



NATIONAL
MILITARY FAMILY
ASSOCIATION

OPERATION PURPLE[®] PROGRAM

2019 Year in Review

The National Military Family Association is honored to provide programs to strengthen and support military families through the generous support of our Operation Purple Program sponsors and donors.

A special thanks to Wounded Warrior Project, which has served as NMFA's National Sponsor of Operation Purple Camp since 2015.

Beyond those listed below are many individuals, military spouse clubs, and partners that make every Operation Purple Program experience special and rewarding for military families.

Military Kids Serve Too!

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Operation Purple[®] Program

Military life can be tough. Between deployments, military-mandated moves, and other uncertainties unique to military life, military families often need dedicated time to reconnect, strengthen their family bonds, and develop the skillsets to help them navigate military life—individually and as a group. The National Military Family Association's (NMFA) Operation Purple Program gives families camp experiences designed to serve each member of the military family.

In 2019, NMFA served **2,256** service members, veterans, and family members through Operation Purple Programs.

Operation Purple[®] Camp

Operation Purple Camp helps military children build resiliency skills and a network of support, so they're better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Operation Purple[®] Buddy Camp

Buddy Camp is a camp experience for younger military children who aren't ready for a full week of sleepaway camp. These younger campers, many of which are children of caregivers, get the best of Operation Purple Camp programming alongside mom, dad, or another family member.

Operation Purple Family Retreats[®]

Family Retreats prepare families for the challenges that result from military deployments and separations, helping them build the tools to stay connected and family focused in these phases of transition, absence, and reintegration.

Operation Purple Healing Adventures[®]

Healing Adventures give families of the wounded, ill, or injured the support, time, and space to adjust to their new "normal."



Operation Purple Camp

According to Department of Defense (DoD) statistics, 55% of military children are between the ages of 6–18. On average, military children move and change schools 6–9 times from kindergarten to high school graduation. They must also cope with regular deployments, and sometimes welcome home a wounded, ill, or injured parent. Military kids face a tremendous amount of stress—and it shows. “One third of school-age military children show psychosocial behaviors such as being anxious, worrying often, and crying more frequently,” the School Superintendents Association reports.

That’s where Operation Purple comes in.

Since 2004, NMFA has provided more than 64,000 children a week of summer camp full of friendships, adventures, and memories. At Operation Purple Camp, military kids take part in activities designed to promote development of the emotional skills military life requires, physical confidence in their own capabilities, pride in their parent’s service, and recognition of their own sacrifices as military kids. They do this alongside all the fun of traditional summer camp: swimming, ropes courses, nature hikes, arts and crafts and, best of all, campfires and s’mores.

In 2019, NMFA hosted **17 weeks** of camp at **15 locations** nationwide. Camp locations were strategically located in areas that benefit the most military families, including **11 new locations** for 2019. Camp applications rose **42%** in 2019. NMFA was able to accept **32%** of the **4,799** campers who applied.

Survey Data

[Data collected from 279 respondents]

96%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Camp helped their child connect with other military kids

89%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Camp gave their child a break from the stresses of military life

93%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Camp showed their child they are part of a community that cares about them

83%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Camp helped their child better understand why they should be proud to be a military kid

91%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Camp helped their child gain a better connection with the environment/outdoors

69%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Camp gave their child a better understanding of the military lifestyle

In Their Own Words

Kids

“My favorite part of Operation Purple Camp was the friends I made and getting a bullseye with the bow and arrow. Being a military kid is hard sometimes. I know that sometimes my dad can't be home for my birthday or school events. I know it is part of his job, but my mom is still there even though he's not.”

Hayden (age 9)
YMCA Camp Chandler

“Operation Purple Camp was so much fun. I loved getting to ride horses, hiking, camp fires, and being okay without my mom for a week. I learned that I miss my dad a lot and he misses me a lot. But Operation Purple Camp helped me see it is okay to talk about missing my dad.”

Westyn (age 9)
YMCA Camp Jackson

“Operation Purple Camp made me feel less alone to know that other military kids also have to go through what I go through like frequent moves, making new friends, and having to deal with their parent's deployments.”

Adeline (age 12)
YMCA Camp Erdman

Parents

“Operation Purple Camp allowed my daughter to connect with the 8 other teens in her cabin in a way I've never seen her connect before. She arrived at camp insecure and quiet, and by the end of the week was shouting out the camp songs and had completely emerged from her shyness. The benefits on my daughter are too numerous to count. A lot is asked of her at home. She has a parent who suffers from PTSD. She spends a lot of time caregiving. This week at camp gave her time with other teens and allowed her to be carefree.”

Kristine, Mom to Michaela (age 14)
YMCA Camp Widjiwagan

“In the military, service members do not have full control and lives are often dictated by the needs of the military. The future is very unknown, and this is a burden that military kids and spouses have to carry. Camp helped my daughter open up and share some of the burdens with other campers and staff. She came home more much relieved.”

Josh, Dad to Evelyn (age 15)
YMCA Camp Cullen



Operation Purple Buddy Camp

More than a third of military children are under age six, according to DoD statistics, and two thirds are under age 11. Operation Purple Buddy Camp is designed for younger military children who aren't ready for a week away from family. The child and their mom, dad, or other family member get quality, one-on-one time and create new memories away from their everyday stresses. While these youngest Operation Purple campers aren't always ready for a full week of sleepaway camp solo, they are ready to enjoy all that Operation Purple Camp has to offer. Activities include canoeing, arts and crafts, swimming, archery, ecology lessons, nature walks, and a campfire (with s'mores of course).

The activities are fun, but the one-on-one time with a parent creates a transformational experience for young military children dealing with deployments and other challenges.

In 2019, NMFA hosted its first Operation Purple Buddy Camp focused on children of military caregivers. During the three-day Operation Purple Buddy Camp, the caregiver parent and child enjoyed activities designed to enjoy a respite from their day-to-day responsibilities, strengthen their relationship, and build community with other caregivers and their kids.

In 2019, NMFA hosted **two** Operation Purple Buddy Camps serving **142 military children and their mom, dad, or other family member** in Washington and Texas.



Survey Data

[Data collected from 54 respondents; unless noted]

83%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp gave them opportunities with their buddy to work together and strengthen their bond

77%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp helped them, and their buddy enhance their communication skills and increase their support for each other

75%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp gave their buddy a chance to learn more about communicating his/her feelings and challenges

94%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp gave them a chance to connect with their buddy

94%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp provided them with an opportunity to make new memories together with their buddy

83%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp gave their buddy an opportunity to experience new outdoor activities

81%*

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp gave their buddy an opportunity to meet other military-connected children and make new friends

85%*

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Buddy Camp gave their buddy a chance to celebrate that Military Kids Serve Too!

* Denotes 53 respondents

In Their Own Words

Applicants

"I want my son to have the opportunity to participate in activities that I can't provide on my own when my husband is deployed. I want him to have a childhood where he fished and hiked and canoed, but I don't have anyone to help him experience those things. I would also love to take a little time just to focus on him and to help him understand his feelings."

Cheri, Mom to Benjamin
Operation Purple Buddy Camp, TX

"Now that our oldest son is getting older and I am back on sea duty and leaving every month for a month or two it's becoming harder for myself to find things to connect with him with, aside from video games. This camp will give myself and Kai a chance to reconnect and get to know each other again! I'm leaving in August for 8 months so this will be perfect!"

Mitchell, Dad to Kai
Operation Purple Buddy Camp, WA

Attendees

"Thank you NMFA staff for having us this past weekend. It was my son's first camp experience and he really had a blast. I'm so glad that someone thought about the children and how many struggles they go through as their parent or parents serve. Thank you for showing the children how much they are appreciated."

Naomi, Mom to Sawyer
Operation Purple Buddy Camp, TX

"This was my first time, by choice, leaving my wounded husband and special needs daughter as a dual caregiver to go enjoy a retreat. Thank you for this opportunity and experience as I will never forget it!"

June, Mom to Ashlyn
Operation Purple Buddy Camp, WA

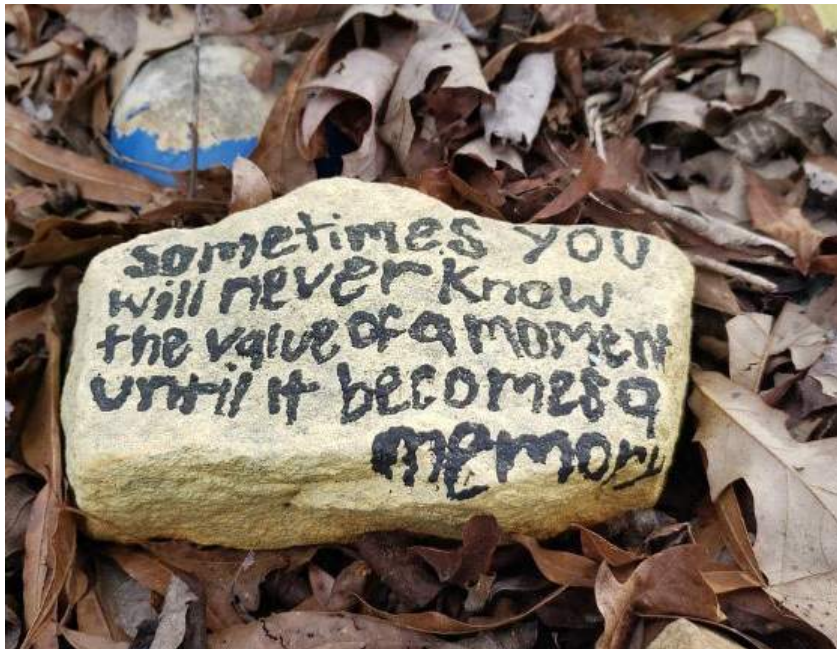


Operation Purple Family Retreats

Every day, more than 200,000 service members are separated from their families by military duty. For these families, the separation itself is challenging, and when the excitement of a service member coming home wears off, there's a new set of challenges that come with reintegration. Those problems are compounded by frequent back-to-back deployments, often with little notice. The family at home forges on through missed birthdays, anniversaries, and new school years, forming new routines along the way. Transition and reintegration aren't easy for anyone.

Since 2009, Operation Purple Family Retreats have supported military families working to reconnect through these hard times. The retreats are a breath of fresh air, providing space for quality time and fun in beautiful camp locations away from home and giving families the opportunity to bond with others in the same phase of military life experiencing many of the same challenges. Families learn more about each other and the outdoors, developing valuable communication tools to help them better adapt to the changing military lifestyle while also enhancing environmental stewardship.

In 2019, NMFA hosted **three** Operation Purple Family Retreats serving **58 families** in New York, Georgia, and California.



Survey Data

[Data collected from 93 respondents]

77%

agreed or strongly agreed the retreat helped them connect as a family

73%

agreed or strongly agreed the retreat gave them opportunities to make new memories

69%

agreed or strongly agreed the retreat provided them opportunities to work together and strengthen the family bond

69%

agreed or strongly agreed the retreat helped them enhance their communication skills and increase their support for each other

77%

agreed or strongly agreed the retreat helped them connect with the environment

In Their Own Words

Applicants

“Our family would like to attend the Operation Purple Family Retreat to have that time as a family and engage with our children in the hands-on activities with an unplugged weekend of togetherness. With back to back deployments and unplanned training schedules it is hard to plan family time and we think this would be a great opportunity to have that family time and adventure together we would be very grateful for it”

**Teigh, Army Spouse
Operation Purple Family Retreat, GA**

“Both my husband and I were deployed over the last two years. While we were gone, my mom and aunt were able to watch our kids, but it has been really hard on them (the kids). I feel like this camp would be a really good chance to reconnect and bond as a family. I would love the kids to be able to meet other kids whose parents have been deployed, and realize they are not alone. I know our kids would love to “camp out” at the beach. I want this to be something great they will remember: A fun time with our whole family.”

**Mary, Navy Service Member & Military Spouse
Operation Purple Family Retreat, CA**

Families

“This was the best! We can put down the cellphones and communicate. I love nature. My family and I enjoyed the outdoor activities. We got to participate in activities we would not have been able to afford in a weekend getaway.”

Melissa, Operation Purple Family Retreat, GA

“At first the ½ mile walk to our cabin seemed so far. But with each trip, we were able to really see the beauty and notice new things like fuzzy caterpillars.”

Britany, Operation Purple Family Retreat, CA

“What an amazing experience. We unplugged, detached from the world outside of camp, and connected. We made new friends, pushed our limits in nature and slept soundly at night. Thank you for this experience! We’ll cherish these memories through the next 9-month deployment and always.”

Amanda, Operation Purple Family Retreat, NY



Operation Purple Healing Adventures

More than 52,000 service members have been physically injured in post 9/11 military conflicts and more than 500,000 are living with invisible wounds, from depression to post-traumatic stress disorder, according to the Wounded Warrior Project. Those wounds, illnesses, and injuries effect the entire military family.

Since 2009, Operation Purple Healing Adventures have supported military families learning to cope with their new “normal.” The long-weekend retreats provide a meaningful opportunity to connect as a family through activities designed to strengthen and renew relationships. The customized curriculum and activities are designed to accommodate the unique needs of Operation Purple Healing Adventures attendees. Credentialed mental health professionals with an understanding of military culture are on site to lend support and American Red Cross Reconnections Workshop trainers provide unique ways for families to connect with those mental health professionals.

Due to financial strain caused by injuries, families often do not have opportunities for vacations. Operation Purple Healing Adventures ensures families experience much-needed time together, while feeling supported and empowered to tackle the challenges ahead.

In 2019, NMFA hosted **four** Operation Purple Healing Adventures serving **68 families** in North Carolina, Texas, Colorado, and Washington.

Survey Data

[Data collected from 65 respondents]

93%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures allowed their family to take a break from the tasks and responsibilities associated with their service member's injury and caregiving

96%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures helped them connect as a family

100%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures gave them opportunities to make new memories

83%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures allowed them to learn more about the challenges of our wounded, ill, or injured service member

84%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures helped them enhance their communication and increased support for each other

81%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures allowed them to learn they can get through difficult times together

93%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures provided them with the opportunity to learn about new resources and share their experiences with other service members or caregivers

93%

agreed or strongly agreed Operation Purple Healing Adventures allowed them to connect with other families facing similar challenges/situations

In Their Own Words

Applicants

"I'm hoping being out of our normal routine and 'out of the house,' will allow me to get closer to my family for one weekend. Before all of my injuries, surgeries, medical conditions and limitations, we used to spend a lot of time outside. Hiking was one of our family favorite activities, and my daughter to this day still asks when we're going to hike again. This weekend will allow us to be together, outside, among other families who may suffering from the same limitations."

Leonard
Operation Purple Healing Adventures, CO

"I would love for our family to be able to attend this event so that we can learn ways to become a strong family again. I want to be able to take stuff home that we've learned from camp and apply it in our lives. With so many VA appointments, the daily stress of everyday life and the busyness that we all have, spending quality time as a family will be really nice. Also, getting to be around other vets really helps me and I feel like more of myself again."

Edward
Operation Purple Healing Adventures, TX

Families

"The retreat gave us a lot of positive memories that we often refer back to. The kids had a blast and tried new things. I was happy to see my family enjoying themselves."

Alisha
Operation Purple Healing Adventures, TX

"Our family traveled from Wichita, Kansas to Deckers, Colorado to attend Camp Shady Brook. The camp and staff were amazing. We needed this family time and it allowed us to bond and laugh and just relax. Everything my husband and I wished we could do over the summer but did not have the chance. THANK YOU for helping my family and giving us this amazing opportunity."

Stephanie
Operation Purple Healing Adventures, CO

"Staff was amazing. We are so thankful for the opportunity y'all gave us and the new friends and memories we will have forever. We cannot thank you enough!"

Amy
Operation Purple Healing Adventures, CO

The National Military Family Association is the leading nonprofit dedicated to serving the families who stand behind the uniform. Since 1969, NMFA has worked to strengthen and protect millions of families through its advocacy and programs. We provide spouse scholarships, camps for military kids, and retreats for families reconnecting after deployment and for the families of the wounded, ill, or injured. NMFA serves the families of the currently serving, veteran, retired, wounded or fallen members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and Commissioned Corps of the USPHS and NOAA.

Learn more and get involved at MilitaryFamily.org.



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