notice.”

She continues that, “due to the inherent unpredictability of military life, where an event that happens across the world could trigger a no-notice tasking, military families are often impacted by these types of events on a more frequent basis. Additionally, while civilians may be able to have the same emergency contacts for years and years, military communities are generally more transient, with neighbors and coworkers moving regularly, which requires military families to constantly update their plans. These factors, combined with the fact that military families are often stationed away from locations where they can rely on family support, make it all the more important that the modern military family is well-prepared and practices good family readiness.”



**Heba Abdelaal**

Active Duty Spouse and  
Military Family Readiness  
Subject Matter Expert

One of the leading experts in the intricacies of military quality of life and mission success is Heba Abdelaal, former Congressional staffer and currently OCONUS Active-duty spouse.

For over a decade she has advocated for the stability of service members and their families to ensure mission readiness in all circumstances. According to Abdelaal, ***“Military families are the backbone of our all-volunteer force. Supporting the success of military families is not just a moral imperative; it’s a strategic necessity for the defense and security of our country.”***









## OPINION

# Our Shared Mission: Elevating Family Readiness for a Stronger Force

**A**s a former military kid turned military spouse, I often joke that I'm a lifelong groupie who now leads a band of groupies. While I love many of the unique aspects of military life, like the close community, income stability and benefits, and the adventure our family experiences together, I was shocked at how quickly our quality of life could change.

## UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES

In our first three years of marriage, we experienced moving to a small overseas base, the loss of my income, the death of a parent, the birth of two babies, and our first deployment. Suddenly, in our new location, I couldn't find work in my area of expertise that would cover the cost of childcare for two babies and we didn't have family nearby to be a backup babysitter.

We missed the eligibility for nutrition assistance by less than \$100/month, despite living way below that eligibility line once student debt payments were made.

We struggled with food insecurity (defined by the USDA as a lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle), even though we were outliers from the data compared with the 1 in 4 Active-duty families also struggling, according to the DoD. For us, the



burden was more than simply the struggle to make ends meet. The overlap of spouse unemployment, lack of childcare, lack of adequate healthcare, the growth of our family, remote location, austere environment, and the cost of our overseas relocation took a toll on our marriage, our family, and my mental health in a place that is at the top of the list for mental health and suicide concerns. While we couldn't believe how quickly life changed for us, as we found resources, support, and stability our concern grew on behalf of our peers.

*“Why did this happen to us?”*

*Why weren't we prepared for this issue?*

*Where are the mentors and leaders to help equip the next generation of servicemen and women?*

*What did we do wrong?*

*How are other families surviving?*

*What other issues are causing similar domino effects for military and veteran families?”*

## COMPOUNDING CONCERNS

Between 2019 and 2023, inflation, housing, healthcare, cost of food, parental leave, mental health, childcare, and our education system have all reached a breaking point nationwide, causing even our civilian neighbors to engage in conversations for reform and solutions.

What many people may not realize is these concerns were already ongoing in the military community as far back as the early 1980s, and often at much higher incidence rates: inadequate childcare, health care deserts, lack of access to mental health support, long wait times for specialty care, limited support for special needs families, military spouse unemployment, food insecurity, unsafe or unaffordable housing, limited communication while apart for missions, and repeatedly severed support networks.

While these issues have escalated, military pay and benefits have struggled to keep up with inflation and the needs of the Total Force, training tempos have not decreased with our removal of troops from Afghanistan, and mental health access is more limited than ever.

*With all of these compounding issues at home, we are living in a chronic state of stress, which then limits our ability to remain resilient when acute stressors arise.* This trend impacts our mental well-being, relationships, and financial stability, therefore creating a trickle-down effect on our service members' ability to prepare for their daily mission.

But there is hope.



## STATISTICS AND FACTS

9

The average times a military child changes schools between grades K-12.<sup>1</sup>

79.8

The average number of days a family waits for a response after seeking childcare fee assistance.<sup>2</sup>

80%

Percentage of families surveyed that are paying more for housing than they can comfortably afford.<sup>3</sup>

50%

Number of U.S. military bases stateside that are located in a healthcare desert.<sup>4</sup>

32%

Percentage of military spouses that are unemployed, though 76% hold at least a bachelor's degree and some even higher degrees.<sup>5</sup>

25%

Percentage of service members having difficulty getting adequate food for their families compared, with 10% of demographically equivalent civilians nationwide.<sup>6</sup>

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> NMFA Report

<sup>2</sup> OCC Project

<sup>3</sup> Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) 2023 Survey

<sup>4</sup> NPR Report

<sup>5</sup> Hiring Our Heroes

<sup>6</sup> USDA data



*It's not all doom and gloom or problems, because the military community has an often overlooked superpower: our military families. We are the most educated demographic in the modern workforce, while also being chronically unemployed and underemployed.*

We are experts at market research, acquisitions, logistics, budgets, problem-solving, community building, and crisis response. So, where do we go from here? How do we, in the military community, tackle multiple areas of concern to improve military quality of life so our Airmen and Guardians can focus on mission readiness for their work and their families? How do we move forward together to help create stability for military members and their families so they can focus on strengthening our national security?

That's the answer: We Go Together.

## GOING TOGETHER

The first step is to engage by learning about the local installation mission and the needs of the families who serve there. To find this information, what better way to learn than to go to the families themselves?

Often, when community members want to learn how to help military families, they ask commanders or official representatives of an installation. However, the best way to discover what problems the families need support with is to ask the families directly.

We must have all stakeholders, including military families, present in these conversations to find sustainable solutions that create impact. Any person, organization, or entity claiming to serve, support, or show gratitude for the military in their community should have military family members as stakeholders and official members of their decision-making process.

Truthfully, the gold standard of inclusion and support would be to stop asking military family members, primarily military spouses, to act as the free problem-solving labor force of the military community. Instead, hiring military family members- not just veterans- in paid roles to advise in this capacity would not only help create financial stability and community inclusion for military families, but it would also give community



*When we work together across the total force, we can ensure that every service member and family knows they are valued and supported as essential players in the shared interest of national security.*

partners access to the wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise that is shared among the military spouse community.

Next, to continue finding solutions together, we must encourage collaboration. On both the local and national scale, we can find organizations engaged in problem-solving many of these concerns using thorough research and intentional collaboration instead of competition. Organizations like F2 and key resource partners truly value the input of military families and spouses and use that input to create impact, spur connection, and help initiate change with our community partners.

Finally, we must take action. Whether we decide to give our time, our talents, or our network, the military community must become active members of the solutions we need, willing to roll up our sleeves and do some of the hard work that leads to reward, instead of just waiting for rewards to come to us. See “How Do I Engage?” to take action today.

When we work together across the Total Force, we can ensure that every service member and family knows they are valued and supported as essential players in the shared interest of national security.



# How Can I ENGAGE?



After learning of the complexity of the military family experience and how it ties to the mission through family readiness, it can be overwhelming to know how to help or where to start.

**Let the steps listed here be a starting point for the journey:**



**UNITED FORCES  
& FAMILIES**

Join United  
Forces & Families



## LISTEN

An essential first step in any attempt to help with a complex problem is to understand that everyone's lived experiences are different. To best engage in finding solutions, take a posture of empathy and humility to understand the root cause of the problem.

Sometimes, factors outside the control of military members or their families might be the root cause of the problem. For example, financial strain on a military family is not solely due to "irresponsible spending practices," but may be caused by unexpected spousal unemployment. Even the most educated, prepared military spouses face barriers to employment outside their control like lack of childcare, employer bias, or relocation.

Because every individual's experience is highly personal and ever-changing, we must understand the varied causes that can lead to the same problem, and then create support systems to absorb these varied needs instead of rigid, complicated support systems that remain inaccessible.



## CHOOSE

While many issues impacting family readiness occur at the national scale, the level of impact may vary by location. After understanding some of the root causes of these quality-of-life concerns hindering family readiness, it's important to choose what level of support to become involved in.

To explore avenues for involvement in existing support and initiatives, look to [Military One Source](#), [Five and Thrive](#), [Candid Conversations](#), or [AFA's United Forces & Families](#). These great sources of information can point new supporters to local and national avenues of involvement in their area of interest. Options range from local community efforts to national advocacy campaigns and everything in between.

The truth is that while many of these quality-of-life concerns will require large changes to complex programs or systems, it is possible to make a lasting impact now by choosing to help alleviate the burden experienced by currently serving Airmen, Guardians, and their Families in the local community.



## ACT

Teddy Roosevelt is quoted as saying, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

Whether it's on a local or national scale, individuals and organizations choosing to support military families have opportunities to lend their voices, time, talents, and resources to create a lasting impact for the less than 1% of Americans who have set themselves apart in service to our nation's military.

Start by joining your local [AFA chapter](#) to stay connected to the mission and the needs of the military and veteran community and receive information on how to engage with our trusted community partners.

Ideas for next steps after joining AFA include connecting with your state and federal legislators, evaluating your organization's hiring and retention processes for military family members and veterans, joining like-minded advocates already working to create change in your area of interest, or considering how you can better welcome new families into your community.

*To create change we must act.*



UNITED FORCES & FAMILIES

# 2 Year Complimentary Membership

We're excited for you to join our AFA family!

Supporting our Air Force family has been an important piece of AFA's mission since our inception in 1946. More than 75 years later, we remain committed to supporting all DAF families. We believe that improving the quality of life for Airmen, Guardians, and their Families is directly linked to stronger Families, united Forces, and the mission effectiveness of our Air and Space Forces.



Photo from af.mil. Taken by Airman  
1st Class Jade Caldwell

Scan to Join

*By joining AFA, you are strengthening our united voice advocating for our DAF families. Here are a few ways your AFA membership will strengthen your leadership:*

1

Opportunities to apply for F2 Grant funding to improve the quality of life for Airmen, Guardians and families in your community

2

Constant updates and education on the issues facing our Air and Space Forces including a subscription to Air & Space Forces Magazine and the Daily Report

3

Invitations to special events including our 20k+ national conferences and special F2 celebrations

4

Opportunities to connect with local AFA leaders and chapters who are ready to support you!

Photo from af.mil. Taken by Senior Airman Anna Smith



# Engage Online

*Read the first three issues digitally*



## *Empowering* Guardians and Their Families

Read Now



## Childcare *Matters*

Read Now



## *Elevating* Family Readiness

Read Now



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BlueShield.

FEP Dental<sup>®</sup>

FEP Vision<sup>®</sup>





UNITED FORCES  
& FAMILIES

*Excited to get started? United Forces  
& Families is ready to help.*



### Get Funding

Grants are available to support family readiness initiatives in your community. Bring your ideas to your local AFA chapter who can apply for a Field grant. Additionally, several focus grants are executed each year as pilot programs for future programming. Contact [F2@AFA.org](mailto:F2@AFA.org) for more information.



### Keep Going

Have other suggestions? Contact [F2@AFA.org](mailto:F2@AFA.org) to share your ideas.

Did You Know? Airmen, Guardians, and military spouses can receive a free AFA membership to join the F2 community. [Join today.](#)



### Help Us Amplify Impact

Your [donation](#) can help grow our initiatives promoting the quality of life for our Airmen, Guardians, and their Families.

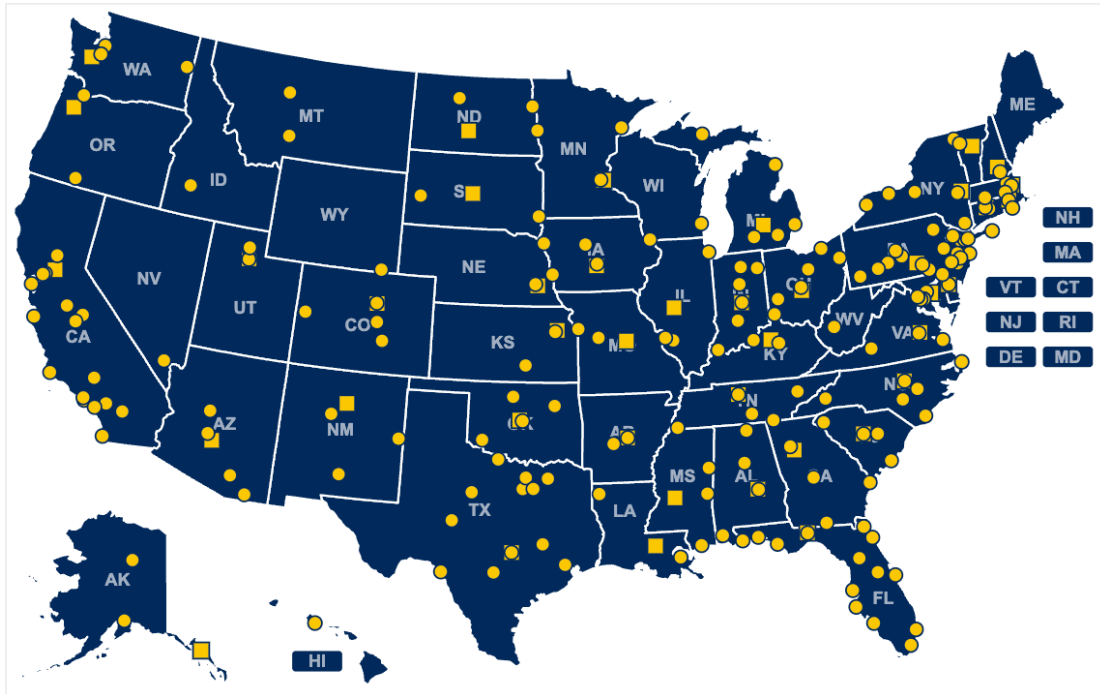






# Connect & Support

JOIN THE F2 COMMUNITY - FIND YOUR CHAPTER

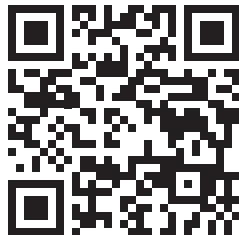


We have locations around the world, including three in the Pacific region, and five in the European region. To find your chapter on our interactive map, click the image to the left, or visit [afa.org/field!](http://afa.org/field!)



## Upcoming Events

We hope you will join fellow AFA members, Airmen, Guardians, senior DAF leaders, and industry experts at some of AFA's professional development opportunities. At events like our Air, Space & Cyber Conference and AFA Warfare Symposium, you will engage in rich discussion and gain unique insights into aerospace power, opportunities, and challenges for our Air Force, Space Force, Airmen, and Guardians.







## Connect With Us

 @airandspaceforcesassociation

 @afa\_air\_space

 @air-space-forces-association

 @afa\_air\_space

[www.AFA.org/F2](http://www.AFA.org/F2)  
[F2@AFA.org](mailto:F2@AFA.org)



# Meet the ENGAGE Team



## Kari Voliva

### VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER & FIELD RELATIONS

Kari Voliva has served in a variety of roles at AFA over the last two decades supporting her chosen Air Force and Space Force family. Her current role as Vice President of Member & Field Relations oversees all of AFA's family readiness and quality of life initiatives, membership operations, volunteer components, governance support, scholarships, and wounded warrior support programs. Kari likes to roll all that up as Chief Kindness Officer because her job is all about helping others and putting more kindness into the world.

Kari holds a Master's of Public Policy with a concentration in Non-Profit Management and a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and International Politics. Both degrees are from George Mason University.

Kari is laughing her way through life with her husband Mike and their sweet family in Virginia. Her most cherished title is Mama to Rosie and Maddie Grace who inspire her to experience wonder every day and spread even more kindness into the world around us.



#### Find Kari Online

✉ [kari@AFA.org](mailto:kari@AFA.org)  
🌐 [AFA.org/F2](https://AFA.org/F2)  
in [linkedin.com/in/karivoliva](https://linkedin.com/in/karivoliva)



## Kristin M. Walker

### AFA ENGAGE CREATIVE DIRECTOR FOUNDER, WALKER BRAND STRATEGY

Kristin is a seasoned Marketing Communications Executive with over 20 years of experience leading communications and branding campaigns. She has extensive expertise in creative and project strategy, working with national and international clients and is passionate about partnering with organizations that support our service members and their families.

Kristin is also a full-time faculty member at the University of South Carolina's School of Journalism and Mass Communications, where she teaches Advertising Strategy and Integrated Campaigns. She holds a B.A. in Communications from the University of Alabama, an MBA from Northeastern University, and certifications in National Security Studies, Marketing Artificial Intelligence, and Teaching with Artificial Intelligence.

As an active-duty Air Force spouse for over 20 years, Kristin has served as a Key Spouse Liaison in various roles, including as the Director of Operations Spouse and Command Spouse for the 16 WPS at Nellis AFB. She currently serves as the Deputy Command Spouse for the 20 FW at Shaw AFB.



#### Find Kristin Online

in <https://bit.ly/4fZVA7J>





# Jenn Montgomery

**AFA ENGAGE CONTRACT GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
OWNER, JEMOY CREATIVE**

Jenn founded Jemoy Creative in 2022 while working remotely from Europe for a full-service marketing agency - she got up every day at the crack of dawn to squeeze in a few hours of 'her own thing'. She's spent her entire 15+ year career working at print shops and marketing agencies, and has had her hands in practically every role - receptionist, account and project manager, creative director, operations director, and graphic designer.

Jenn is a difference maker for solopreneurs and small business owners who are putting everything they've got into just making it. The difference is that she knows how to level up the marketing and design assets they're using so they're way beyond "good enough."

She is a proud Army veteran, Army wife, and Navy brat - the military runs in her blood, and she fiercely supports the heroes of our country.

Away from work, Jenn is keeping busy! She can be found selling hand-sewn wares at craft shows, experimenting in the kitchen with scratch-made goodies, gardening, and reading. Whenever she can, she loves exploring and experiencing new places and cultures, and considers herself a language junkie, proudly able to get around and feed herself in 5 languages!



## Find Jenn Online

 [JemoyCreative.com](https://JemoyCreative.com)  
 [@jemoycreative](https://@jemoycreative)



# Heather Campbell

**AUTHOR, MILITARY FAMILY ADVOCATE &  
MILITARY FOOD INSECURITY SME**

Heather Campbell is a nationally recognized subject matter expert in food insecurity and quality of life within the military community. As a Registered Dietitian her expertise in nutrition for at-risk families was met with lived experience in food insecurity as a young Active-duty Air Force family. Her dedication to research, community connection, and solution-focused conversations have led to impact with the highest levels of decision-makers. Her professional portfolio includes briefing at 2022 CORONA Spouse Conference, contributing to a brief for the White House Hunger Conference, influencing legislation, supporting the House Armed Service Committee's Quality of Life panel, serving on multiple coalitions and advisory boards, and numerous media features.

## Find Heather Online

 <https://bit.ly/4cDwRDa>



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