



## Military Family Programs

Spring 2012

The USO has been lifting the spirits of troops and military families for more than 70 years. While this mission has not changed, the USO has continually adapted to meet the changing needs of our troops. In today's active duty force, 56% of our troops are married, while 44 % have children. Military families today are enduring the stresses of multiple deployments; coping with their loved ones' visible and invisible wounds of wars, and struggling with the grief accompanying the loss of a family member.

The USO's broad reach and reputation attracts valuable resources and partner organizations to create a comprehensive array of programs and facilities with the scale to make a meaningful difference. The USO uses this presence around the world to say "thank you" on behalf of the American people

**More than 160 USO locations worldwide** -- Military family members benefit from a variety of family programs offered at USO locations worldwide. In 2011, troops and their families visited USO Centers more than 8-million times. We provide a warm and comforting place where they can connect with family via Internet or telephone, play a video game, watch a movie, have a snack or just put their feet up and relax and recharge.

**USO Warrior and Family Centers** -- In 2011 the USO broke ground and began construction on the Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir, Va., the first of two stateside centers to support wounded, ill, and injured warriors, their families and caregivers. The site has been selected for the second center, which will be located at the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Md. These centers will offer a comprehensive array of specialized services and programs designed to meet the needs of recovering troops – and their families – in a supportive and home-like setting. The buildings will encompass nearly 20,000 square feet each, and will include children's play spaces, movie theaters, classrooms, sports cafés, therapeutic art centers and healing gardens and more, all created expressly –to support the healing process.

**Operation Phone Home®** -- Operation Phone Home® is one of the most frequently requested services from our forward deployed troops. At our centers located in combat zones, the USO provides a private phone network for troops to make free phone calls home, access to computers with free high speed internet bandwidth to connect, online, with friends and family, as well as free wireless Internet access for troops with their own computers. For those forward deployed troops serving in remote areas without access to our centers, the USO provides free international pre-paid calling cards. In 2011, the USO shipped phone cards to more than 250 locations around the globe. To date the USO has provided nearly 3 million free pre-paid international calling cards to troops stationed overseas.

**Sesame Street/USO Experience for Military Families** -- Now in its sixth year, Sesame's "Talk, Listen, Connect" outreach initiative includes kits with a DVD and other resources which serve as tools for military parents and caregivers to talk to children facing the complex issues associated with military life. Bringing the magic of "Talk, Listen, Connect" to life, Elmo, and his friend, Katie, a military child, take their messages to the stage during the Sesame Street/USO Experience for Military Families tour performing at military installations worldwide.

**With You All The Way** -- USO partners with The Trevor Romain Foundation to promote self confidence and academic achievement in military children six to 18 years old. Using innovative, inspiring and humorous stories, Trevor has spoken with thousands of children about the difficulties of deployment during his many USO tours. Trevor has created a number of supportive kits that include DVDs, journals, resource books and other elements to help families cope with deployment, reintegrating a family, and what happens when a parent returns from combat with wounds, both seen and unseen. Tour performances are led by Romain, who listens to what children are experiencing and teaches them positive ways to express themselves. The *With You All the Way* tour kicked off an international tour in January with presentations to thousands of military children in Hawaii and Guam.

**United Through Reading's Military Program** -- USO joined United Through Reading® in 2006 to host the Military Program. Using all the emotion and inflection as if they were in the same room with their children, troops visiting a host USO Center, or even stationed at a Forward Operating Base in Afghanistan read one of many available storybooks into a video camera. The USO mails the DVD recording and book home. Children then watch Mom or Dad and listen to their loving voice at bedtime, naptime, or just anytime. Families back home then complete the United Through Reading® Circle of Communication by sending back a touch of home – a photo of the child watching their deployed Mom or Dad reading the book. Since the program's inception, the USO has shipped more 200,000 recordings.

**Hire Heroes USA/USO Workshops and Career Opportunity Days:** The USO, in partnership with Hire Heroes USA, hosts transitions workshops for wounded, ill and injured service members, their spouses, and caregivers. The workshops focus on resume writing, mock interviews, professional work practices and translating prior military experience into a civilian career. As a follow up to the workshops the USO, in partnership with Hire Heroes USA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, host Career Opportunity Days for wounded, ill and injured troops, spouses and caregivers. These non-traditional career fair ~~type~~ events connect employers with participants based on interest and background. Employers conduct mock interviews and provide feedback. Career Opportunity Days are limited to 25 employers and 100 participants to ensure attendees get the personalized service they need and more importantly, deserve. This year, the USO will host 22 workshops and 14 Career Opportunity Day events.

**USO Caregiver Conferences** -- These events provide spouses parents and other caregivers supporting warriors practical advice and needed information about available resources addressing such topics as post-traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, parenting and suicide prevention. In 2012 the USO will host multiple Caregivers Conferences throughout the U.S. with the first scheduled on May 30th in San Antonio, Texas.

**Military Family Care Package** -- Troops headed overseas write a note in a special journal which is packed in a "care package" along with other useful items like prepaid calling cards, disposable cameras, and gift certificates for household items. The package arrives home several weeks after the service member deploys, reminding the family that their loved ones are thinking of them.

**USO Photo Book Program** -- Through a partnership with RocketLife LLC, families upload up to 60 photos and create personal soft cover photo books small enough to fit in a cargo pocket. These 20-page albums warm the hearts of troops and keep them connected to their lives back home.

**Good Grief Camps** -- Through a partnership with Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), grieving children and teens are provided a safe and supportive setting to learn how to cope and build support systems and realize that they're not alone. USO also helps support the bereavement kits TAPS provides to survivor families.

**IMG Academies** -- The USO has partnered with former U.S. Army paratrooper and legendary tennis coach Nick Bollettieri and his Florida-based IMG Sports Academy to provide warriors and their families an opportunity to enjoy tennis, golf, basketball, football and other activities. This four-day program allows the family to play together creating powerful bonding experiences and many lasting memories.

**Healing Adventures Camps** -- This family camp experience brings together families of wounded, ill or injured service members to rediscover family fun and togetherness. This USO and National Military Family Association partnership gives families a week of relaxation and recreation while promoting family growth and resiliency.

**Camp Erin** -- In partnership with the Moyer Foundation, this program hosts weekend grief camps for children and teens who have lost a parent.

**'Joining Forces'** -- The USO is partnered with First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative to strengthen military families nationwide. *Joining Forces* focuses on three key issues facing military families – education, employment and wellness. Specifically, the USO is urging Americans to send messages of thanks to military families, to seek out volunteer opportunities, to share stories of support and to spread awareness of USO military family programs. Go to [uso.org/JoiningForces](http://uso.org/JoiningForces) to get involved.

**America Joins Forces with Military Families** -- Co-sponsored by the USO, this annual conference at the White Oak Plantation in Jacksonville, Fla. brings together representatives from both the private and public sector to develop critical steps to meet the needs of the nation's military families. In February 2012, more than 50 prominent nonprofits, veterans and military family service organizations, faith-based groups, and federal, state, and local agencies from across the nation joined with representatives from the White House, the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor and Education, Congress and state and local governments. This broad, yet centralized coalition brought together critical partners such as Blue Star Families, the US Chamber of Commerce and many others to build a coordinated road map for military families.

**USO Concert at the White House** -- On July 4th, 2011, President and Mrs. Obama hosted singer Amos Lee and Grammy award-winning band Train to entertain military families for the 3rd Annual Salute to the Military USO Concert on the South Lawn of the White House. Complete with a picnic, festive games, remarks and handshakes with President Obama, the show was a tribute to America's armed forces and lifted the spirits of more than 1,000 military members and their families.