



Survivor's Link

COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Honoring Our Loved Ones

By Pam Valliere, NDW Regional Navy Gold Star Coordinator, Gold Star Mother

Navy Gold Star is dedicated to helping our Survivors honor the sacrifice and service of their loved ones.

What can you do to honor them?

Many families like to hold annual events that mirror what the service member liked to do. It could be a volleyball or softball tournament, memorial runs, concert or a multitude of events that have meaning for the family. Others set up charitable organizations that help veterans or those who share a similar passion as their loved one. Families may find work that helps them to honor their service member while helping those going through a similar time.

But those can be large overwhelming plans that may be beyond what some Survivors can do.

How else can they honor their service member?

Attending events that are military based or involve Sailors can satisfy the need many Survivors have to volunteer within the military community. When they volunteer they feel closer to their loved one. Others give money in the name of their loved one to organizations that they feel are worthwhile or that their loved one supported.

Planting a tree or bush in your yard, or creating a spot in your garden where you grow plants that reminds you of them, is another way to honor and remember them. Detailing their life in a scrapbook can be a way to honor them as well and may be convenient when people visit. You can show them the pictures and other memories in the scrapbook and make your loved one

come alive to someone else. Keeping a journal with their jokes, memories of special times with them, turns of phrase that remind you of them, and your journey without them, can be a way to remember and honor them as well.

Other families create roadside memorials at or near the place their loved one died, or put R.I.P. memorials on the back of their car or truck. Some create memorial T-shirts or get a tattoo that commemorates their loved one. Some will travel to parts of the country where their service member served in order to experience some of their experiences. Honoring your spouse, child, parent or sibling can be in the form of taking on some of their characteristics. They may have a particular sense of humor that resonates with you now. Every time you speak of your service member, you keep their memory alive and honor them.

If your service member was in the midst of a project, such as refinishing a piece of furniture, renovating a space or some other project that had meaning to them, gathering friends and family to finish the project can be very healing and there will be a physical thing that will remind you of your loved one.

If you are on Facebook you can create a memorial wall or leave the service member's page active so friends and family can continue to post memories, accomplishments and thoughts about them. Many funeral homes offer virtual memorials where you can "light a candle," or post a tribute or memory.

These virtual memorials may make it easier for people to honor their loved one by giving them a place to do so.

As you can see, there are a variety of ways to honor your loved one, and there is no right or wrong way to honor them. If it helps you to remember, then it works.

Keep in mind that the way you honor them can change as your circumstances change. If you have been doing a memorial run or tournament and you decide it doesn't help you to honor them that way anymore, or it has become too difficult to continue, there is no dishonor in discontinuing the event and finding another way to honor them. Honoring them should not make your life harder. It should make it easier to remember them.



2016 Virginia Run for the Fallen

By Melissa Black, Navy Gold Star coordinator- NB Norfolk, VA, Gold Star Spouse and Samantha Blackwell, Navy Gold Star coordinator, NAS Oceana, VA

Navy Gold Star Program coordinators from NB Norfolk and NAS Oceana had the privilege to once again participate in the Honor and Remember, Inc. 2016 Virginia Run for the Fallen. The VA Run for the Fallen is a four-day, 250-mile run that started on April 28, 2016, at Fort Story, Va., in the predawn hours and concluded on May 1, 2016, in Section 60 at Arlington National Cemetery. At the end of each mile, the core run team stops at a designated Hero Marker, honors that fallen hero by stating his/her name out loud, salutes, and then hugs the family and friends of those honored that were there to witness this beautiful tribute. This occurs every mile along the 250-mile route.



The core run team is comprised of four volunteer runners, usually active-duty military or veterans, who see this as an opportunity to honor fallen shipmates and battle buddies. These four runners form up and run in cadence in front of the Honor and Remember, Inc. RV. In addition to their love of country and a desire to honor fallen service members (some with whom they have served), the runners also carry flags along the full length of each mile. The flags carried are: the American flag, the state flag of Virginia, and the Honor and Remember flag. Upon reaching the Hero Marker for a fallen service member, the fourth runner is given the hero marker flag.



The Navy Gold Star coordinators were part of the advance team. We stayed ahead of the runners and main caravan of support vehicles so that we could visit with the waiting family, friends, colleagues, or strangers who came to honor the fallen. We were able to provide direct outreach, distrib-

ute information on the Navy Gold Star Program, provide emotional support, and answer any questions. The coordinators also provided T-shirts and yellow roses to immediate Gold Star family members so that the runners would be able to easily identify them.

Upon approaching the Hero Marker, runners would stop, read aloud the name(s) of the fallen, and render a salute, and hug/speak to family members identified by that yellow rose. Unfortunately, this lasted only a few moments because the runners needed to stay on time to keep up the set schedule for arriving at the next Hero Marker in a timely fashion. Although this time was brief, it meant the world to waiting family members and friends. This also highlights the importance of the outreach we provide as coordinators (Navy Gold Star and Survivor Outreach Services). Our presence before the runners arrive affords an opportunity to connect with Gold Star families who may have never had contact from the military services since the loss of their loved ones. It is truly a privilege and an awesome avenue to ensure Survivors know the military cares about them and their loss.

Each day was long, a minimum 12-hour day. The first day



the runners ran 67 miles, day two they ran 75 miles, day three they ran 69 miles, and the last day they ran 36 miles to Arlington National Cemetery. At the end of each day, a local American Legion provided dinner, where the runners and staff enjoyed delicious meals and great fellowship. Before dismissing to the hotel for each night, the names of all the heroes honored that day were read out loud.

Upon arriving at Arlington National Cemetery, the entire run team (support staff, runners, coordinators, etc.) as well as Gold Star families, walked quietly and reverently together to Section 60. After a few words by Lt. Gen. Anthony R. Ierardi, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-8, United States Army at the Pentagon, the founder of Honor and Remember Inc., George Lutz, presented an embroidered Honor and Remember flag to a widow of a service member killed in action.

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Hero's Rock Tribute Rockers and Thank You Tour

Hero's Rock is a 501(c)3 non-profit that is working on a very special project called the Patriotic Pony Pledge. They made a promise to build 27 handmade rocking horses for Fisher Houses across the country to help comfort and support the children of our wounded warriors.

Each rocker delivered to a Fisher House will be custom decorated with red and blue hand prints of love and support, have a laser portrait of a fallen hero, and be accompanied by a "Thank You" book that celebrates the lives of our fallen heroes.

Our goal is to honor heroes from across the country from all of the military branches. If you would like to have your hero honored on one of these special ponies please nominate him/her at contactus@herosrock.us or call 650-ROCKERS.

Starting Sept. 1, 2016, Hero's Rock will be traveling 7,500 miles across 21 states delivering these special rockers in our Hero's Rock Thank You Tour with rallies along the way.

To see the most current information (heroes list, schedule, pictures, etc.), follow us on Facebook/Hero's Rock or visit www.herosrock.us.

Run for the Fallen, continued from page 2

The last Hero Mile to section 60 at Arlington National Cemetery is timed perfectly so the ceremony begins promptly at 1330. After an opening prayer, welcome remarks by Mr. Lutz, a brief speech by a flag officer, and the flag presentation, a moment of silence is observed for all those fallen service members honored along the entire route. Although this time is sobering, perhaps the most memorable event occurs when each person is asked to take a few printed tapes which list the names and location of service members buried at Arlington National Cemetery. These name tapes are given to personnel so they may visit those particular service members. Along with the name tapes, personnel are asked to take an equal number of small memorial stones to place atop each gravesite visited during this reverent time.

As I looked around, I saw a group of 30 people scouring the numbers on the backs of tombstones, looking for the name on his (her) tape. Upon locating a specific gravesite, people would stop at the grave, read the words on the tombstone, gently place the memorial stone on top, and then step back to reflect on the life that person gave for the freedoms we each enjoy today. Many times, the person placing the stone would wipe a tear from their eye as they considered the cost this service member bore. A thought that often resonated was "this was someone's father or mother, son or daughter, sister or brother, husband or wife" who died for a cause greater than themselves.

After 30 (or more) minutes searching for graves of service members and wandering around the quiet stillness of that hallowed ground, I turned to look once more at the perfectly lined rows of white marble tombstones. I smiled as I saw many of the tombstones had small, grayish memorial stones atop the graves. This stone, though small, lets family and friends of that service member know something near and dear to the hearts of Gold Star families — that their loved one was and always shall be remembered.

As always, it's a privilege and an honor to connect on a human level with each of the surviving family members present along the tribute route. With each passing year, more families are connected with the Navy Gold Star Program and long-term casualty assistance offices of the other service branches. This has been, and continues to be, one of the more life-changing events that this coordinator has ever experienced, and I'm grateful to be given the opportunity to represent the Navy Gold Star Program.

Disclaimer: It is the mission of the Navy Gold Star Program to provide Survivors with information on resources available to them. Survivor's Link is one of several tools used to accomplish that mission and from time to time will include information (including phone numbers and websites) for various non-governmental resources. The Department of the Navy does not warrant or endorse these entities, products or services.

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1-888-509-8759



NavyGoldStar

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Navy Gold Star Program
716 Sicard Street SE Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20332
Phone: 1-888-509-8759

Easy Day

By Amy Garber, Gold Star Wife

Easy Day. Two simple words that would become a part of our family language. Two simple words that embody my late husband Jeff's personality and his ability to try and ease the monotony and stress that can accompany the long days of workups, trainings and deployments. Two words that would be painted on the side of the aircraft assigned to Carrier Air Wing 7 in the days following his death and that his children would have tattooed in memory of their Dad. Two words that would be used to personalize license plates, to name scholarships and awards, and that would be etched into memorials, challenge coins, his marker at Arlington, and our hearts forever.

On Feb. 20, 2009, we took Jeff to the pier at Naval Station Norfolk and said our goodbyes. Liberty was expiring that night, and although he was the command master chief of the Air Wing and probably could have pushed his time until early in the morning, that wasn't the way he led. He believed that if his sailors were expected to report on time, then so should he. He led by example, not by rank.

The air wing was embarking aboard the aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower for a deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. It was only going to be a five-month deployment, and we were hopeful that this would be his last deployment of any length. Little did we know how fateful those hopes would be.

We were able to communicate with Jeff on the phone a couple times a month, and via email on a fairly regular basis. Jeff called on Sunday, June 14, and we were able to talk for almost two hours. I couldn't believe how long we talked because it seemed like the time flew by. The ship had pulled into the United Arab Emirates and they had spent Saturday in Dubai. He had played two rounds of 18 holes of golf at Dubai Creek, and he was wiped out from the heat! He didn't complain, because for Jeff any time on a golf course was time well spent! He talked about how excited he was for the kids to come on the Tiger Cruise and how he couldn't wait to come home. He didn't talk much about what was going on with the Air Wing. There were a lot of things he couldn't talk about and I understood that. He mainly wanted to talk about what was happening at home. We also talked about his upcoming interview for the position of force master chief of the Naval Air Forces of the East Coast and Texas. When he was first asked to interview he wasn't too sure. A part of him was ready to retire, but the more he prayed about it, the more he felt that God was opening this door in order for him to continue to advocate for the Sailors who were coming up through the ranks. That was his motivation and drive, and we would hear countless stories of his acts of selfless leadership. Easy Day. The kids were still sleeping when we came toward the end of our conversation and he said to let them sleep, that he would call the next weekend and talk to them. I wish I had woken them up. It's a regret I have, but a path I can't let myself go too far down.

On June 18, the kids were out of school for the summer, and on June 19 Paige was resting at home after having her wisdom teeth out. Josh and Tayler were spending the night



with friends. On Saturday, June 20, the day before Father's Day, our doorbell rang at 6 a.m. I ignored it the first time thinking it was some wayward person who had the wrong house. The doorbell rang again, and I got up to see if I could see anything out the window. I didn't see anything out of the ordinary. It rang again and I walked downstairs. Although I could see them through the window in the door, my heart couldn't believe that they were going to tell me what my head said they would. There had to be a mistake, but there was no mistake. Jeff was gone. He had died in his sleep of what we would later be told was a massive heart attack. He had gone into medical on Friday, June 19, complaining of classic heart attack symptoms, but the few tests they could run were normal and he didn't fit the profile, so they sent him out with heartburn and indigestion medication. He didn't feel well the rest of the day, but told friends that he was going to see how he felt after a good night's sleep. He said he'd go back in if he still didn't feel well. He would never have that chance. He died in the early morning hours of June 20, 2009, at the age of 43.

Our children were 17, 15 and 13 when Jeff died. They had lost their hero. The dad who was larger than life to them. The dad who they were so excited was coming home soon. The dad who was going to teach them to drive and who would play football and basketball with them for hours. The dad who would teach them to build things, to play golf and would play guitar and sing with them. The dad who coached their soccer and basketball teams, and who spent countless hours working backstage at theater productions. The dad who was supposed to attend their high school, college and boot camp graduations. The dad who was looking forward to one day walking them down the aisle, and who was so good at giving them words of wisdom and encouragement during the tough times. The dad who was their biggest fan and who loved them unconditionally. The dad who taught them about Jesus and lived a life reflective of his faith. The man who loved all of us so well. Grieving for my children and the loss of a dad who loved them so much has been one of the hardest things for me on my grief journey.

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There have been many hard days during the past seven years, but there have been many “Easy Days” as well. Jeff’s saying, that was so well known to his fellow shipmates, has become a wonderful reminder to all of us about how to look at life. Days may not always be easy, but we need to try and approach them with a positive attitude. We need to reach out and help even when we wish someone would help us. It’s in those moments of selfless acts that we find great blessings. He taught us all so much and he didn’t even know that he was teaching us. He was one of the humblest people I have ever known. Nothing that he did was for his own glory. Not to say that he didn’t work hard in order to advance in his career, but he didn’t do it in a way that only brought glory and attention to himself. He was happy for others in their successes even if it meant that he didn’t get a position or award that he had hoped for. He trusted that the Lord had a plan for him, and he looked for where God was at work and he joined in, allowing God to work through him and giving all glory to God for all the blessings in his life. He was a selfless and strong leader, admired by all ranks for his honesty and integrity. He knew that to get respect you had to give respect. He left an amazing legacy and we are honored to carry it on in the way that we continue to live and love.

Taylor, Paige and Josh are all young adults who have so much of their dad in them, yet have their own unique personalities and capabilities. Taylor is 24 and graduated last year from Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn., and has a passion for missions and a heart for service — like her dad. Paige is 22 and will graduate this August from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, with the gift of effective communication and the ability to truly listen and to express her thoughts to two or two hundred with admirable ease — just like her dad. Josh is 20 and a combat engineer in the Marine Corps stationed at Camp Lejeune with a

desire to serve and to lead the way his dad did. I know they will find success — not by following in their dad’s footsteps, but by walking alongside their dad’s footsteps, learning from them and gathering strength and inspiration from them, while forging a new path of their own. Just as Jeff would have wanted it. Easy Day.

We have experienced incredible amounts of unselfish kindness and support from family, friends, our faith community, the Navy, and complete strangers. We are so thankful for all of the memories that have been shared with us by Jeff’s fellow shipmates, funny and serious stories alike. They all are gifts that we have tucked into the treasure trove of memories that we have stored in our hearts.

I would like to end with Jeff’s own words. As I was looking through his immediate personal effects, I found a paper that he had written for a class that he had just finished on the ship right before he died. It was titled, “About Me.” I can tell you over and over how much he enjoyed what he was doing and what the Navy meant to him, but let me let him tell you in his own words:

“The Navy has given my family incredible opportunity over the past 24 years; I am at the top of the food chain in the enlisted community and in the most demanding and rewarding job anyone could ask for. Being a command master chief is like being a father for the first time over and over again. I will tell you that I enjoy coming to work every day and making a difference in someone’s life whether that’s giving career advice or making someone smile, I just enjoy being me.”

We miss and love Jeff so very much, and we will do our best to carry on his legacy of faith, love, courage, decency, and humility. We will remember him, his boundless energy, his contagious smile, and try to make each day an Easy Day!

Chaplain’s Corner: You Are Not Forgotten

By CNIC Force Chaplain’s Office

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” – Maya Angelou

We all desire to be remembered. Maybe this explains why historical markers are everywhere. We see them at home and abroad. Historical markers are all along roadways, in buildings, on bridges, and just about any place that might attract attention. The markers, if we choose to read them, inform us of significant actions taken by extraordinary people at some point in time.

There is a “historical marker” that God has placed on us all — image bearers. The first book of the Holy Bible offers us an irresistible clue of how special we are in God’s sight. Genesis chapter 1, verse 27, informs

us that God created male and female in his image. Remembering that we bear God’s image can help us frame the best of times as well as the worst of times. How so?

Is it not strange that God uses us to live out our lives as “living historical markers”? Think about it. Do you remember the people who had a positive influence on your life as a child? Chances are, you are a “living historical marker” for a kind aunt, a doting grandpa, or maybe just an encouraging neighbor or school teacher who made an indelible impression. This kind of impression fuels an incessant incentive that drives us to be the best

we can possibly be. Long after our memory dims on exactly what this person did for us, we will never forget how special they made us feel.

We all want to be remembered. Even God desires to be remembered. Bearing God’s image places us in a wonderful place to deliver many transformative moments of the good that we did that is long forgotten, but the lingering memory of feeling special lives on for countless souls.

The good news is simply a reminder: You are not forgotten!

Straight from the Lighthouse - Spotighting your Survivor Resources

*MyNavyBenefits - Interactive Online Survivor Benefits Reports
By Team Southeast*

Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP), Dependents Indemnity Compensation (DIC), Social Security -- survivor benefits for spouses and children can be quite overwhelming and complicated to understand after the tragic death of your service member.

There are various governmental agencies involved, different rules, and milestones that will impact the future of the benefits your family receives.

No one enjoys logging into a bank account and seeing that their benefit payment did not hit their account on the expected day with bills and other financial obligations right around the corner, especially after they have just started to feel they have gotten a handle on financial matters.

Thankfully, there is a resource available to assist in financial planning for your family and visualizing your survivor benefits throughout the years.

Interactive Online Survivor Benefits Reports are a great tool available to survivors of all service members who have died on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

Previously you would receive a yearly mail-out of this report but now you can access your Survivor Benefits Report 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Your report offers a consolidated illustration of current and estimated future benefits from the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Social Security Administration.

Additionally, you can input possible life events that you or family members in your household may experience over the years, and see how that might impact your benefits.

How will children's secondary education plans or aspirations change benefits? What if there is a change to disability or marital status?

By utilizing the interactive reports through various scenarios, you can work to prepare for, and help secure your financial future.

Each branch of service offers their own website to access your report. **MyNavyBenefits** can be accessed through <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/prebuilt/USN/Casualty/login.aspx> by a surviving spouse, child, or child's guardian.

Initial reports are available through unique login information provided by your CACO and are available for six months following the date of death.

Once you receive your finalized initial report you can access your interactive report, at your convenience by logging in with your DS Logon (Premium Account) and password.

If you do not have a DS logon premium account, you can visit the Defense Manpower Data Center's website (<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement/authenticate.do?execution=e1s1>) to create or upgrade your account.

By accessing your Interactive Survivor Benefits Reports, you will be able to plan for the financial future of your family.

While survivor benefits can be overwhelming to understand, your Navy Casualty Office and Navy Gold Star team are available to help connect you with resources or troubleshoot concerns you may have.

Sometimes, while navigating the often choppy waters of the systems, you may find some difficulties. We strive to be a beacon of light for you and your family for as long as you would like, and look forward to our next edition of spotlighting your survivor resources!



Keeping Your Child Healthy and Engaged Over the Summer

By Military OneSource, www.militaryonesource.mil

Summertime is the perfect opportunity for your children to loosen up and have some fun, but the structure of the school year doesn't have to stop after the final bell rings. You can use your downtime to help your children maintain their academic skills and develop healthy habits. It can also be beneficial for children with special needs to maintain a routine during the summer months as a way to ease anxieties and reduce stress levels. Here are a few ideas to help your children have a healthy and happy summer:

Seek out a summer program. Check your installation, local schools, recreation centers and other community-based organizations for programs on topics that might interest your child.

Crack open a book. Whether reading with your younger children or encouraging your older children to read on their own, summer reading can help keep brains engaged and study habits fresh.

Take a field trip. Visit parks, museums, zoos or nature centers for a low-cost educational opportunity for your entire family.

Count, track and measure. Find fun ways to incorporate numbers into everyday tasks. Measure items around the house or track daily temperatures. Go to the grocery store and practice adding, subtracting or multiplying the prices of items.

Think ahead. Check with your child's school to see if they have summer packets of math and reading skill activities to help your child prepare for the next school year.

Get moving. Outdoor activities reign supreme in the summer, so don't forget to schedule time for your children to play and burn off energy with some sunshine and exercise.

Snack healthy. A healthy diet is just as important in the summer as it is during the school year. Keep plenty of fruits and vegetables on hand to encourage good snack habits.

Recharge. Children need a chance to refuel, and being out of school isn't a green light to stay up all night. Keep a regular summer bedtime to make sure they're getting enough sleep.

Even while having fun in the sun, you can still find plenty of ways to put your children's health and education first. Helping your children stay engaged academically and physically throughout the summer will help set them up for success in the new school year.



The Art of Healing

By Danielle Gamez, Naval Base Ventura County Gold Star Coordinator

For centuries people have channeled their grief into healing through artistic expression. From Homer's tales of Troy to Picasso's "Guernica," from Van Gogh's "Sorrowing Old Man," to the many tragedy-themed paintings of Frida Kahlo, across ages and cultures, artists have always combated grave tragedy with great beauty. However, you don't have to be a famous or trained artist to experience the healing effects that art can have upon a grieving heart.

One California Gold Star family member described her experience while converting her grief into art. "The first painting I did after he died was a huge release for me. It felt like everything I had inside was finally coming out in a way that I could never verbally express. The actual finished painting didn't matter as much as the process and the emotions I let myself experience. It's hard to explain, but I finally felt like I might be able to have a life again."

Creating artwork after experiencing loss can be extremely therapeutic and liberating. It doesn't matter what your artwork looks like, as long as the process benefits you through the creation of it. You'll be surprised at how good it feels once you get started. Just remember, the goal is not to make an epic masterpiece, but to express yourself truthfully. Here are five ideas to get you started:

- 1. Collage your loved one.** Have you ever been going about your day and experienced something that reminded you of your loved one and it just stopped you in your tracks? Flip through magazines or newspapers and cut out anything that reminds you of your loved one. It could be anything! Maybe an ocean sunset picture that reminds you of a vacation, a running shoe because they loved to run, a cupcake because they had a big sweet tooth, or maybe even add some leaves or flowers you find from nature; it's not hard to find our loved ones in the little day-to-day moments if we stop and look. Arrange the images and words you find onto a piece of construction paper with glue, and watch a whole new visual of your loved one emerge.
- 2. Start a grief journal.** Just write. Write and don't stop to think if it makes sense. Don't worry about grammar, spelling or fluidity. Write for your eyes only so you can express yourself freely. This is just between you and your loved one, no one else. Sometimes it can be hard to get started because you may see the blank page and feel like the words are not coming as easily as you hoped. Find a nice bound notebook to keep all your entries in one place, and try a few writing exercises to get you started. For example, a top 10 list of special memories or start with one of your favorite quotes. Some sample jump-off sentences that could also help you get started are: "I remember when ...," "If I could see now I would tell you ...," or "The greatest lesson you taught me ...". Aside from visual arts, writing can be therapeutic because you dig down deep inside yourself to find emotions and feelings that are hiding beneath the surface, so grab a pen and let go.

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3. Color a mandala. Mandalas are sacred pieces of artwork which are used to evoke healing, spiritual development and meditation. The word mandala means “sacred circle,” and is derived from the word “mandra,” which means “container of essence.” Within its circular shape, the mandala has the power to promote relaxation, balance the body’s energies, enhance your creativity, and support healing. The mandala is a circular matrix with a center point—a point from which all things are possible. From the center comes forth infinite possibilities and unlimited potential. When you are coloring mandalas, you’re expressing your desires for healing and wellness. You can find mandala coloring books along with many other adult coloring books in online stores or download single images from the internet for free. Use crayons or colored pencils and color away; it is that simple and surprisingly powerful!



4. Paint or draw a self-portrait. The self-portrait is one of the most revealing art activities one can do. It is a source of self-reflection and a way to release emotions in a healthy way to begin the healing process. The basic idea is that you communicate how you see yourself through art. It doesn’t have to be a literal depiction of your face, but you could start with an oval shape and begin filling it in with shapes or words. Think about how you truly view yourself.

5. Create a mobile memory book. Use blank luggage tags and an “O” ring or key ring, and put together a small memory book you can carry with you. Draw a picture, write a quote, or capture a memory to put on each tag. The best part about this activity is that you can always add to it and take it with you. You could also create one as a family and combine your tags together for a truly unique way to remember your loved one.



It’s okay if you’ve never been an artist before or haven’t picked up a crayon since your childhood. The important thing is to try to not worry about what other people might think. You can always keep it to yourself and practice your own self-reflection. Also, if you have children you can do these activities with them. Children often excel in these types of activities because they are already so creative. It may also be easier to express their emotions through art rather than words. Survivors of all ages have proven for years that art can channel grief and sometimes even help to heal it. Survivors also prove that every single person trying to pick up the pieces after loss, in the profoundest sense, is an artist.

Southwest Art Contest

In honor of Memorial Day, our Navy Gold Star coordinators in San Diego and Port Hueneme, Calif., asked local children to draw “What Memorial Day means to me ...” They had more than 100 entries from kids ranging in age from 5 to 11. The top seven entries from the San Diego area were displayed across Naval Base Coronado, and the top two drawings were featured at Naval Base Ventura County. A big thank you to these talented young artists for showing us the meaning of Memorial Day!



NBVC Memorial Day Art Contest Winners



Connor Hager, age 5
Title: God Bless America



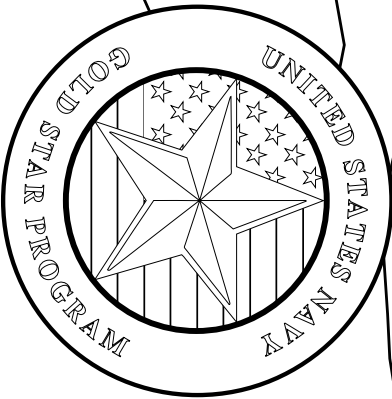
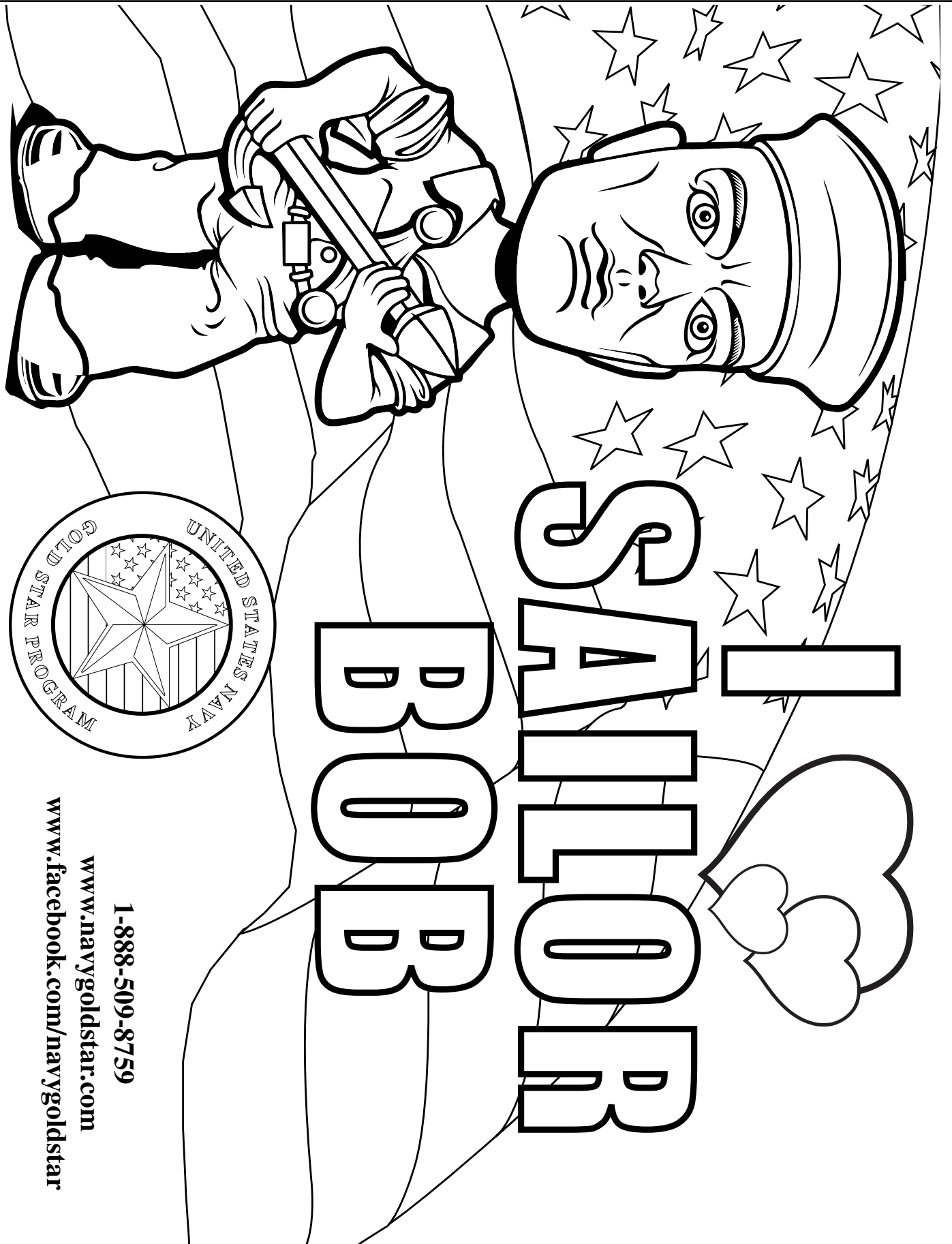
Madilyn Schmitt, age 7
Title: Seabees

Never Forgotten

By Mike Bruner, Navy Gold Star Program Manager

As we close on Gold Star Awareness Month (May), I can’t help but reflect on the lives lost in service to our nation and those family members who are forced to carry on without them. We should be asking ourselves how to continue to remember and “Never Forget,” and how one month, one day, one ceremony should not be the only time we remember our fallen heroes and their surviving families. Ultimately, we are responsible for honoring our fallen military member’s commitment to this country. I invite you to help us to “Never Forget” the lives of those brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen who are no longer with us, and submit a tribute on our tribute page at www.navygoldstar.com. This is one small way we can help to show the world the face of our heroes.





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| NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR | 619-532-2886 | FFSP / 937 N HARBOR DR BOX 53 SAN DIEGO CA 92132-0058 |
| NB VENTURA COUNTY INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 805-982-6018 | FFSC / 1000 23RD AVE BLDG 1169 CODE N91 PORT HUENEME CA 93041 |
| NAVBASE CORONADO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 619-767-7225 | FFSC / BUILDING G SAUFLEY RD SAN DIEGO CA 92135-7138 |
| NB SAN DIEGO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 619-556-2190 | NB SAN DIEGO FFSC 3005 CORBINA ALLEY STE 1 BLDG 259 SAN DIEGO CA 92136-5190 |
| NAVY REGION NORTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR | 360-396-4860 | FFSC / 610 DOWELL ST BLDG 35 KEYPORT WA 98345 |
| SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 425-304-3721 | SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX 13910 45TH AVE NE SUITE 857 / MARYSVILLE WA 98271 |
| NAVY REGION SOUTHEAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR | 904-542-5712 | FFSC / BLDG 919 LANGLEY ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212-0102 |
| NAS JACKSONVILLE INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 904-542-5578 | FFSC / 554 CHILD ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212 |
| NSA MID-SOUTH INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 901-874-5017 | FFSC / 5722 INTEGRITY DR BLDG 456 MILLINGTON TN 38054-5045 |
| NAS CORPUS CHRISTI INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 361-961-1675 | FFSC / 11001 D ST CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78419-5021 |
| NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON REGIONAL COORDINATOR | 202-433-3059 | FFSC / 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373 |
| NSA ANNAPOLIS INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 410-714-4040 | FFSC / 168 BENNION RD ANNAPOLIS MD 21402 |
| NAVY REGION MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COORDINATOR | 757-445-3073 | 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 127 | 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 | 860-694-1257 | FFSC / BLDG 83 BOX 93 GROTON CT 06349-5093 |
| NAS OCEANA INSTALLATION COORDINATOR | 757-492-8282 | FFSC / 1896 LASER RD STE 120 VIRGINIA BEACH VA 23460-2281 |

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