



COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Navy Gold Star Program Attends Snowball Express

By Lisa Bauch, Navy Gold Star Program Analyst

For the past six years, the Navy Gold Star Program has attended the Snowball Express in order to connect with surviving families from around the world at a centralized event. This magical experience is hosted by the Gary Sinise Foundation at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. The Gary Sinise Foundation is committed to year-round programming and support for families that honors their fallen hero, encourages them to make new memories, and provides opportunities to connect with others who know what they've been through.

We are excited to finally be coming together again for the first in-person Snowball Express at Walt Disney World since 2019. While the foundation has hosted a series of virtual events over the past couple of years and several smaller, localized in-person events, this December marks the return of the larger event in Orlando, and we are honored to be invited to participate in the resource room on Dec. 2-3.

Navy Gold Star Program representatives from California, Washington, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Florida will be on hand to meet with families and connect them to the program. Additionally, through a generous donation, we will have more than 40 teddy bears handcrafted with donated uniforms from the Navy, Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force to present to the children of our fallen heroes. If you are in attendance, be sure to stop by and see us. We look forward to seeing you in Orlando!

To learn more about this event, visit <https://www.garysinisefoundation.org/snowball-express>.



Helping Surviving Families Achieve Their Post-Secondary Goals

From www.TAPS.org

When considering post-secondary education, begin with the end in mind and know where you would like to be in the future. It is okay to start right where you are, recognizing that every survivor is at a different point in their school search process. Take one step at a time to be closer to where you would like to be. Remember to cast a wide net when starting your search, keeping an open mind. Know that there will be many opportunities to shorten your list, but you should not limit yourself in the early stages.

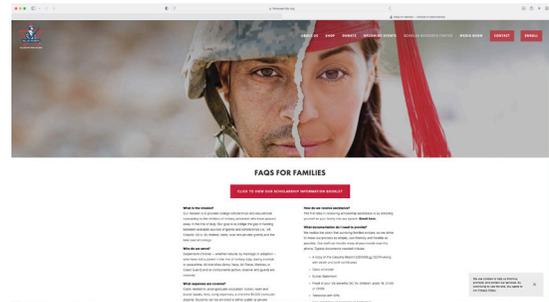
As you work to create a more curated list of schools you intend to connect with and eventually apply to, be sure to determine which factors are most important to you - which priorities are non-negotiable versus which are not deal breakers. Knowing this going into your search will help focus your decision making.



Resources are Available for College Entrance Exams



The [eKnowledge](#) Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) Prep Program was recently selected by the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) as their official SAT and ACT Prep course for all 19,500 member high schools and 12 million students. The participant only pays a nominal student-fee to offset some of the program's streaming and support expenses.



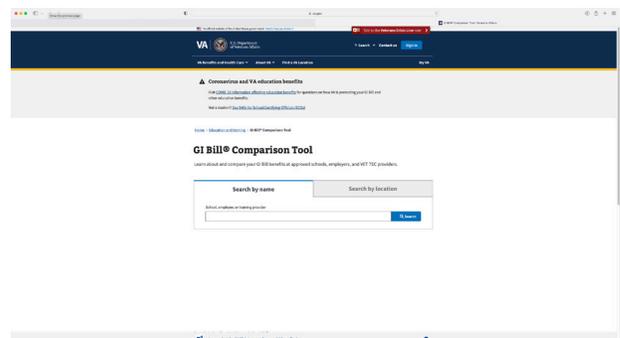
The [Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation](#) may assist with the SAT and ACT test application fees for the surviving children of military personnel who have been killed in the line of duty or from a service-connected disability. They also may help with Advance Placement (AP) exams and other expenses.

Choosing a School

Knowing what you don't want is just as important as what you do want. What do you want to do as a career? What program of study aligns with the career path you are pursuing? What if you don't know? Some students have known since birth they want to be a pilot, teacher, or doctor. Some students have no clue. Most students do not know for certain. With endless career options and thousands of programs of study, eliminating the "no's" is a good place to start.

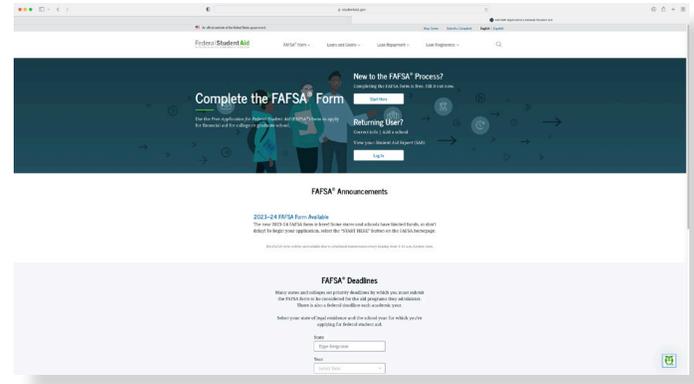
Comparing schools side by side will help you choose the "right fit" school for you. Consider things such as test scores and academics, degrees offered, campus atmosphere and extracurricular activities, tuition rates, acceptance, retention and graduation rates, alumni programs, etc. Research and visit schools when in session, as your perspective may change once on campus for your initial visit.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) also offers the [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) so that students can identify how much the GI Bill pays at each school, what is the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), on campus veteran programs and support available, and more.



Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Before each academic year, students should file the [FAFSA](#) to determine their eligibility for federal student aid, which is typically income/need-based. Based on the information provided in the FAFSA, students may be eligible for the Federal Pell Grant, Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant, the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, or other forms of financial aid. It is also important to note that many state waivers and private scholarships require the FAFSA to be completed and submitted before applying for the additional funding.



Start Applying for Scholarships Early

Although survivors typically cannot apply for education benefits through the VA until they are 18 years old or have graduated from high school, many scholarships open their applications early, often between Jan. 1 and April 1. Students who wait until they are enrolled and attending a post-secondary institution have often missed most application deadlines for the upcoming school year.

To learn how much financial aid you may be eligible for, refer to the [TAPS Education Portal](#). Keep a calendar or checklist to help manage the various private scholarships, noting they have different eligibility requirements and application deadlines.

Maximize Your Benefits and Scholarships

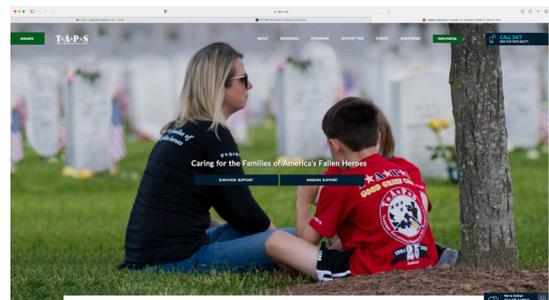
TAPS aims to guide you on how to maximize benefits and scholarships. Forty-seven out of 50 states provide some version of an education waiver for eligible survivors for undergraduate studies. Many states allow students to access the waiver before they use VA education benefits or to complement the VA education benefits related to unmet tuition needs.

Submit Your Application for the Certificate of Eligibility (COE)

Federal education benefits specifically related to your loved one's military service are offered through the VA, with eligibility being dependent upon line of duty and/or service connection factors. Students who are 18 years old or have graduated from high school may complete and submit the [VA Form 22-5490 - Dependents' Application for VA Education Benefits](#) in order to receive a Certificate of Eligibility from the VA. Keep in mind that this form can take an average of 3-5 weeks to process.

TAPS Education Support Services

If you or your child are exploring post-secondary education opportunities, TAPS Education Support Services is at the ready to help you navigate the process, all with a goal of helping you maximize your benefit and scholarship opportunities. To connect with a member of the [TAPS Education Support Services](#) Team, email education@taps.org or call 800.959.TAPS (8277).



The websites referenced in this article are listed below.

eKnowledge: <https://eknowledge.com/NewLookAff/Home.php?coupon=FECB51344>

Children of Fallen Patriots: <https://www.fallenpatriots.org/faqs-for-families>

GI Bill Comparison Tool: <https://www.va.gov/education/gi-bill-comparison-tool/>

FAFSA: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/afsa>

TAPS Education Portal: <https://www.taps.org/resources/education-assistance/education-assistance-search-tool/>

VA Form 22-5490: <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22-5490-ARE.pdf>



Tips for Having Better Family Get-Togethers

By Patsy Jackson, NDW Gold Star Coordinator

Lets' face it. We are getting closer to the holiday time of the year. Sometimes this can bring great pleasure and sometime sadness. The dynamic of family gatherings can be very challenging during the holiday season. Sometimes we are elated because of the gathering and other times overwhelmed at the thought of hosting or traveling. For many, being around larger groups is still something you may not be ready for. Hopefully, these tips give you some things to think about before you gather this holiday season.

Plan ahead to know how many people are coming to your home. If you are ready to have a slightly larger group at your home, make sure you have seating for all. If not, ask your guests to bring a folding chair. You can also make the holiday dinner a potluck. Ask each person to bring a dish, and if they are willing, to describe their dish and what it means to them or their family. At one Gold Star potluck, we asked Gold Star family members to bring their loved one's favorite dish. It makes for great conversation as well as remembering your loved ones during your gathering event.

One of the most important things to do during a gathering is using universal precautions with frequent hand washing. Make sure you prepare the dining/eating area with all of the needed supplies such as plates, flatware, napkins, and hand sanitizer. Before they come to your house, ask your guests if they are healthy and feeling well. Open the windows to have cross-ventilation. Let's face it - we want to keep everyone healthy.

When guests arrive, get everyone involved in a task. When grandma or whomever is making the beloved pumpkin pie or homemade pound cake, have the children or others help her to see if they can get her to tell what the secret ingredient is. If you are the one visiting someone else's home, ask if there are tasks you and your family may do to assist. Sometimes we have elderly family members who can no longer do the things they long to do such as decorating a holiday tree, placing candles on a mantle, and sorting and handling decorations. Maybe you or an appointed family member can do their task this year with them directing from their chair or wheelchair. Use this time to tell stories about history or previous holidays. Children can talk about how different people celebrate holidays around the world. With the entire group together, you can also make a memory of the day such as a scrapbook, holiday stocking, framed picture ornament, etc.

With this all said, you can make things easier on yourself with a little planning. The holiday season does not have to be so difficult when you have a group of people helping each other. I hope you have a great holiday season and would love to hear how you celebrate!

Remember Daily Blessings Gracefully Flowing

By CNIC Force Chaplain's Office

James 1:23-24: "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." New International Version

Just as businesses do end-of-year accounting of transactions reflecting profits and losses, we also can. If we choose, we can do the same in recalling how God provides daily blessings that are personal and unique to our circumstances.

What God does for us, however, is not transactional. Instead, these blessings are indications of a relationship that God has with each of us gracefully attending to our spoken and unspoken needs. December is a good time to remember these daily blessings. These are gifts of God for the people of God.

The teaching from James paints a picture of what we are inclined to do. We catch a glimpse of our image in the mirror. In just a few seconds, we forget what we were looking at. The book of James nudges us to take a "screenshot" from our memory bank and hold on to what is:

God loves us.

God loves us enough to provide.

God provides daily.

Let's pray: In gratitude, O Lord, we remember the daily blessings that gracefully flowed in our lives in 2022. Help us to remember, lest we forget – we are special in your sight. Amen.





Resuming Life as a Surviving Spouse

By Johnny Causey, Gold Star Spouse of Cmdr. Aquilla J. Causey

I am Johnny Causey, surviving spouse of Cmdr. Aquilla J. Causey, affectionately known as “CDR Q” or “Mrs. Q,” throughout the Navy and worldwide family group. I can recall the time we met, at the copier in PERS 3 in Millington, Tennessee, in November 2000. She had made some copies in my area, and as I was coming through the door, all the papers fell. I stopped to help her pick them up, and she was so elated that I took the time to help her. At that time she was a lieutenant. From then on, I was captivated by her and her gentle and sweet spirit toward everyone.

Fast forward to April 13, 2001: We were getting married, and so the fairytale love began. It was as if she had been waiting for me all that time. Shortly thereafter, 9/11 happened, and we were hurled into Bahrain, “Q” in October, and me in November. Our families thought this to be tragic and sad, but it was just what God had designed to strengthen our love bond. We were miles away from family and friends, but we established an unbreakable bond in Bahrain from 2001-2003. From that time forward we were inseparable and truly one in our love, life and ministry. From then on, our life was a fairytale romance and love inasmuch as everywhere we went, people spoke about how we loved and interacted with each other. As we transferred to various commands and duty stations, we taught couples classes in different ministries and church groups, inspiring others with the God-given love within us.

In May 2013, Q is sent to Millington where she is attending a SHRM course, and I was attending a ceremony at my alma mater in Niagara Falls. Several calls were missed due to being close to the border, but when things cleared up I discovered that Q was sick and had been admitted to the hospital in Memphis. I hopped on a plane to be there with her, and it turned out that she was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. I was crushed, and heartbroken after all the love we shared and the seemingly perfect marriage. I was angry but was concerned with her well-being, so we began the

journey of our abiding love. We decided to be as aggressive against this dreaded disease as it was against her, and began to pray and grow deeper in love through this ordeal. We spent almost a month in the Baptist Hospital in Memphis before returning to Great Lakes where we were assigned. It was as if the place where the fairy tale began was the same place it started to end.

I told Q that if we could get past six months we could beat this, and as we prayed for healing continuously, it appeared that healing wasn't going to come on this side but on the other side of life. Sadly and painstakingly, on Nov. 16, 2013, all of her pain and suffering ended in my arms as I sang to her and held her closely. She smiled at me and pointed to the corner, and then transitioned in our home. I felt betrayed and abandoned by God and the world. I couldn't cry because we endured the journey together. We were inseparable to the end. “Til death do we part” was our promise and vow to God and each other. Even though I no longer have Q with me, as I look back on our journey of love, I realize that God gave her to me to teach me to love. In my heart, I truly know the meaning of real love because of her.

As a survivor and supporter of the Navy Gold Star Program, I can truly give love to those who have experienced the loss of a lifetime. The Navy Gold Star Program gives me the strength to help and join others who have gone through this journey and to know that they are not alone. There is no need to be ashamed because we care! Our loved ones may be gone, but neither they nor us will be forgotten! Your love abides for your lost one, so allow it to endure to find joy and peace within.



Navy Gold Star Program Directory

Name	Phone	Address*
NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	619-705-5980	FFSP / CNRSW N40 750 PACIFIC HIGHWAY SAN DIEGO CA 92132
NB VENTURA COUNTY INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	805-982-6018	FFSC / 1000 23RD AVE BLDG 1169 CODE N91 PORT HUENEME CA 93041
NAVBASE CORONADO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-930-8290	FFSC / BUILDING G SAUFLEY RD SAN DIEGO CA 92135-7138
NB SAN DIEGO REGIONAL COORDINATOR	901-671-5597	NB SAN DIEGO FFSC 3005 CORBINA ALLEY STE 1 BLDG 259 SAN DIEGO CA 92136-5190
NAVY REGION NORTHWEST INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-930-8062	FFSC / 610 DOWELL ST BLDG 35 KEYPORT WA 98345
SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-671-7519	SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX 13910 45TH AVE NE SUITE 857 MARYSVILLE WA 98271
NAVY REGION SOUTHEAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	904-548-5001	FFSC / BLDG 919 LANGLEY ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212-0102
NAS JACKSONVILLE INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	904-542-5706	FFSC / BLDG 27 RANGER ST BOX 136 NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212-0136
NSA MID-SOUTH INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-874-5017	FFSC / 5722 INTEGRITY DR BLDG 456 MILLINGTON TN 38054-5045
NCBC GULFPORT INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	228-871-4569	FFSC / 5301 SNEAD ST GULFPORT MS 39501-5001
NAS CORPUS CHRISTI INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-930-8109	FFSC / 11001 D ST CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78419-5021
NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON REGIONAL COORDINATOR	901-930-8578	FFSC / 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373
NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-671-6521	FFSC / 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373
NAVY REGION MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COORDINATOR	901-930-8308	FFSC / 7928 14TH ST SUITE 209 NORFOLK VA 23505-1219
NWS EARLE INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	732-866-2110	FFSC / 201 RT 34 BLDG C59 COLTS NECK NJ 07722
NAVSTA GREAT LAKES INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	847-688-3603 ext. 134	FFSC / 525 FARRAGUT AVE STE 300 BLDG 26 GREAT LAKES IL 60088
NB NORFOLK INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	757-322-9182	FFSC / 7928 14TH ST SUITE 102 NORFOLK VA 23505-1219
SUBASE NEW LONDON INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-671-6910	FFSC / BLDG 83 BOX 93 GROTON CT 06349-5093
NAS OCEANA INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	757-492-8282	2073 TARTAR AVENUE, BUILDING 585, FFSC AT DAM NECK ANNEX, VIRGINIA BEACH VA 23461-1917

*When communicating with your coordinator via mail, please add NAVY GOLD STAR PROGRAM and contact column information to all mailing addresses to ensure delivery.