



Spouse of:
Lt. Col. Renae Hilton
Current Duty Station:
Andrews Air Force Base, Va.



JEREMY HILTON

**FEARLESS ADVOCATE, TIRELESS VOLUNTEER AND DEVOTED DAD:
OUR COMMUNITY'S NEWEST MILITARY SPOUSE OF THE YEAR IS ONE HECK OF A GUY!**

BY MELISSA RAYWORTH, MANAGING EDITOR

It couldn't be more fitting: The Military Spouse of the Year Award program has been breaking new ground since it began five years ago. And after a year in which we've reached new levels in advocating for military families and drawn increased national attention to military community issues, we're also breaking new ground in electing our newest winner.

Jeremy Hilton is a hardworking advocate, a tireless volunteer and... did we mention he's also a man?

Too many people still assume that "military spouse" is synonymous with "military wife." But our community is filled with multitasking men who build their lives around supporting wives who serve. Many, like Jeremy, are full-time parents to military kids.

And many, like Jeremy, are also passionately involved in bettering the lives of our whole community. He has been singled out this year—being voted 2012 Military Spouse of the Year by a record number of thousands of his fellow spouses—because he is everything that military spouses aspire to be.

He doesn't let a challenge slow him down. He doesn't believe difficult odds must mean defeat. And he is deeply committed to using the growing influence of the Military Spouse of the Year program to make a lasting difference. >>

Jeremy and Renae are the proud parents of 9-year-old **Kate** and 2-year-old **Jackson**.

GETTING YOUR VOICES HEARD

Just days after he is publicly announced as the 2012 MSOY, Jeremy and our 2012 Spouses of the Year for each military branch will sit down for a private breakfast with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It's a unique opportunity that we're glad to provide, so that he and his fellow SOYs can begin garnering support for the initiatives they are pursuing.

As Military Spouse of the Year, he will have the ears of **senators, congressional representatives** and **Dept. of Defense** officials who can impact the lives of military families. Our network of relationships has grown dramatically since this award was created, and we're excited to take that even further this year. Jeremy will also have the opportunity to speak to a national audience via appearances on TV news shows and in other news outlets, because the current Military Spouse of the Year has become a go-to source on military family issues for the national media.

Throughout the past year, we have supported our 2011 MSOY, **Bianca Strzalkowski**, in the creation of the **Military Spouse Education Initiative (MSEI)** to help America's military spouses achieve their educational goals. Thus far, the MSEI has been presented to numerous organizations and government officials, and these presentations may soon lead to the creation of a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping military spouses earn their academic degrees.

Read on for details on how Jeremy Hilton plans to use the reach of the Military Spouse of the Year program to break more new ground and improve the lives of America's military families.



To Jeremy,

Joe Namath once said, "If you aren't going all the way, why go at all?" I know, Jeremy, that you entered into a life of service to "go all the way." I doubt the onset you expected you'd become **THE** advocate for 1.1 million spouses, who are mostly women, but here you are. I could not be prouder or more hopeful. We all look to you for leadership and to advocate in our best interests. There will be times when being the MSOY is going to be tough. **But I'm looking forward to the best MSOY year yet!** Because, honestly, if we aren't going all the way, why go at all?

Babette Maxwell

Executive Editor/Founder, Military Spouse Magazine



To our 2012 Military Spouse of the Year,

Welcome to our family! We are so very proud of you and your commitment to our military spouse community. We stand with you as you embark on your journey to lead 1.1 million of our peers. Always remember to fight for what you believe in with that passion that has carried you to this chapter.

Bianca Strzalkowski

2011 Military Spouse of the Year and Marine Spouse of the Year



To our 2012 Military Spouse of the Year,

I am so proud of the accomplishments you have made for spouses. You are truly making a difference. Keep up the good work. Always remember to dream big, have faith, set a goal and you can accomplish anything.

Crystal Cavalier

2011 Army Spouse of the Year



JEREMY'S PLATFORM

GOALS AS 2012 MILITARY SPOUSE OF THE YEAR

Jeremy will use his leadership role to advocate for military families on issues including **special education, medical care** and **long-term care**. His focus is on **EFMP** and **wounded warrior families**, but his work will help the entire community as he fights for increased support and helps others learn how best to navigate the benefits and services that are already available.

BACKGROUND AND INSPIRATION

Jeremy was a Navy officer with a thriving career when he and his wife, Lt. Col. **Renae Hilton**, had their first child in 2002. "Kate was born with significant medical issues," Renae told us in a letter nominating Jeremy for MSOY. "Due to the expectation of a higher deployment tempo in the Navy, Jeremy decided to separate from the Navy and take care of Kate full-time." Since then, Jeremy has made it his mission not only to advocate for his own family, but for the thousands of other similarly affected military families. >>

Congratulations to all the 2012 SOYs!

You are embarking on a journey that will extend far beyond this award and the year that awaits you. This opportunity to represent your branch and to collaborate with the other branch winners as a voice for all military spouses and families is a valuable experience that will not go unnoticed by others. Enjoy the moment, cherish the friendships that will grow, and be proud of the accomplishments that have earned you this recognition. You are all remarkable in your achievements and will certainly continue to do great things for our growing military community!

Megan Glynn

2011 Air Force Spouse of the Year



To our 2012 Military Spouse of the Year,

Breathe! You were chosen for a reason... that **YOU ARE** the **PERFECT** person to **REPRESENT ALL OF US** regardless of service branch. Enjoy each moment, savor it, relish the opportunities that are presented and placed before you. Know that we are all behind you, cheering you, supporting you, helping you to succeed.

Don't be afraid to step back and take a moment to reenergize, to refocus, and to reconnect with your family. And above all we are here for you... all you need to do is ask and we will help you in anyway you need.

We believe in you and know you will accomplish great things during your year as the MSOY!

Laura Vanderwerf

2011 Coast Guard Spouse of the Year



To our 2012 Winners,

Remember that communication with your spouse is the most important thing in any marriage, especially a military marriage. Congratulations on being selected as the 2012 MSOY. May this year be as fulfilling to you as it has been for me. It was an eye opening experience I will never forget and will always cherish.

Robert Duncan

2011 Navy Spouse of the Year



As a military spouse myself,

I would like to congratulate you on being selected as the Military Spouse of the Year. We may all represent different services but we all share the same bond. I regret that I was unable to attend the ceremony but I send you my best wishes."

Mrs. Linda Papp

Spouse of the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Robert J. Papp Jr.



To our 2012 Military Spouse of the Year,

I stand in awe at the strength of our military families and for the sacrifices they make on a daily basis. Thank you for representing all military spouses in such a remarkable way and for creating a legacy for others to follow. Congratulations on your selection as the 2012 Military Spouse of the Year!

Mrs. Bonnie Amos
Spouse of the **Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James F. Amos**



It is an honor to congratulate the 2012 Military Spouse of the Year.

After hearing the background stories, I am overwhelmed by the commitment, courage, determination and entrepreneurship of the six spouses nominated. Each has had challenges which were met with positive solutions for their own families and also proved to serve as an outreach to other spouses and military families who face into their communities responding when there is a need and making a difference whether the method was through running, working, teaching or volunteering.

Thanks for leading the way, being role models and having the courage to seek the positive, inspire others and innovate when necessary.

Cheryl McKinley
Spouse of the **Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Craig R. McKinley**



Congratulations on your selection as Military Spouse magazine's 2012 Military Spouse of the Year!

What a huge honor and accomplishment you have achieved, and I am so very proud of you and your contributions to our great nation. Being a military spouse can have many challenges, but you have used them as an opportunity to uplift, encourage, and assist your fellow spouses and their families. The selfless dedication and care you have shown is a testament to how each one of us can truly make a difference to others around us and impact our military as a whole. Thank you for your tenacious efforts and for giving so much of yourself in service to our country. You truly have made our military and its families stronger and more resilient to meet tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.

Paula Roy
Spouse of the **Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force, James A. Roy**



Advice and Advocacy

FOR **EFMP FAMILIES** AND **WOUNDED WARRIORS**

JEREMY HILTON'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCES GIVE HIM INSIGHT.
HIS MILITARY BACKGROUND GIVES HIM THE DETERMINATION
TO WIN EVEN THE MOST DIFFICULT BATTLES.

BY HEIDI G. EVANS, NAVY SPOUSE

Most families seek a primary care doctor when they move. But for special-needs families or those caring for a wounded warrior, a move to a new place may mean choosing and connecting with an entire team of doctors, specialists, therapists and educators to provide needed services. For these thousands of military families, PCS orders can be brutal. In 2012 Military Spouse of the Year Jeremy Hilton, those spouses have a friend who understands.

FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE

Jeremy spent the first years of his daughter's life focused entirely on her care. He brought to that caregiving the same determination he brought to building his own Navy career.

But as she grew and her medical situation became more stable, Jeremy began reaching out to other military families who were on a similar path. Over time, he's become a resource and a vocal advocate for these families. With the reach and influence of the Military Spouse of the Year award behind him, he is looking forward to taking that work a step further in months to come.

In advising other families, his message is clear: You can't simply let the system run its course. "You are the only one advocating for your child. No one else is going to help," he explains. EFMP families who are relocating may be assigned a military representative to determine whether their special needs can be accommodated, he says. But that representative may not know the right questions to ask, and every branch service is different. So it's vital to get involved.

Jeremy says one of the best resource for families is **STOMP**, or **Specialized Training of Military Parents**. The 27-year-old, federally funded program offers support nationally for parents of special needs children.

This is just one of the challenges Jeremy is looking forward to helping military spouses manage during his tenure as Military Spouse of the Year.

Your 2012 Branch Spouses of the Year



JENNIFER BASSETT
2012 **Coast Guard Spouse of the Year**

Installation: Coast Guard Cutter Alert

Goal: To have military spouses recognized as a protected class.

Follow her at:
baseguide.com/2012CGSOY



EL BROWN
2012 **Army Spouse of the Year**

Installation: Fort Belvoir

Goal: To promote early childhood education and special-needs support for military families.

Follow her at:
baseguide.com/2012ArmySOY



STEPHANIE GERAGHTY
2012 **Marine Corps Spouse of the Year**

Installation: Camp Lejeune

Goal: To promote physical fitness among military families.

Follow her at:
baseguide.com/2012MarineSOY



CHRISTINE GILBREATH
2012 **National Guard Spouse of the Year**

Installation: Redmond Taylor Heliport

Goal: To develop a comprehensive welcome program for new military spouses and those who are currently disconnected from the military community.

Follow her at:
baseguide.com/2012NGSOY



TRICIA ROSS
2012 **Navy Spouse of the Year**

Installation: Camp Lejeune (but PCS'ing soon!)

Goal: To use her experience as the manager of Blue Star Families' Books on Bases program to promote increased literacy among military children nationwide.

Follow her at:
baseguide.com/2012NavySOY

Dear Babette,

Few people ever really make a recognizable difference in another person's life. Fewer still make a difference in the lives of many. Only a tiny elite can improve the lives of millions.

A million military spouses maintain the homefront while our warriors fight. They reschedule vacation when warrior deployments change. They dry warrior children's tears when warrior daddies and mommies miss birthdays. They let our warriors focus on getting the bad guys, knowing that all's well back home. And, as we've all known for many years, they, more than anyone, really decide whether warriors re-enlist or get out.

Military spouses have a really tough job. They endure great sacrifice. They give so much and ask for little. They do all this because they fell in love with a warrior. And through their warrior, they've developed a love affair with their country, too. They do all this without pay, without control and with little recognition. They are the unsung heroes of our great nation and their importance to our national security is so understated; so underappreciated.

But then you came along.

To these patriotic women and men, through *Military Spouse magazine*, you have given voice where silence once ruled.

Through baseguide.com, you have offered guidance from a girlfriend's perspective.

Through **Base Guides**, you have created representation where taxation once enjoyed a monopoly.

Through **Military Spouse of the Year**, you made it cool, and honorable, to be a military spouse.

It's not easy being a military spouse. But nothing worth having ever came easy. You've made them realize that it's worth it. Because what you do—what the 1 million of your sisters and brothers do, what my wife once did—matters. It matters a lot.

The word hero has been diluted in our world where everyone's a winner and we give kids trophies for participation. But you wear the title well. How befitting for a woman who has been preparing for this role her whole life. Babette, you are the deserving and undisputed leader of this million-woman march. Female voters had Susan B. Anthony. African-Americans had Martin Luther King. Military spouses have you.

As an American, we thank you. As a colleague, we congratulate you. As a friend, *we cherish you.* ★



CM Hab *[Signature]*

Big & Rich
Co-Founders, **Victory Media**, a veteran-owned small business