

# HIDDEN HELPERS

November 2022

## Announcing New Commitments and Expansion of Hidden Helpers Coalition

Continued support for children in the military and veteran caregiving families

Today, the Hidden Helpers Coalition is announcing a series of new commitments and coalition members to support the more than 2.3 million children and youth living with and serving wounded, ill, or injured service members and veterans. Alongside partners the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), First Lady Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative has led the Coalition, focusing on addressing key challenges facing our military and veteran caregiving community. We are thrilled to celebrate the growth of this movement and the passion for supporting children and youth impacted by the care needs of their loved ones.

In advance of the Coalition's one-year anniversary, **The History Channel and A&E Networks, Lockheed Martin, and American Academy of Pediatrics** have signed on and pledged to support the creation of new programs that will help provide our military caregiver children, youth, and families the resources they have earned. This brings the coalition to a total of 78 member organizations that represent a diverse cross-section of public and private sector partners committed to supporting this mission.



# SUPPORTING HIDDEN HELPERS



## Elevating Hidden Helpers' Voices

**The History Channel and A&E Networks** is launching the first-ever 'Untold Story Challenge,' a new storytelling initiative, in partnership with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, that is aimed at amplifying the stories of hidden helpers by shining a light on the stories of America's military-connected, caregiving youth. Through writing, drawing, film, and photography, hidden helpers will be able to share their origin stories and see themselves in the stories of others. This will be the first step in working together to explore new and innovative ways to recognize our nation's hidden helpers and their service.

## An Innovative New Solution for Hidden Helpers

**Lockheed Martin** has provided a generous donation to the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to support the creation of new evidence-informed content and peer support resources for hidden helpers. Built by helpers and for helpers, these newly designed resources will fill the gap in services that meet the needs of military-connected, caregiving youth and their families. Lockheed Martin's commitment will make a drastic and long-lasting impact on hidden helper families, giving them easily accessible tools to help them thrive and tailored solutions that allow them to dream.



## SUPPORTING HIDDEN HELPERS

Today, the Coalition is chaired by Steve Schwab, CEO of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington, CEO of Wounded Warrior Project. The 78 Coalition partners are actively working in subcommittees to address elements of hidden helper wellbeing. Each committee addresses a key system identified through the Mathematica report, which include:

**Clinical Transformation** - Transform the culture of pediatric and primary care to better identify, communicate, empower, and support caregiving children, youth, and young adults.

**Education** - Pursue the identification of caregiver children and youth across primary and secondary educational institutions and equip administrators, staff and educators with the knowledge and tools to address the unique learning needs of Hidden Helpers.

**Impact & Measurement** - Create uniform measures and expected outcomes informed by program design and implementation, reflective of best practice.

**Peer Support** - Identify and promote best practices in peer-to-peer programming to foster greater wellbeing and thriving skills in caregiving children and families.



## ADDITIONAL COALITION COMMITMENTS TO DATE



**Armed Services YMCA** with the support of Wounded Warrior Project, has pledged to expand the Operation Hero After-School Program to focus on hidden helpers aged 8 to 13 years old. Operation Hero sessions will focus on topics like self-image and identify, peer connection, and managing conflict. Operation Hero will expand services for hidden helpers across 7 locations: Hampton Roads, VA; El Paso, TX; Killeen, TX; and Fort Bragg, NC, as well as three ASYMCA Affiliates in Florida and Georgia. Armed Services YMCA will collaborate with Wounded Warrior Project, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and the Hidden Helpers Coalition for in-person alumni events to ensure participating youth can continue to foster and grow these peer connections.



**Bob Woodruff Foundation** is pleased to be collaborating with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation on the Hidden Helpers Webinar Series. In addition to contributing to the webinar on logic models and demonstrating impact, BWF is supporting the development of two additional webinars on educator resources and overarching youth caregiver research. This support honors their commitment to sharing and promoting best practices among Coalition members. BWF also committed to funding new opportunities to support hidden helpers in 2022. Their Fall portfolio includes grants to two programs that will improve wellbeing for children in veteran and caregiving families to be announced soon! BWF is committed to continue funding new opportunities to support hidden helpers in 2023.



**Blue Star Families** crafted the Hidden Helper Course and piloted it in the Dayton & Southwestern Ohio Chapter. Participating students and the instructor engaged in stimulating discussions and shared experiences as they critically examined topics relevant to the military way of life after a family endures a visible or invisible injury. Students applied ethical theories and discussions to critical topics associated with engaging military culture in civilian communities, specifically addressing the impacts and experiences of the hidden helpers. The course led to the creation of additional programming, support, and awareness among participants.



**Camp Corral's** 2022 impact far exceeded the original commitment made. 1,297 military-connected children attended Camp Corral Summer Camp in 2022. Additionally, Camp Corral hosted six Family Retreats for wounded, ill, and fallen military families across the nation. A new peer-connection program, Camp Corral Connect, was launched to provide continued connection opportunities for campers throughout the year and the new SALUTE Leadership initiative is in the final stages of development launching in January 2023. In partnership with DAV and PsychArmor, Camp Corral released the 'Respite at Home: Time to Take 5' to serve as a video resource for caregiver families. Camp Corral's renewed focus on mission will result in an exponential increase in the impact 2023 programs will have on the lives of military-connected children nationwide.



**Caregivers on the Homefront** launched Homefront Hangout, a peer led mentorship program for veteran children. COH is also hosting monthly art workshops both in-person and virtually for hidden helpers!



**Coalition to Salute America's Heroes** America's Little Helpers (ALH) fully launched their national program of support, offering monthly virtual programming for hidden helpers ages 3-24, providing tools for youth and young adults to cope and thrive on their journey to adulthood. In addition to working towards lessening the feelings of isolation and breaking the stigma of being a child of a caregiving home through connecting with peers online, ALH provides access to resources through monthly email newsletters.



**Cohen Veterans Network** with the support of Wounded Warrior Project, is expanding behavior and mental resources and therapy sessions for post-9/11 caregiver children and youth ages 6-18 to enable them with the tools and resources to thrive.



**Emory Healthcare Veterans Program** continues to heal veterans' invisible wounds and has increased efforts to identify hidden helpers, offer family services, and provide relevant resources and referrals.



**Exceptional Families of the Military** continues to identify families with hidden helpers who are also caregivers for an exceptional family member. This year, we are looking towards ways to actively involve these hidden helper families and provide support to them.



**Gratitude Initiative** provides the most comprehensive college and career counseling, test prep, and financial aid counseling program available today. Their College Success Academy Program is delivered online to serve a military or veteran family around the globe. The program is supported by a team of degreed counselors that work with students and parents. GI enrolls children in grades 8-11 and stays with them and their parents until the student graduates college. Their high school senior survey results for students successfully completing the program have shown:

- 99% of students were accepted to one or both of their top two college choices.
- \$23,587 dollars per year – the average financial aid award offer received by our students from their colleges.
- 95% College Freshman persistency rate for GI's students compared to a national average of just 74%.

In 2022 to date, GI has enrolled sixty new hidden helpers children in grades 8-11. They are currently serving over 300 hidden helpers children in middle/high school and another 200 in college.



**MCEC**<sup>®</sup>

**The Military Child Education Coalition** has developed a pilot project to address the unique needs of military children and hidden helpers, supported by Wounded Warrior Project. MCEC worked with Elizabeth Dole Foundation to recruit eight hidden helper high school students who participated in direct training and support at the MCEC Global Summit in July 2022 and continue to engage through quarterly roundtables hosted by the high school students. MCEC also built and tailored curriculum for a three-hour course which was presented at the MCEC Global Summit for educators and youth-serving professionals. They are the process of;

- building a week-long Hidden Helpers Student Leadership Program for high school students;
- a series of webinars for parents to better identify and meet the needs of hidden helpers;
- creating the opportunity for educators and youth-serving professionals to participate in four quarterly ECHO Professional Learning Community one-hour sessions to collaborate and learn how to best meet the needs of the community;
- and a series of podcasts highlighting issues related to hidden helpers.



**Military Family Advisory Network** conducted critical research to understand the intersection between caregiving and key issues like food insecurity. The MFAN team, with the support of Wounded Warrior Project, has also worked with the full Hidden Helpers Coalition to develop a theory of change, or roadmap, to guide their work towards positive outcomes for our youngest caregivers. This work will enable MFAN to understand the impact this coalition has on the hidden helpers they are serving.



**Military Spouse Advocacy Network** opened their 24/7 Mentorship-HUB and Virtual Education and Resource Center to caregivers and their families. Military Spouse Advocacy Network continues to work with other Coalition members to increase support and programming for caregiver children.



**National Association of Counties** worked with Mathematica to begin mapping hidden helpers and hidden Heroes by county in their data mapping tool over the course of several months, but eventually came to realize it is difficult to portray county-level data while protecting the privacy of those individuals. As a result, they have pivoted to doing state-level maps.



**National Military Family Association** serves and supports hidden helpers through both advocacy and its programming, including Operation Purple, which offers camps and retreats for military kids and their families. Powered in part by Wounded Warrior Project, NMFA's Operation Purple Camps have adapted curriculum for children ages 11-17 from families with a wounded, ill, or injured service member to specifically draw out conversations around the experience of hidden helpers and support them in identifying their needs, raising awareness for those needs, and asking for the support they need to thrive.



**Nemours Children's Health** in collaboration with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and with input from members of the Hidden Helpers Coalition, is in the early phases of developing a collection of trainings and other resources designed for health care professionals, aimed at increasing their ability to connect with, and care for, military caregiving children/patients and their families. In Fall 2022, Nemours Children's and EDF launched a web-based survey and focus groups with parents of hidden helpers. Responses will be used to inform training materials and resources.



**Our Military Kids** Combat Injured Program provides extracurricular activity grants for enrichment activities and tutoring for caregiving children and youth, hidden helpers, of post-9/11 combat-wounded service members. Each scholarship (fees associated with athletic, fine arts, STEM, and tutoring programs) is a maximum of \$300 to cover fees for one activity for a period of up to six months. Each child is eligible for up to five grants, provided the severely injured parent continues to receive treatment and the child is otherwise eligible. This work has been supported by Wounded Warrior Project and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation.



**Philips Military & Veteran Caregiver Mental Wellness Framework Created by Caregivers, for Caregivers.** Building upon input and ideas from military and veteran caregivers' firsthand, lived experience, this new framework seeks to address the longstanding gap in resources that specifically support military and veteran caregivers themselves—not just their veterans—in their own personal mental health and wellness journeys. This tool, powered in-part by WWP, is intended to provide pathways for caregivers to acknowledge and take care of their own mental wellness amidst the daily challenges of caregiving in addition to all of life's other responsibilities.



**Project Sanctuary** hosts therapeutic retreats for the entire military family, including the children. Throughout the week, children participate in classes focused on improving relationships, communication, understanding Post Traumatic Stress and money management. Children also participate in recreational activities with their parents to help build more cohesive bonds and reconnect as a family unit. Project Sanctuary understands the children need time to navigate their feelings and emotions and be empowered to have fun in a safe environment.



**Public Counsel** has created a Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) toolkit to assist the class of veterans and caregivers who would like to appeal the decisions they received. The toolkit includes information and a template appeals brief, and template declaration. PC has also given four presentations on this toolkit to date. Public Counsel has also represented several caregivers and veterans on their Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) appeals.



**Sesame Workshop** continues to facilitate trainings and webinars on the use of their family caregiving materials to support providers in their work with hidden helpers. They are actively seeking funding to support the creation of new materials that would address the mental health wellbeing of hidden helpers, and help families navigate these ups and downs together.



**Unite Us** continues to offer free access to its care-coordination technology to all 501c3 community-based organizations. Recently, Unite Us and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation formed a national partnership to ensure that their programs and services are added to the Unite Us networks across the country, giving caregivers access to the care they need, when they need it. Additionally, Unite Us continues to support the needs of the military community at large, and was recently selected as one of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 30 finalists in the Phase 1 of Mission Daybreak, a \$20 million grand challenge to reduce Veteran suicides. Mission Daybreak is part of VA's 10-year strategy to end Veteran suicide through a comprehensive, public health approach.



**Wound Warrior Project is providing additional commitments, including the following:**

- Elizabeth Dole Foundation's design and development of a Family Resource Hub that will provide online, accessible, and vetted resources for hidden helpers, as well as launching a new initiative focused on training health care providers around the behavioral health care needs of hidden helpers and their families.
- American Red Cross' development and delivery of in-person Hidden Helpers Resiliency Workshops for post-9/11 caregiver children ages 8-13. Curriculum development includes research and creation of a module tailored to military and veteran children in caregiving homes.
- Kids Rank hosting Masks of Hope workshops for children and youth caregivers of post-9/11 service members and veterans.
- PsychArmor expanding and revising educational materials focused on military and veteran children to target peer support for youth and children caregivers of post-9/11 service members and veterans



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