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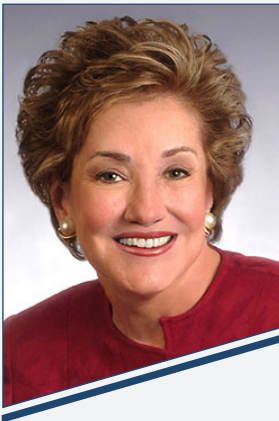
# HIDDEN HEROES

## CITIES & COUNTIES TOOLKIT

TO SUPPORT MILITARY AND  
VETERAN CAREGIVERS



**Elizabeth Dole Foundation**  
CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



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**“ There are 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers in the United States.**

These spouses, mothers, fathers, and other loved ones put their lives indefinitely on hold to care for their wounded veterans and servicemembers at home. In most cases, caregivers begin this journey in total isolation, without any support.

**Hidden Heroes is our way of providing these selfless Americans with the help they need and the recognition they deserve. ”**

- Senator Elizabeth Dole

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# ABOUT HIDDEN HEROES



Hidden Heroes brings vital attention to the untold stories of military caregivers and seeks solutions for the tremendous challenges and long-term needs they face. Hidden Heroes is a program of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, an organization dedicated to strengthening and empowering the nation's military and veteran caregivers.

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## HIDDEN HEROES SEEKS TO:

- 1 Raise awareness of the issues military caregivers confront every day.  
———— ★ ————
- 2 Inspire cities, counties, individuals, businesses, and civic, faith, and government leaders to take action to support military caregivers in their communities.  
———— ★ ————
- 3 Encourage military caregivers to register at [HiddenHeroes.org](https://HiddenHeroes.org) to better understand their needs and connect them to helpful resources and support.

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# OVERVIEW



In fall 2016, the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution to encourage cities to increase resources for military and veteran caregivers. To inspire participation, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation established Hidden Heroes Cities, a growing network dedicated to identifying local military and veteran caregivers and increasing awareness and support for them.

Through this program, cities and counties join the Foundation and participating communities across the nation to streamline services and share best practices for addressing the needs of caregivers at a local level.

**More than 135 cities and counties have already signed on.  
See the full list [here](#).**



# ENLIST



## HOW TO BECOME A HIDDEN HEROES CITY OR COUNTY:

### SIGN AND SUBMIT A RESOLUTION

As a first step, the city or county passes a Hidden Heroes Resolution or proclamation. This pledge outlines steps the city will take to identify military and veteran caregivers and increase local awareness and support services for them.

You are welcome to use the Foundation's [Resolution template](#) as a model, or you can create your own. Once the document has been approved by the mayor, city council, or county government, please send a signed copy to [Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org](mailto:Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org).

### DESIGNATE AN INDIVIDUAL AS A POINT OF CONTACT (POC)

Next, the community designates a local point of contact, from the public or private sector, to spearhead the initiative and interact with the Hidden Heroes team.

Once you have assigned a POC, please send their name, email address, and phone number to [Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org](mailto:Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org). We encourage each community POC to schedule bi-monthly or quarterly check-in calls with Yazmin. Through these calls, Yazmin will help track progress and identify opportunities for the Foundation to support and promote community efforts.



# DEPLOY



## REACH MILITARY CAREGIVERS

### IDENTIFY MILITARY CAREGIVERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

Identifying military caregivers will be your biggest challenge. Most see themselves as just the spouse, mother, father, or sibling providing daily care for a loved one at home. They often do not identify as “caregivers.” Join Hidden Heroes to encourage military caregivers living in your city to raise their hands so they can receive the help they deserve.

#### **YOU ARE A MILITARY CAREGIVER IF YOU SUPPORT A SERVICEMEMBER OR VETERAN IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:**

- Manage medication
- Coordinate medical appointments
- Provide emotional and physical support
- Assist with activities of daily living
- Advocate for proper treatment

When you encounter military caregivers in your community, we encourage you to direct them to **[hiddenheroes.org](https://hiddenheroes.org)** where they will find a carefully vetted directory of resources and a secure place to communicate with other military caregivers nationwide (for more information, see page 11).

Email **[Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org](mailto:Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org)** to request a unique referral code for your community.





## RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH CAREGIVERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Customize and add local resources for military and veteran caregivers into the Hidden Heroes customizable resource guide [\*\*template linked here\*\*](#).

Other resources to share:

- [AARP Prepare to Care Guide for Military Caregivers](#)
- [Hidden Heroes Resource Directory](#)
- [Caregiver Journey Map](#)
- [9 Steps for Respite Care](#)
- [Comcast Internet Essentials - Low-cost Internet for Low-income Families](#)
- [Caregiver Survey](#)

Create a flyer. To promote caregiver self-identification and spread the word about the resources available through [hiddenheroes.org](https://hiddenheroes.org), customize and share the [\*\*flyer linked here\*\*](#).

Notify local veterans and caregiver support organizations in your community about the recent passing of the resolution. These groups will be great to loop into your efforts, as they are on the ground working with veterans and caregivers every day.

- Encourage these organizations to fill out our Hidden Heroes Resource survey so they can be added to our resource directory.





## ORGANIZE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Work with local organizations to determine ways they can support or offer services to military caregivers. Potential organizations to consider include:
  - Businesses
  - Nonprofits
  - Military Service Organizations
  - Veteran Service Organizations
  - Faith groups and houses of worship
  - Rotary clubs
  - Service organizations
- Host conferences, webinars, or other convenings to identify the existing services specifically for military caregivers and areas of need. These events provide community members a platform to collaborate in helping military caregivers locally.
- Include military caregivers in the conversation when planning other military/veteran events. Designate a table with information about the program and resources available for military caregivers.
- Encourage local organizations that provide direct services to military caregivers to become a resource on HiddenHeroes.org. As part of our vetting process, these potential new resources will need to complete the Hidden Heroes Website National Coalition Partner [Questionnaire](#).
- Host a job fair for military and veteran caregivers. Invite local businesses interested in hiring caregivers to participate.
- Prepare your local Action Call Center or Crisis Hotline to direct military caregivers seeking resources to the Hidden Heroes Resource [Directory](#) on HiddenHeroes.org. The directory offers caregivers personalized resources that address challenges.
- Utilize local spaces such as public libraries, recreation centers, and universities for events, caregiver support group meetings, or as places to distribute Hidden Heroes information.



## HONOR MILITARY CAREGIVERS AND RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THEIR NEEDS

- Use our Hidden Heroes materials to reinforce your community's commitment to military caregivers. In the resource section of this toolkit, you will find:
  - Broadcast and print PSAs featuring Tom Hanks and Ryan Phillippe
  - Social media messaging and graphics
  - A calendar of key military caregiving events/dates
  - A promotional flyer template
- Host a community event to honor and recognize local military caregivers.
- Leverage your city or county's resources to include messages about Hidden Heroes and your commitment to military caregivers. Use communication tools such as banners, email, press releases, newsletters, events, social media, utility bill inserts to encourage more members of the community to participate.
- Create a webpage on your city or county's website that is specifically dedicated to the Hidden Heroes campaign. Offer information about resources available to local caregivers and the community's goals for the project.
- Bring local caregivers together for a round table discussion or focus group. Use this feedback and insight offered by caregivers to determine key focus areas in your community.



## HIDDENHEROES.ORG

HiddenHeroes.org is the first-of-its-kind online destination for military caregivers. On the website, visitors can find the following:

- **Step Into The World of a Military Caregiver** provides testimonials from military caregivers across the nation that share helpful information about the caregiving journey. Within each profile, caregivers have answered questions about how caregiving has impacted their lives and the challenges they face. Caregivers also offer tips about resources that have been most valuable to them. You can search caregiver stories by service branch, state, type of care recipient wound, and much more.
- **Vetted Directory of Valuable Resources** is a simple-to-search directory of more than 200 of the nation's best military caregiver support programs. Featured resources and organizations have been thoroughly vetted by the Foundation to ensure their services are top quality. Users can search keywords or filter through various categories to quickly find resources specific to their individual needs.
- **Explore Our Community** is a safe and confidential online community exclusively for military and veteran caregivers. Caregivers can connect with peers and participate in virtual gatherings to share experiences, helpful resources, and words of encouragement. This section also provides access to a private Facebook group exclusively for verified military caregivers.
- **Take Action** challenges communities, businesses, nonprofits, and individuals across the nation to respond to the military caregiving crisis with helpful solutions.



# REPORT



## UPDATE US ON YOUR PROGRESS

The ideas presented in this toolkit are simply thought starters. Tell us what your city is doing to raise awareness and support for military caregivers.

Send photos and share compelling stories about your city's service. We would love to hear from you and find ways to recognize your ongoing commitment to military families!

Looking for inspiration? We can connect you with participating cities to collaborate, gain insight, and share ideas.

Contact Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Manager of City and Community Initiatives Yazmin Alfonso at [Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org](mailto:Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org) or (813) 638-7036.



# RESOURCES



## HIDDEN HEROES CITIES SEAL AND LOGOS

Use this seal and logo on all official materials supporting Hidden Heroes and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. Reference the guidelines for using these logos and find the seal [here](#).

## PRESS RELEASE

Spread the word about your community joining the movement. Download the Hidden Heroes Cities press release template [here](#).

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

To bring national attention to the unique and important ways military caregivers serve the nation, Hidden Heroes developed a series of video and print PSAs. The Foundation invites your community to share these PSAs on your website and social media channels, publish them in newsletters and show them at local events.

Tom Hanks with military caregiver Jessica Allen, her husband Staff Sergeant Chaz Allen, and their two daughters Ryann and Deryn.

[Download the :60 and :30 spots](#)[Download the print PSA](#)

Ryan Phillippe with military caregiver Heidi Woodring and her husband, U.S. Army veteran Chris Woodring.

[Download the :60 and :30 spots](#)[Download the print PSA](#)

## GRAPHICS

Shareable Hidden Heroes graphics [here](#).

## SHARE, RETWEET, LIKE & FOLLOW US

 @DoleFoundation |  @ElizabethDoleFoundation |  @ElizabethDoleFoundation

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

#HiddenHeroes | #MilitaryCaregivers

## MILITARY CAREGIVERS: FACTS AND FINDINGS

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation commissioned a landmark RAND study, [\*\*Hidden Heroes: America's Military Caregivers\*\*](#), which revealed that:

- There are 5.5 million military caregivers currently serving in the United States.
- 1.1 million caregivers are caring for a veteran or servicemember who served after September 11, 2001 and 4.4 million are caring for someone who served on or before September 11, 2001.
- Military caregivers provide \$14 billion of uncompensated voluntary healthcare services annually.
- Those caring for post-9/11 veterans or servicemembers are suffering depression at four times the rate of civilian caregivers. They consistently experience more personal health problems, financial challenges, workplace issues or strains in family relationships as compared to non-caregivers.
- There are seven areas of urgent need for military caregivers:
  - Mental and Physical Health
  - Community Support at Home
  - Respite Care
  - Education and Training
  - Interfaith Action and Ministry
  - Employment and Workplace Support
  - Financial and Legal Issues



## FIND RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS ON HIDDENHEROES.ORG

Reference the HiddenHeroes.org [Resource Directory](#) to learn more about national organizations that support military caregivers as well as those in your community. Encourage local organizations not on this list to complete the Hidden Heroes Website National Coalition Partner [Questionnaire](#).

## CONNECT WITH OTHER HIDDEN HEROES CITIES & COUNTIES

Access the list of Hidden Heroes Cities and counties [here](#) and to connect with the designated point of contact for each city, reach out to Yazmin Alfonso. Collaborate on initiatives for military caregivers with communities in your region, state, and nationwide.

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### THE ELIZABETH DOLE FOUNDATION

600 New Hampshire Avenue NW (Tenth Floor)  
Washington, DC 20037

Yazmin Alfonso, Manager of City and Community Initiatives  
[Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org](mailto:Yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org)  
(813) 638-7036







# THANK YOU

