

Military Family Advisory Network

Annual Report

2016



Military Family
Advisory Network

militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org

Letter from the MFAN Board of Directors

The Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) board of directors is pleased to present MFAN's 2016 Annual Report. MFAN had a busy year convening military family community influencers, strengthening our programs, developing new innovative programs and resources, and growing as an organization.

In 2016, the MFAN advisory board — consisting of 14 thought leaders in the military and veteran family community — met four times in Washington, D.C., to talk about the issues facing military and veteran families. Meeting in person gave the advisory board an opportunity to discuss the problems they're seeing and think through solutions to take back to their communities. The meetings included roundtable discussions with the USO, the National Council for Behavioral Health, and other organizations seeking insights from a diverse group of military family members. Each meeting helped inform existing and new programs and reminded us of the importance of what we do as an organization to support military families.

It's been more than a year since the launch of MilCents, MFAN's free, online financial literacy program designed specifically for military families, and we are very happy with the impact the program has made. More than 9,000 users have started MilCents — taking the first step to gaining control of their finances! Last summer, we collected feedback from MilCents users about what they liked, didn't like, and wanted more of in the program. Their comments helped guide our updates to MilCents, including the development of track-specific programs for each phase of military life: service academies/ROTC, actively serving, transitioning military, retirees, and veterans. We are thankful for the continued support of Promontory Financial Group, which allows us to get MilCents into the hands of military and veteran families looking to get their financial management in gear.

MFAN continues to partner with The Congressional Award. Organized by Congress, this program offers opportunities for military youths to volunteer and to gain the support of a mentor who can provide additional stability in their lives. We increased promotion of The Congressional Award in 2016 through both the Military Youth Toolkit and regular posts on MFAN's social media properties. We are inspired by the number of military youths working toward earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal every day.

In 2016 MFAN also began working on exciting new programs and resources. With the help of the advisory board and several other organizations, we started developing a free, online health and wellness program for military families that is slated to launch in late 2017. Work is also underway for an online resource aggregator for use by military families across the globe, as well as another iteration of the Military Family Support Programming Survey.

We are excited to get existing programs to those who need them, to complete and launch new programs, and to welcome a new advisory board this summer. We consider ourselves lucky to be working to support military families with such amazing individuals, organizations, and leaders in the military and veteran community, and we look forward to another year of providing unique insights into military life for those who want to learn more.

Sincerely,

Brenda Linnington

Chair, MFAN Board of Directors

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Meet MFAN

The Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) was created to connect military families with the resources they need to thrive. We are military spouses, reservists, and veterans dedicated to improving the lives of military families. MFAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to building a community of military and veteran families, at home and abroad, who are well informed about resources designed to serve them, equipped with tools for success, connected to leaders who serve the military family community, and embraced by the general public.

Our mission:

MFAN translates the needs of military families in a way that service providers can understand, and translates services in a way that speaks to our families. We convene leaders of the military family community who, through collaboration with outside organizations and effective communications, elevate and amplify the voice of military families everywhere.

Our goals:

1.

Research, understand, and make sure families know about and can use programs and resources that are available to military families.

2.

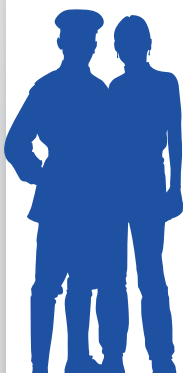
Promote opportunities to enhance wellness, education, and employment among military families.

3.

Build community among — and bridge the gaps between — organizations serving military and veteran families.

4.

Redefine “military family” in a way that promotes the strengths — rather than merely the sacrifices — of military families.



MFAN Board of Directors and Executive Director

The board of directors is made up of a diverse group of military spouses, former advisors, and civilian supporters who assume all official responsibilities and manage MFAN's expenses.

Shannon Razsadin, Executive Director

Shannon oversaw the founding and launch of MFAN and continues to manage the group's advisory board, which bridges the military-civilian divide and empowers military and veteran families. Through her years of distinguished work in partnership development and event management, Shannon has built relationships with community and federal leaders, national nonprofit organizations, vendors, and community agencies. She and her husband, CDR Aleksei Razsadin, USN, and daughter, Sophia, live in Washington, D.C.

Jack Benson

Jack is one of MFAN's co-founders as well as a partner at Reingold — a communications and marketing firm dedicated to important causes and campaigns that promote positive social change. Reingold is committed to supporting the military and veteran community, and its partners saw an opportunity to help raise awareness about programs and services that serve military families. Through Reingold's support, MFAN is able to employ cutting-edge strategies to effectively communicate with military families. Reingold also trains MFAN advisors to use these techniques and best practices in their personal efforts on behalf of military families.

Jack directs several of Reingold's campaigns on behalf of service members and veterans, with a special focus on encouraging help-seeking for mental health issues. He is an Executive Committee member and co-lead of the Public Education and Awareness Task Force for the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, and he is a trustee of the Washington Waldorf School.

Shelley Kimball

Shelley comes to MFAN's board of directors after serving a two-year term on the advisory board. She holds a doctorate in mass communication with a specialization in media law, which she teaches at The George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs. A Coast Guard spouse, Shelley was selected as the 2013 AFI Coast Guard Spouse of the Year. She writes a twice-monthly column about military family issues, called "From the Homefront."

Brenda Linnington, Chair of the MFAN Board of Directors

Brenda, a West Point graduate, Army veteran, spouse of a 35-year Army retiree, and mother of a soldier, is an advisor on military and veteran financial education. She most recently served as the director of the Military and Veterans Initiative for the Council of Better Business Bureaus, which included BBB Military Line — a national program providing consumer education and advocacy for the military community. Brenda has worked on numerous Department of Defense military family programs, including the U.S. Army's Respite Child Care expansion project and Sexual Assault Prevention and Responses Program. She is a recipient of the Department of the Army Exceptional Public Service Award Medal.

Kevin Miller

Kevin is an MFAN co-founder and partner at Reingold who directs national outreach and education campaigns focused on service members, veterans, and their families. Kevin previously led Operation Smile's multimillion-dollar promotions, cause-marketing campaigns, and co-marketing efforts with a variety of Fortune 500 companies — producing a 300 percent increase in corporate and foundation support and adding tens of thousands of new donors. Kevin is chairman of the Operation Smile Board of Directors and serves on the boards of the Center for Public Safety Excellence and End Slavery Now.

*Tammy Moore,
Vice Chair of the
MFAN Board
of Directors*

Tammy joins the board of directors after two years as an advisory board member. She is the advisor to the American Red Cross president and CEO on policy, strategy, and operational matters related to serving the armed forces. An Army spouse, Tammy is a two-time recipient of the Commander's Award for Public Service, and her work with the American Red Cross has been featured in several publications and news media outlets.

Joseph Ney

Joseph is an MFAN co-founder and a partner and creative director at Reingold. He provides strategic and creative oversight for numerous outreach campaigns to support members of the military and veteran communities. Joseph is a member of The One Club, the world's foremost nonprofit dedicated to promoting excellence in advertising and design in all its forms. He is also a member of the Art Directors Club of Metropolitan Washington and AIGA, the professional association for design.

Erin Ward

Erin joins MFAN's board after serving on the advisory board for the past two years. She is the executive director of the Military Spouse Corporate Career Network and operations manager for Corporate America Supports You. Her experience in broadcasting, administration, and marketing has helped make her a successful advocate for military families as a part of MFAN and in her full-time work.



Key MFAN Initiatives

MilCents

In the fall of 2015, MFAN launched MilCents, a free, online financial literacy program designed specifically for military families. To develop the program, MFAN recruited the financial expertise of subject matter experts from the Better Business Bureau Military and Veterans Initiative, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority Foundation, and the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. The program covers a variety of important topics related to financial education, including budgeting, credit, debt, savings, planning for retirement, and identity protection.



The first iteration of MilCents launched in October 2015, followed by a second in February 2016. Both versions saw a large amount of participation:

- ★ There were 2,779 users of the October 2015 version and 6,517 of the February 2016 version.
- ★ MilCents Facebook ads generated 8,128 sessions and attracted 5,051 new users.
- ★ In October 2015, traffic from organic Facebook posts generated 1,278 sessions and 851 new users.

During the summer of 2016, MFAN collected feedback from MilCents users about what they liked, didn't like, and wanted more of in the program. Their feedback was used to develop updates to MilCents, outlined in the Looking Ahead section of this report. MFAN was fortunate to receive funding from Promontory Financial Group to support MilCents outreach efforts.

Advisory Board

The 2015–2017 advisory board tackled many hot-button issues facing military families in 2016, such as cyberbullying, financial education, and overall health and well-being. The advisory board was critical in sharing information about MilCents, The Congressional Award, and other resources with military families in their communities.

Quarterly advisory board meetings gave advisors an opportunity to meet, talk about what they're hearing in their communities, and come up with solutions to challenges affecting military families. Meetings in 2016 also included discussions with the USO, the National Council for Behavioral Health, and other organizations looking to gain insights from a diverse group of military family members. In addition, advisors completed the National Council for Behavior Health's Mental Health First Aid training.

In 2016, the 2015–2017 advisory board met on the following dates:

In-person meetings:

- ★ January 11
- ★ April 23
- ★ July 9
- ★ October 1

Virtual meetings:

- ★ February 16
- ★ March 8
- ★ June 14
- ★ August 9
- ★ September 13
- ★ November 8
- ★ December 13



The Congressional Award

In 2016, MFAN continued to share information about The Congressional Award. Organized by Congress, the program offers opportunities for military youths to volunteer and to gain the support of a mentor who can provide additional stability in their lives. Congressional Award participants set and accomplish goals in four program areas: public service, physical fitness, personal development, and expedition/exploration. They receive a Congressional Award Gold Medal after completing all required activities.

MFAN established a partnership with The Congressional Award in 2015 after learning about the program and realizing how much it could positively benefit military youths who often have a transient lifestyle. The program can be completed anywhere in the world! MFAN's support for the program continued in 2016 with promotion of both the Military Youth Toolkit and regular posts on MFAN's social media properties.



Looking Ahead

Meeting With the Spouse of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

During the MFAN advisory board meeting on Jan. 28, 2017, the advisors met with the spouse of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mrs. Ellyn Dunford, and gave presentations on challenges that military families are facing. Presentation topics included domestic violence, food insecurity, military family finance, and EFMP/ECHO. The presentations led to a broader discussion about the needs of the military community and how MFAN can help bridge gaps in support to meet them.

MilCents

Following the success of MilCents in 2015 and 2016, MFAN decided to transform the 10-week program into a self-guided course that military families could complete at their own pace. Using feedback from past MilCents participants, MFAN updated MilCents with changes that included:

- ★ Creating five distinct audience tracks for participants to choose from, one for each phase of the military lifecycle: Service Academies/ROTC, Actively Serving, Transitioning Military, Retiree, and Veteran
- ★ Including information about the new blended retirement system
- ★ Adding badges for completing certain activities — as well as a prize for the first 150 participants to collect the seven available badges

MFAN launched the revised MilCents program in March 2017.

MilYou

An important part of life that many military and non-military families sometimes overlook is their health: physical, mental, and relationship well-being. That is why MFAN created MilYou, a free, online wellness program that will empower participants to live their best lives by focusing on three topics: physical health, emotional and mental well-being, and relationships. During the program, MFAN will host events, share critical physical and mental health resources designed for military families, and take what participants do online and bring it into their communities.

MilYou will launch in the fall of 2017.

The Congressional Award Reception

In 2017, MFAN is continuing to raise awareness of The Congressional Award program. This included hosting a reception in Washington, D.C., for Congressional Award Gold Medal recipients affiliated with the military. At the reception in June 2017, MFAN put a spotlight on the Gold Medal recipients and their inspiring accomplishment.



Survey

MFAN released the Military Family Support Programming Survey in 2014, along with a set of recommendations for policymakers. In the summer of 2017 — three years after the inaugural survey — MFAN is conducting the second iteration of the Military Family Support Programming Survey. The survey includes questions from the 2014 survey as well as new questions that reflect current challenges facing today's military families. Results of the Military Family Support Programming Survey will be released in early 2018.

Advisory Boards and Advisory Board Transition

In 2017, the 2015–2017 advisory board — listed below — will close out their two-year term. Their time as MFAN advisors included the launch of MilCents, the development of MilYou, and promotion of The Congressional Award among military families.

The 2015–2017 advisory board includes the following military family members:

Andy Blevins, Army spouse and Navy veteran, Salem, Oregon

Claire Woodward, Marine Corps spouse, Palm Harbor, Florida

E.J. Smith, Marine Corps spouse, Jacksonville, North Carolina

Ellie Kay, Air Force spouse, Palmdale, California

Ingrid Herrera-Yee, Army National Guard spouse, Ashburn, Virginia

Janet Sanchez, Army spouse, Joint Base Sam Houston, Texas

Kim Robertson, Air Force spouse, Aurora, Colorado

Kristine Schellhaas, Marine Corps spouse, Boise, Idaho

Lidesyan Williams, Navy spouse and Navy reservist, Fort Worth, Texas

Rebekah Sanderlin, Army spouse, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Shelley Drisko, Coast Guard spouse and Coast Guard veteran, FORCECOM, Virginia

Sidra Montgomery, Navy spouse, Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia

Stephanie Crosse, Army spouse, Fort Meade, Maryland

Taylor Miller, Navy spouse, Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia

The 2015–2017 advisory board will be succeeded by a new advisory board, to be selected in the summer of 2017.



Financial Statement

MFAN's entire budget is devoted to programming. In 2015, 100 percent of donations — cash and in-kind — went directly to supporting military families.

MFAN does not have any salary expenses; all members of the organization, including the executive director, serve on a volunteer basis.

	Convening Families	Educating Families	Support Expenses
Subscriptions	N/A	N/A	N/A
Travel and meals	\$41,766.90	N/A	N/A
Legal, bank fees, and accounting	N/A	N/A	\$900.71
Postage and mailing	N/A	N/A	\$68.00
Program development and outreach	\$222,663.75	\$324,309.09	\$226.00
Total Expenses	\$264,430.65	\$324,309.09	\$1,194.71

2016 Total Expenses: **\$589,934.45**



Thank you to our sponsor, Promontory Financial Group.

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